



NEW ENGLAND WATER ENVIRONMENT ASSOCIATION

NEWWEA

WORKING FOR WATER QUALITY



**Portland
Water
District**

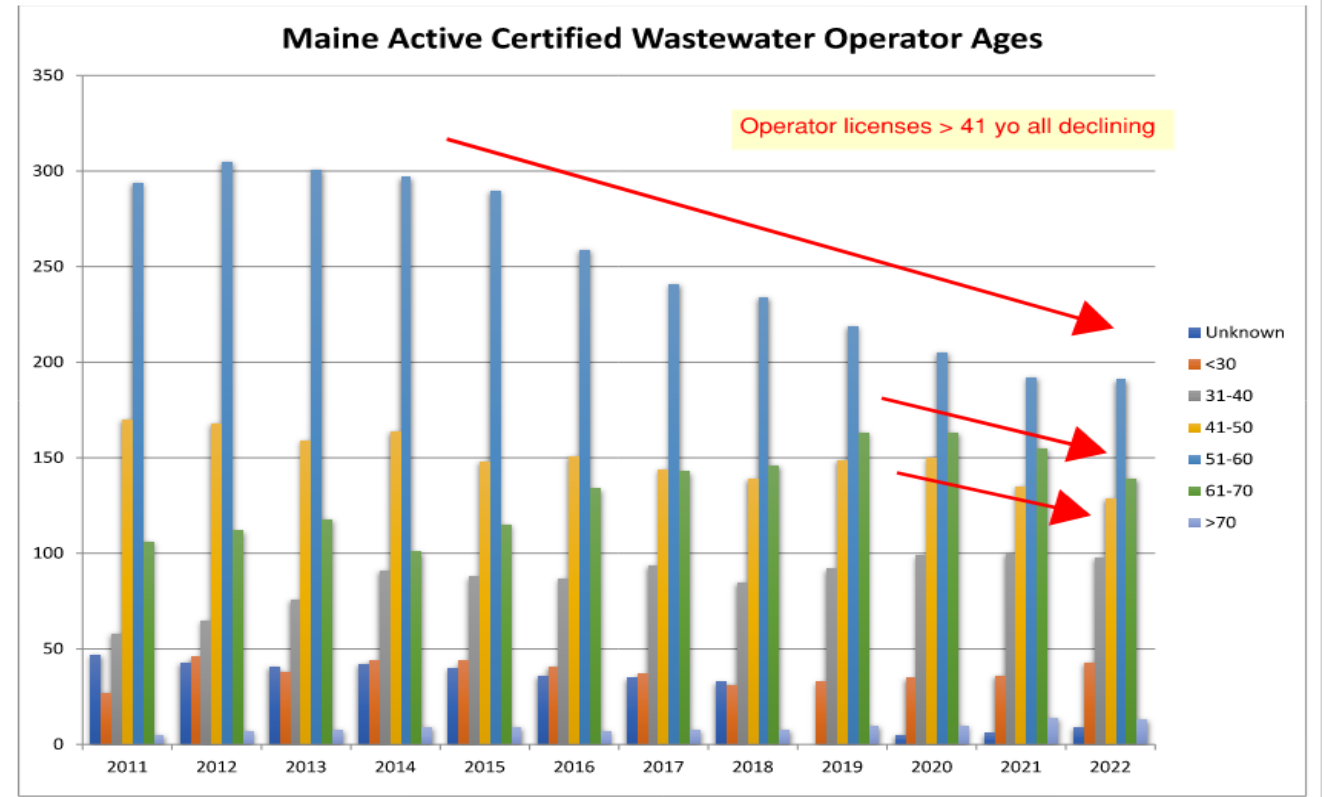
From Sebago Lake to Casco Bay

The Water Warrior Jobs Initiative



The need for qualified operators

- Prior to 2015, the vast majority of licensed operators were >50 years old.
- The effects of the anticipated retirement boom is becoming readily apparent.
- Challenges being faced industry wide include effective recruitment, retainment and training of new personnel.



