ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

NEW HAMPSHIRE DEPARTMENT OF Environmental Services

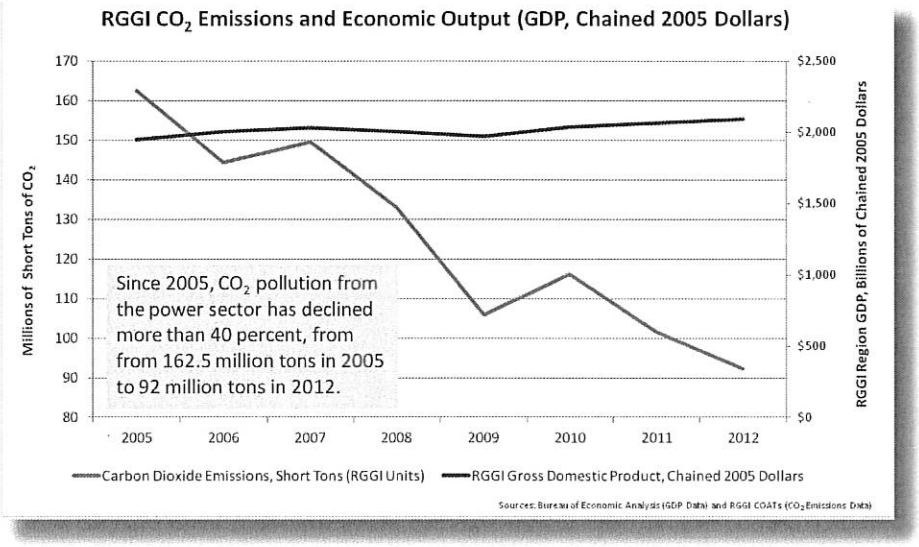
Newsletter of the N.H. Department of Environmental Services March-April 2015

COMMISSIONER'S COLUMN

The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) is Good for New Hampshire

The upcoming Earth Day inspires me to reflect upon New Hampshire's participation in a regional program that benefits our state both environmentally and economically, and is representative of the kind of innovative solutions we will need even more of in the future. New Hampshire's Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (enacted by our legislature in 2008 as RSA 125-O:20 through 29) creates a regional market that reduces carbon dioxide (CO_2) emissions from power plants. Our participation in RGGI also benefits our state's economy by lowering electric costs for all consumers, creating jobs for New Hampshire businesses and retaining millions of energy dollars in our local economy.

Additionally, the nine RGGI states may not be acting alone in the future. The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has proposed a national Clean Power Plan to reduce carbon dioxide pollution from power plants. New Hampshire's participation in RGGI may allow it to meet these proposed new requirements as part of a cost effective, market-based regional program. Since EPA's announcement, several states have expressed interest in joining the RGGI states as a means of cost effectively complying with the Clean Power Plan.



First and foremost, our state is economically better off by participating in RGGI than not. New Hampshire is not an energy "island" and approximately half of our power is purchased from the 6-state New England regional grid. Under RGGI, electric generating units purchase allowances from the states for each ton of CO_2 they emit. These allowances are purchased at regional auctions and may be traded by generators in accordance with their needs. The revenues are used by states to in-

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Wood Stove Change-out Program Available for Cheshire County Residents

Due to its valley topography, the Keene area can experience high levels of particle pollution, especially on calm, cold winter nights. This particle pollution has been attributed to emissions from wood stoves. Wood stoves built before 1988 are a lot less efficient, and put out more particle pollution, than modern EPA-certified wood stoves.

Now residents of Cheshire County can turn in old, inefficient woodstoves for a voucher towards a new EPA-certified cleaner-burning stove. To obtain a voucher, residents can fill out the application found on the American Lung Association's webpage: http://www.lung.org/associations/charters/northeast/woodstove/Northeast_WCP.html. The vouchers are worth $1,000 towards a wood stove, $1,500 towards a pellet or gas stove, or $4,000 towards an outdoor wood boiler. In all, $425,000 worth of vouchers will be given out. A requirement of the program is that the unit being replaced must be turned in to a certified dealer to be taken out of service.

The program is funded by a wood-burning power plant in Bridgewater. New Hampshire has pollution standards for biomass plants that want

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vest in programs that lower electricity demand, thus reducing costs and emissions.

