

Interim Report of the Long-Term Seacoast Commission on Drinking Water

(RSA 485-F:6)

November 1, 2020

I. Commission Charge:

Pursuant to RSA 485-F:6, the Commission shall:

Continue the work of the RSA 485-F:5 Seacoast Commission on Long Term Goals and Requirements for Drinking Water which was repealed on November 1, 2018.

Utilize and expand upon existing studies to plan for seasonal or drought supply issues.

Prepare and discuss mutual aid between seacoast towns for firefighting.

Prepare and discuss mutual aid agreements for emergency or replacement drinking water supply where contaminated.

Encourage coordination between towns and cities.

Establish working subgroups as needed.

Monitor and review the work of state agencies regarding possible new emerging contaminant threats.

II. Members:

Rep. Pat Bushway (chair)	NH House of Representatives
Rep. Mike Edgar (vice chair)	NH House of Representatives
Tim Roache (clerk)	Rockingham Planning Commission
Rep. Renny Cushing	NH House of Representatives
Rep. Aboul Kahn	NH House of Representatives
Rep. Deborah Hobson	NH House of Representatives
Sen. Martha Fuller Clark	NH Senate
Sen. Tom Sherman	NH Senate

Rep. Jaci Grote	Town of Rye, NH
Jen Czysz	Strafford Planning Commission
Brandon Kernen	NH Dept of Environmental Services
Brian Goetz	City of Portsmouth, NH
John Storer	City of Dover, NH
George Eaton	Town of Seabrook, NH
Arthur Ditto	Rye Water District, Rye, NH
Bob Kelly	Town of Exeter, NH
Danna Truslow	Town of Rye, NH, appointed by Senator Sherman
Mindi Messmer	Town of Rye, NH, appointed by Sen Sherman
Dabra Seiken	City of Portsmouth, appointed by Senator Sherman
Peggy Lamson	Town of Newington, appointed by Senator Fuller Clark
Lindsey Carmichael	City of Portsmouth, NH, appointed by Senator Fuller Clark
Ann Lightbody	University of NH
Cameron Wake	University of NH
James Zuckerman	Town of New Castle, NH
Carl McMorran	Aquarion Water Company

III. Introduction:

The organizational meeting of the Long-Term Seacoast Commission on Drinking Water was held at the Legislative Office Building on September 27th, 2019. State Representative Renny Cushing of Hampton, as the first named representative to the Commission, convened the meeting and was elected as the chairman.

The initial meeting of the full Commission convened on October 25, 2019. At that meeting, Chairman Cushing named State Representative Pat Bushway of Hampton as the vice chair of the Commission and Tim Roache, Executive Director of the Rockingham Planning Commission, as the clerk. In addition to members of the NH House of Representatives, the Commission includes Senator Martha Fuller Clark, district 21 and Senator Tom Sherman, district 24. Other Commission members include representatives from seacoast towns and water systems, the Rockingham and Strafford Regional Planning Commissions, the Department of Environmental Services, and the University of New Hampshire.

IV. Process:

The Commission met in person in October and November of 2019 and in January and February of 2020. At the January meeting, Chairman Cushing announced that he was stepping down as chair and recommended Representative Bushway be named chair and Representative Mike Edgar of Hampton be named vice chair. Those recommendations were voted on and approved. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the meetings beginning in March of 2020 were cancelled per the direction of the Speaker of the House. The Commission was given permission to resume meeting remotely in July of 2020 and continues to do so. The minutes of all meetings as well as all other documents referred to in this report are available on the Commission website which can be found at the following:

<http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/statstudcomm/committees/1493/>

Please note that several of the Commission meetings are designated as “work sessions” due to lack of a quorum. It should also be noted that while not all members of the Commission directed by the governing legislation have been named, efforts are ongoing to identify all required members.

The Commission members agreed to continue the work of the Seacoast Commission on Long Term Goals and Requirements for Drinking Water which completed its work in November 2018. Under the direction of vice chair Edgar, the Commission conducted a review of the findings of the previous Commission to determine which action items are complete and which need additional work. The following are the tasks that were assigned to the previous Commission:

- Utilize and expand upon existing studies to plan for seasonal or drought supply issues.
- Prepare and discuss mutual aid between seacoast towns for firefighting.
- Prepare and discuss mutual aid agreements for emergency or replacement drinking water supply where contaminated.
- Create a centralized planning group to encourage coordination and support between towns.
- Evaluate threats to groundwater quality due to environmental issues.
- Monitor possible new emerging contaminant threats to groundwater and drinking water quality.

The current Commission assessed the status of work on these tasks, and the results of that assessment are available on the Commission website. That assessment serves as a guide to focus the Commission's work in the near and long terms. The Commission may form sub-committees to address specific issues, but given the size and composition of the Commission, the current consensus is that it is likely to be more effective and efficient for the entire Commission to address most issues.

V. Progress to Date:

As the Commission was not allowed to meet from March through June, progress to date in addressing issues has been limited. The following is a summary of the work that the Commission has accomplished to date:

- In January, the Commission drafted and agreed to submit a letter to the Drinking Water and Ground Water Trust Fund Advisory Commission in support of a proposed regional water system interconnection between the cities of Dover and Portsmouth. The purpose of the project is to enhance water system resiliency by connecting existing regional water systems in the communities of Rochester, Somersworth, Rollinsford, and Dover to the north and the communities of Newington, Portsmouth, New Castle, Greenland, Rye, North Hampton, Hampton, and Seabrook to the south. A copy of the letter is available on the Commission website.

- In February, the Commission made final edits to the letter drafted in January, reviewed relevant bills that have been introduced in the Senate and the

House of Representatives for this legislative session, and reviewed the tasks completed by the previous Commission as well as those that this Commission will continue to address.

- Once allowed to meet again virtually starting with July meeting, the Commission continued its review of remaining bills of interest that was begun in February. That included a discussion of HB1264, signed into law on July 23rd, which, among other things, sets the maximum contaminant levels (MCL) for certain perfluorochemicals in drinking water, establishes a per and polyfluoroalkyl substances fund and makes an appropriation therefor, and expands the statute governing ambient groundwater quality standards. The Commission also received a detailed briefing on Drought Management presented by the Department of Environmental Services (DES). As the drought continues, DES provided updates on drought conditions along the seacoast and throughout the state. The slides from the July Drought Management presentation are available on the Commission website.

- At the August meeting, the Commission reviewed relevant bills that were not enacted in the legislative process, and which may merit consideration for future legislation. The Commission also received a detailed briefing on Water Efficiency from the Deputy Director of Public Works of Portsmouth. The slides from that presentation are available on the Commission website.

- At the September meeting, the Commission discussed the way ahead to address the issues remaining from the previous commission that include regional water supply planning, coordination between municipalities during drought conditions, hazardous and medical waste disposal, groundwater/source water protection, interconnectivity, and water efficiency. The consensus was that, given that the Commission is chartered for 10 years, each topic can be taken on separately by the entire Commission. Following that discussion, the Commission received a presentation on water source protection and the role that wetlands play in that process.

- At the October meeting, the Commission focused primarily on reviewing and editing the annual report.

VI. Conclusion:

The Long-Term Seacoast Commission on Drinking Water will continue to meet monthly. The Commission will focus on continuing the work of the previous commission and will address additional relevant issues as presented.