The need for qualified operators

- Total Licensed Operators- 750 (2015), 665(2020) and 611(2022) **18.5 %** ↓
- Licensed Operators > 50 years old- 410 (2015), 370 (2020) and 338 (2022) **17.5 %** ↓
- Licensed Operators < 40 years old- 170 (2015), 180 (2020) and 143 (2022) **15.9%** ↓
- Licensed Operators < 30 years old – 45 (2015), 40 (2020) and 43 (2022) **0.5%** ↓
- > 50 year old we lost 72 operators since 2015 and overall **139 operators!**
- In the next 10 years, the water industry will need 37000 new water professionals due to utility growth, development and regulatory requirements.

Why Focus on Veterans?

- Commitment to public service
- Experience in a highly regulated work environment
- Capable of handling high-stress crisis situations
- Advanced technical and leadership training
- Understanding the value of teamwork
- Desire to be involved in their community
- Drive to learn and improve

7 million

Veterans in the U.S. Workforce

(Veterans in the U.S. Workforce)

200,000

**Service members separate
annually from the military and
transition to civilian life**

(Employer Guide to Hire
Veterans—Dept. of Labor)



An idea formed between friends

Looking at these challenges, and the natural fit that returning veterans would be for the industry, two rather handsome water professionals were separately working on ways to bring veterans into the industry. Peter Goodwin was investigating how to leverage language in the Clean Water Act to restore training funds, and a guy by the name of Dustin Price was looking into recruitment services for Veterans and veteran-focused job fairs to get the word out on our industry.

These two men decided to join forces, and met at the place where all of Americas best ideas are made.



All best ideas are in the presence of nachos

On the back of an Applebee's napkin, the idea of the Water Warrior Jobs Initiative was born. We narrowed down the mission to 4 key “tentpoles”

- Training – How do we help provide or guide veterans to water sector training?
- Certification – How do we assist veterans in the certification process, and get credit for their service in the application process?
- Recruiting – How do we connect veterans with hiring municipalities
- Apprenticeship – Can we create a training program that is recognized as an apprenticeship, and qualify for GI Bill funding?



Bringing the idea to DC

Four tentpoles in hand, we visited DC for Water Week!

Met with Senator Maggie Hassan to discuss many water issues, including the idea to attract veterans to help with the workforce challenges. She was supportive and her staff was interested in hearing more and asked for a white paper.

As I left DC, all I could ask myself was...

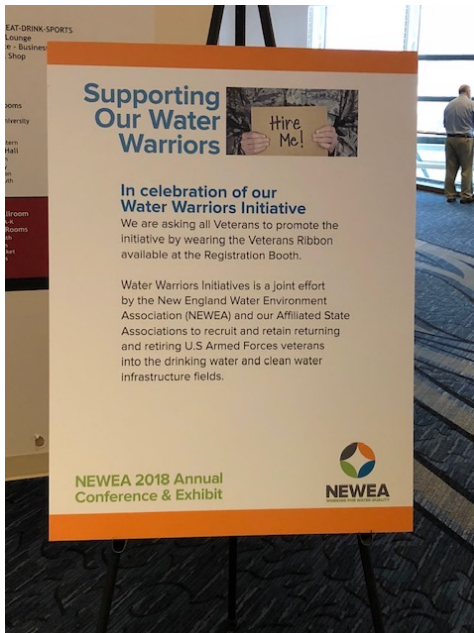
What the heck is a white paper?



The birth of the Water Warrior Jobs Initiative

After a bit of research, the white paper titled “The Water Warrior Jobs Initiative” was born. It was shared with state legislators, state and regional associations, and state regulators.

In 2017, NEWEA created a ad-hoc Veteran Workforce Committee to help push the initiative forward, and we got to work!



waiting to take these jobs as they open up. The facts are most people are unaware of our industry as a viable career alternative, and the training and education needed to be successful is hard to find.

