



Key Clean Water and Drinking Water Issues across New England - 2019

Funding: Our Top Priority – Provide Robust Federal Funding for Water Quality

- America's economic future depends on clean and safe water, yet our water, clean water and stormwater systems are old and in critical need of repairs, upgrades and replacements. The American Society of Civil Engineers gives these systems only a "D" letter grade. Many utilities are financially challenged and simply keeping up with standard maintenance and repairs can be an issue (even with State Revolving Fund loans and funds available via the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act - WIFIA). These loans must be repaid while O&M costs rise faster nationwide than these capital investments. Federal government spending on these systems has decreased from \$17 billion dollars in 1977 (2014-dollar equivalent; 63% of total investment) to \$4.4 billion dollars in 2014 (9% of total investment). As a greater share of costs for future investment are shifted down to the local level affordability becomes increasingly more difficult for low income and fixed income customers. Many of the oldest systems are in the Northeast.
- Federal funding is needed for the separation of combined sewer overflows, which are an increasing public/political issue at many local levels. Continued support of integrated planning efforts to address these issues will allow for local communities to have a larger voice in the prioritizing water quality projects.
- Need for federal funding to assist utilities in addressing treatment for the ever-increasing numbers of emerging contaminants (e.g., PFAS). Emerging contaminants are best dealt with by elimination of the source, where Congress can play a key role. Treatment in advanced Wastewater/Clean Water Treatment Facilities, where technologies are always improving, may provide some opportunity, but at significantly higher costs. Onsite septic tank systems are not as robust, may be costlier to adapt, and many private systems do not currently function adequately.
- Additional federal funding would be beneficial for water and wastewater/clean water resiliency efforts (e.g., additional water sources, drought preparedness planning, flooding, cybersecurity).
- Continue funding USDA Rural Development programs, key resource for small rural systems.
- Federal funding for regional interconnection projects, which are helping to combat water scarcity, emerging contaminant remediation, or brackish water infiltration.

Regulations

- Utilize sound science and research before imposing additional regulatory requirements on water and wastewater/clean water utilities (e.g., stringent aluminum standards in National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits, when natural background levels of Al in the Northeast exceed the standards). These requirements strain already limited resources and often divert monies away from addressing needed infrastructure improvements that will do far more to protect public health. Cost/benefit analyses need to be considered for any federal or state regulatory mandate.
- Carefully monitor any bills regarding limiting groundwater extraction or water rights. While mainly aimed at private entities, these bills can negatively affect public water suppliers trying to provide full services to their consumers via limiting supply and capacity capabilities.
- Increase funding for the 2020 EPA National Priorities Water Research grant program to \$20 million and fully fund the Innovative Water Technologies grant program \$10 million as authorized,

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