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"New Hampshire works best when New Hampshire works together."

Governor John Lynch
State of the State Address
January 21, 2010



Priorities and Initiatives



Press Release

For Immediate Release

December 17, 2012

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New Hampshire Must Address Long Term Water Issues, Commission Advises

CONCORD – The New Hampshire Water Sustainability Commission today presented its report, urging that New Hampshire undertake a long-term approach to addressing its water issues. The state must establish a path to long-term water sustainability, the report advises. New Hampshire needs a long-term action plan in order to ensure the availability of clean water supplies, clean rivers and lakes, and water systems able to handle current demands, including those posed by aging systems that break down in the face of changing weather conditions.

Governor John Lynch established the Water Sustainability Commission in April 2011. The Commission's purpose was to identify strategies and management measures for ensuring that the quality and quantity of New Hampshire's water resources in 25 years are as good as or better than they are today. The Commission consisted of 14 members, representing the broad range of perspectives in the State on water needs, use, and management.

Members of the Commission met today with Governor Lynch to present, "New Hampshire Lives on Water," a report with findings and recommendations based the Commission's work over the past year and a half, which included an extensive public engagement process. The focus of the report is on both the systems that provide water supply, wastewater, and other water-related services, and on the state's natural assets - rivers, streams, lakes, ponds, and groundwater.

"Our beautiful lakes and rivers help provide countless recreation opportunities for our families and visitors, which helps to fuel our vibrant tourism industry. A clean water supply is also important for manufacturers and businesses across the state, making this issue important for our environment, our economy and the future success of our state," noted Governor Lynch. "I appointed the Water Sustainability Commission to help map out a strategy to ensure that those important resources and infrastructure investments continue to support our great quality of life and economic vitality well into the future, and this report is a significant step in that direction."

"When it comes to water, the Commission found that delaying action will cause problems to become bigger over time," noted Commission Chair John Gilbert. "Bigger problems cost more money to fix. If we don't maintain, upgrade, and replace our water supply, wastewater, and stormwater systems and our dams in a timely manner, we are likely to find ourselves dealing with major failures and expensive repairs that will hurt our people and damage our economy."

Among the Commission's findings: New Hampshire residents recognize the importance of water to their quality of life, but many are asking for more information and education about the challenges and their responsibilities to ensure that in 25 years our water and water systems are as good as or better than they are now. New Hampshire is experiencing declining water quality in some of the state's lakes, rivers and estuaries. Residents are increasingly concerned about access to and control of water and water supplies. Extreme weather events are increasingly frequent, causing problems with water quality, stormwater systems, flooding, and the ability of water systems to meet their customers' needs. The state's water infrastructure, last extensively upgraded in the 1970s and 1980s, is aging and increasingly inadequate to meet present needs.



Water issues vary from one region to another across the state. There is no one-size-fits-all solution that solves problems from the North Country to the Seacoast. Investment is needed to protect our water resources and maintain our water infrastructure if the state wants to maintain its water-derived economic advantage.

"The Commission believes that New Hampshire can ensure that in 25 years our water resources and infrastructure will be as good as, and even better than, they are today," noted Commission Vice-chair Martha West Lyman. "But in order to get there, we need a fully engaged public that understands how important water is, how it works, and the challenges and consequences facing our water's future."

"Solutions of the past won't work for the future," noted Commission Chair John Gilbert. "Today's water problems are more complex than those of the past and require more thought and more resources to address. The solutions require the involvement of not just state and local governments, but businesses, institutions, and individuals. For example, we need to rethink the way we pay for investments in water infrastructure. Clean water, where and when we need it, is a renewable resource only if we manage it effectively. We owe its care to our children and their children."

The report, which includes seven strategic goals and related specific recommendations, can be viewed on the [Water Sustainability Commission's website](#).