Most clean water and drinking water training is provided by state organizations, and is directed to professionals already in the industry, as a way to obtain education credits for recertification. Community college, vocational training and other adult education facilities rarely carry any curriculum for the treatment of water. State organizations rarely coordinate, so training varies from state to state. Providing consistent, up to date training to our veterans is the first step, and first challenge, in getting them prepared for a career in the water resource industry.

Not So Basic Training

The successful operator is a skilled troubleshooter, maintenance mechanic, electrician, data analyst, chemist, and laborer. Most treatment facilities consist of a complex biological process composed of several interdependent systems. These systems are usually monitored with sophisticated monitoring and data collection programs. Laboratory analyses are conducted daily to ensure the water people drink, swim and fish in are safe. On top of the in depth technical knowledge

based system. That training and education is available, it's just a matter of getting it to the veterans looking for work.

The training to become a qualified and certified operator can come from several sources.

Water Warrior First Class

The New England region has several sources of education and training for operators to improve upon their trade.

On the wastewater side classes are available from the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES), the New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission (NEIWPCC), the Joint Environmental Training Coordinating Committee (JETCC) and more recently the Northern Maine Community College system(s) are initiating 2 year Associate's Degree Programs.

Drinking water classes are available through NHDES, the Granite State Rural Water Association (GSRWA), the New England Water Works Association (NEWWA), and the New Hampshire Water Works Association (NHWWA).

Early Victories

One of the earliest successes came from support from state regulators, who worked with NEWEA and the committee to look at how military experience is measured in certification.

We’re proud to report that every state in New England will now credit all veterans, regardless of their rate/MOS, with at least 1 year education experience to quicken their path to higher certification!

Resources were shared to assist regulators in understanding the many jobs in the military branches and what their training would equate to in college credits through American Council on Education.



7.C. Experience Requirements	3.B. Qualification for Certification	Updated definitions of wastewater work experience and related work experience. Added methodology to accept military work experience as related work experience, and a certificate from a water technology program as wastewater work experience..
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Ready for our close-up!

The VWC won a grant from Woodard & Curran to create outreach material, and used that to create a video presentation to be used at veteran events to showcase the water industry and how it is a great fit for returning servicemen



To view the Water Warrior Video, use the QR code below



Water Warriors



Subscribe



Getting in front of Vets

This was one of the most daunting challenges. Actually getting in front of returning vets was a puzzle!

John Hart cracked the code by finding his local TAP coordinator, and created a connection. After that he was able to be present during TAP (Transition Assistance Program) sessions, play our video, share links to job boards and information on the certification process.



Our next challenge...

- If we can create an onboarding wastewater training program robust enough to qualify for state-approved apprenticeship, that training period would qualify for GI Bill funding.
- This would bolster one major obstacle in recruiting veterans – Starting pay.
- GI Bill would add a training stipend to the new employee's starting pay, making the initial pay more attractive.
- Couple that with the added experience credit in the license application process, and that an apprenticeship would also count to education credit, a veteran in this program would qualify for a higher grade (and higher paying) license much quicker than before.
- The main obstacle is that one size does not fit all for each municipalities training needs.



Ready to enlist?

- The Water Warrior Jobs Initiative is just one of several critical workforce development projects being run by NEWEA's Utility Management Committee.
- These committees are successful due to the ingenuity and hard work of volunteers. Volunteers like YOU!
- If you'd like to join the Utility Management Committee and help solve the workforce development challenges of the future, use the QR code on the right!



SCAN ME



Whoa, Dustin! You went too fast! You need a clever way to fill a few minutes... Try showing the water warrior video! No one will suspect a thing!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2AnWOswJI>
Ok



Christine L. Brown

Christine L. Brown, 1970-2019



Thank you!!!



QUESTIONS?

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