

New Hampshire Water Resources Plan Process
Public Meeting Backgrounder
Rev 3/5/09

State officials will discuss the state's water resources challenges at Boyd Hall, Plymouth State University on March 31 at 7:00 PM. The meeting is co-sponsored by the Pemigewasset River Local Advisory Committee.

According to a recently completed report, the state faces a number of significant challenges with respect to the sustainable management of water resources. First, population growth and the associated land development can have profound impacts on water quality, water availability, and water-based recreational opportunities. Second, climate change, which is already bringing increasingly frequent extreme weather events to New Hampshire, is expected to exacerbate water quality problems, to test the readiness of local governments to deal with droughts and flooding, and to overwhelm the existing stormwater infrastructure in many places. Third, as is the case nationwide, New Hampshire's infrastructure for water supply, wastewater treatment, and water storage is sorely in need of maintenance, upgrade, or replacement, but no funding mechanism is in place to raise the needed money. Fourth, in order to inform the effective management of water resources, the state needs to address critical data needs by expanding efforts to gauge stream flows, monitor groundwater levels, gather water quality data, monitor the occurrence and spread of invasive species, and map flood-prone areas.

These four challenges, and much more information about the state's water resources and the issues facing New Hampshire, are presented in the *New Hampshire Water Resources Primer*, developed by the Department of Environmental Services and a group of stakeholders at the request of the legislature's Water Resources Committee.

As an initial step in a process that could lead to a state water resources plan, DES worked with stakeholders to prepare the *Primer* to inform policy makers and citizens about the state's water resources and the challenges faced in sustainably managing them. The *N.H. Water Resources Primer* is the first document that covers all of the water related topics of importance to policy makers in New Hampshire.

The *Primer* contains pertinent facts and statistics about the state's water resources, water use, water infrastructure and water law. Individual chapters cover Rivers, Lakes and Ponds, Groundwater, Wetlands, Coastal and Estuarine Waters, Water Use and Conservation, Drinking Water, Wastewater, Stormwater, Dams, and Floods and Droughts. Each of these chapters provides information about the topic, issues related to it, and current management efforts. Each chapter also provides a few preliminary stakeholder recommendations.

Between now and May of 2009, DES staff, interested stakeholders, and legislators will hold **a series of public information sessions throughout the state to present the Water Resources Primer and to listen to the public's reactions and ideas about how to address the water resources management challenges facing New Hampshire.** The

results of a recent statewide survey of policy makers' attitudes and concerns for water resources will also be presented. DES urges state and local decision makers and all citizens, to take advantage of this opportunity to shape both the state's water plan process and our water resources future.

The Primer and other related information are available on DES's website at www.nh.gov/des (under What's New). For more information, please contact Sarah Pillsbury (sarah.pillsbury@des.nh.gov) at (603) 271-1168.