

Appendix C - Public Input

The Commission sought and received public input to its process in several ways including:

- Incorporating time for public comment into its meeting agendas.
- Holding five simultaneous public conversations about water facilitated by New Hampshire Listens (a project of the Carsey Institute at the University of New Hampshire).
- Holding a sixth public conversation, with assistance from New Hampshire Listens, for people whose work involves or uses water.
- An online public input tool and public input period in July 2012.
- E-mails and written input and comments.

Through these mechanisms, approximately 500 people willingly gave of their time to explore water issues and solutions together or otherwise provide comments and input regarding water issues in the state. We know that people in New Hampshire care about their water and have many creative ideas to share about what needs to be done and how to do it. The reports of the public conversations facilitated and assisted by New Hampshire Listens and the other comments and input provided to the Commission are in meeting minutes and other documents posted on the website and are included in Appendix D through G in this report.

The Commission read and considered the public comments and input it received. The public comments and input were generally quite consistent with the issues identified by the Commission; however, they often shone a brighter light on certain issues and, thus, influenced the Commission's thinking and recommendations, which took into account the public's input.

The key insights and issues identified by the public are summarized in the items that follow.

- There is a great need for a broad public awareness and education effort to engage all New Hampshire residents in issues related to water, its value and cost, its efficient use and conservation, and how we manage the water we have. A focus on education at many levels emerged as necessary prior to any significant forward movement related to how people use water, funding, and support for additional regulations. There was an emphasis on public awareness campaigns, outreach to businesses, and information for decision makers at all levels of government. Commenters expressed their desire for updated, factual information and increased access to that information. Decision-makers, at the local level and in smaller towns in particular, need access to expertise and assistance to negotiate the complicated decisions they are asked to make concerning land use and water.
- There is a need for management, coordination, and protection of New Hampshire's water, a natural resource that transcends socio-political boundaries. Management of water will need new approaches requiring shared information and collaboration on a watershed basis. A new way of coordinating across local, state, and national boundaries was called for involving new and innovative decision-making structures dependent upon "working together," having implications for traditional forms of public policy and leadership across boundaries.
- There is a need for effective regulation of water to protect its quality and preserve its availability through incentives for conservation. Regulation, however, should not be the only solution, and the common need for water and the need to protect water for the common good that tips the scales toward the need for some public policy intervention. Incentives for individuals, property owners, and business owners should emphasize conservation, health and

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safety, economic health and personal responsibility. Existing disincentives for conservation and other sound management practices involving water need to be identified and corrected.

- There is a need for a funding structure for long-term and proactive investment in water infrastructure. There was a strong recognition that, in order to be prepared in the future for multiple water-related challenges, sources of capital funding need to be identified including and beyond individual municipalities. At the same time, participants were very aware of the potential for increases in individual water bills. A repeated idea was to revalue water and change the way residents pay for water so that infrastructure maintenance and replacement are reflected in the cost.
- We need more data to fully understand how water works, how much we have, and how clean it is in order to support sound decision-making for managing the state's water from the individual user level to interstate and, possibly, international commerce.
- Many comments received from the public identified the challenging tension of balancing the rights of property owners to "reasonable use" of water on and bordering their properties with protection of water for the common good. Along with these issues, the interests of the environment and ecological systems need to be factored into decisions about use of the state's water.
- A significant number of comments mentioned the need for innovation and a new way of working. Comments acknowledged the need for policy innovations that provide incentives for water-responsible actions, as well as, the desire to see local and regional decision-makers work together. Participants also sought creativity and innovation in developing incentives for sustainable water use and management practices and finding resources for research.
- There is a need to reevaluate the way we value water versus the amount that we actually pay for it.