



# PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

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CITY OF PORTSMOUTH

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Senator Chuck Morse, Chair  
New Hampshire Drinking Water and Groundwater Advisory Commission  
New Hampshire State Senate.  
107 North Main Street  
Concord, NH 03301

## Testimony

Drinking Water and Groundwater Trust Fund Public Comment

February 16, 2018

Brian Goetz, Deputy Director of Public Works

City of Portsmouth

My name is Brian Goetz and I am the Deputy Director of Public Works for the City of Portsmouth. In that capacity I am in charge of the City's water-wastewater and stormwater systems and have been intimately involved with the infrastructure improvement programs throughout the City and region. I am submitting comments on behalf of the City regarding the future allocation of money from the Drinking Water and Groundwater Trust Fund. However, before I continue I want to thank the Commission for the previous round of funding that included two projects for the City of Portsmouth's water system, one to further study water system expansion into an area in the Town of Greenland that we do not currently have water mains, and a second one that will pay for nearly half of the purchase of a 72-acre conservation easement on property adjacent to our Bellamy Reservoir in Madbury.

The City of Portsmouth has been proactively committed to not only meeting increasingly stringent regulatory guidelines for our water system but to also replace aging infrastructure on a programmed basis. Master plans are performed every ten years and provide the guidance for capital improvement planning. These master plans not only look at the physical water systems but also include financial rate models that allow our City Council to make informed decisions on the financial impact of the projects on the citizens and businesses of Portsmouth.

Since 1990, over 41 miles of our water mains have been upgraded. This amounts to 21 percent of the water system's pipes. Use of low interest SRF loans as part of our \$21 million water treatment facility upgrade, completed in 2011, helped to replace a facility originally constructed in 1957. Our commitment continues. Our proposed six-year capital improvement plan includes nearly \$16 million for water system improvements. This will ultimately lead to rate increases to pay off the bonded debt incurred to pay for them. Again, as with our capital planning, the City has been proactively improving operating efficiencies and adjusting expenses in anticipation of these projects to avoid rate shock. However, any state assistance would help offset these increases. Assistance that also includes principal forgiveness (grants) is also encouraged as this can allow communities like Portsmouth to leverage their ratepayer dollars and accomplish more system improvements with less impact to customer rates.

Our water system improvements, past and present, benefit not just the citizens of Portsmouth but importantly, the economy of the State of New Hampshire.

Additionally, I would personally like to share my thoughts on future allocation of the Trust Funds with respect to the following:

**Public Outreach – *We need better public understanding of public drinking water systems***

Drinking water system infrastructure, supply availability and water quality issues are complex and vary widely by community. There are public water systems with ample supply and good water quality while there are other systems that at times struggle to meet water demands. The every changing regulatory environment, evolving science and health implications surrounding water resources makes day-to-day operations and long-term planning ever more difficult for public water systems. Understanding and communicating this information to water system customers and the general public is also very difficult and complex.

It would help all water systems in the state if some of these funds were dedicated to public outreach in a way that would broaden the understanding of New Hampshire's precious water resources. The state has already embarked on the first phase of this outreach by developing the Water Resources Primer:

[www.des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/dwgb/wrpp/primer.htm](http://www.des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/dwgb/wrpp/primer.htm).

This report summarizes most all of the water resource and supply issues in New Hampshire in a very comprehensive and understandable fashion. However, ten years have passed since its publication in 2008. It would be valuable to allocate some of this funding to updating this plan and perhaps, taking some of the recommended next steps toward bringing some of the recommendations to fruition.

**Source Water Protection – *Without a good map we don't know where to go***

Protecting existing public water supplies for State of New Hampshire is vital. Recognizing this, the New Hampshire DES has been proactive in working with communities to protect their water supplies. A major step was taken last year as DES gathered stakeholders to identify high priority water supply lands that would support the long-term protection of the water resources in the state. The next step in this process would be for the state to move forward with developing a ***Water Supply Land Protection Plan***. Support and involvement from this Commission would help greatly in taking the next step toward finalizing this plan and thus, it could be utilized as a guide for future identification and allocation of trust funds regarding source water protection.

**Source Water Supply Development – *Water systems need water in their pipes***

No community can thrive without the support of an adequate supply of drinking water. Future economic growth is very dependent on water supply availability. Spending on infrastructure that only puts new pipelines in the ground can only go so far if there is not adequate supply to fill them. Therefore, use of these funds should give priority to projects that support water system source water development and where necessary, appropriate treatment systems.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak. I am available to discuss these ideas further should the Commission desire. Feel free to contact me at: 603-766-1420 or by email at:

[bfgoetz@cityofportsmouth.com](mailto:bfgoetz@cityofportsmouth.com).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Goetz', written in a cursive style.

Brian Goetz, Deputy Director of Public Works  
City of Portsmouth