The costs of RGGI implementation in the other states are reflected in the regional wholesale electricity rate, and we would still incur this cost even if we were not participating. The Public Utilities Commission (PUC) estimated the revenue from the sale of RGGI allowances that New Hampshire would forego by discontinuing its participation in RGGI to be approximately $17.5 million per year. If New Hampshire were not in RGGI, the average residential ratepayer would see increased costs of about $0.85 per month.

The RGGI states have witnessed a significant reduction in power sector CO_2 pollution, even as the regional economy has continued to grow, as shown in the graph above.

There are several additional significant benefits to implementing RGGI. The "NH Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Fund Annual Evaluation (July 2011 – June 2012)" indicated that each dollar invested in energy efficiency resulted in $4.95 in energy savings. An independent report by the Analysis Group found that the investment across the participating states of the first three years of RGGI proceeds:

- Generates $1.6 billion in net economic benefit region-wide through the end of the decade;
- Puts $1.1 billion in electricity bill savings back into the pockets of consumers in the region over the next decade;
- Creates 16,000 job-years in the region; and
- Keeps $765 million in the local economy due to reduced fossil fuel demand.

Market-based implementation results in competition, efficiency and innovation that deliver emissions reductions at the lowest possible cost.

I often hear the criticism that investments of state proceeds from RGGI allowance auctions are beneficial only to those individuals, municipalities and businesses directly receiving RGGI grants. To the contrary, any investment of RGGI proceeds in energy efficiency directly benefits all New Hampshire citizens and ratepayers by reducing the overall demand for electricity, which in turn reduces the additional capital investment needed by electricity providers to meet increased demand. All of these costs are ultimately passed on to all New Hampshire consumers, so keeping them low is

Commissioners's Column, cont. page 3

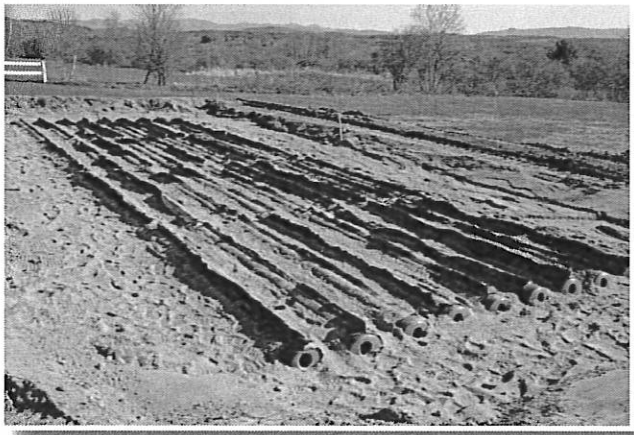
NHDES Launches Online Permitting Process for Subsurface Systems Program Applications

NHDES is pleased to announce that the Subsurface Systems Program ePermitting system, an online system for processing all subsurface applications, is now available for use.

This web-based system allows New Hampshire permitted designers and installers, and New Hampshire licensed surveyors to apply for septic system and subdivision approvals, pay application fees via credit card, and view application status.

NHDES is strongly encouraging all applications for septic and subdivision approvals to be submitted electronically. Visit the Subsurface ePermit website at http://des.nh.gov/onestop/subsurface-epermitting.htm for additional information. The use of ePermitting will make the submission, review and approval of applications more efficient and timely.

If you would like to discuss the functionality of ePermitting or have any questions, please contact Rob Tardif, Administrator of the NHDES Subsurface Systems Program, at (603) 271-2904 or robert.tardif@des.nh.gov. ■



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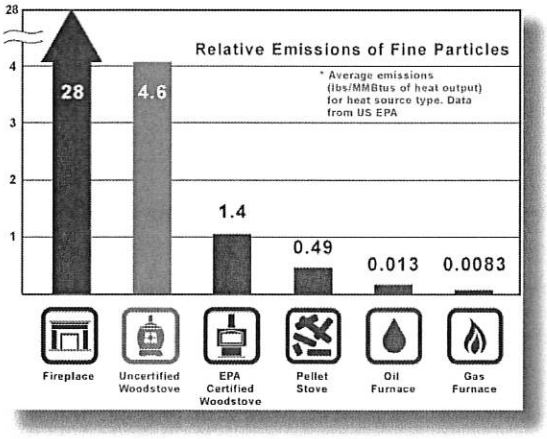
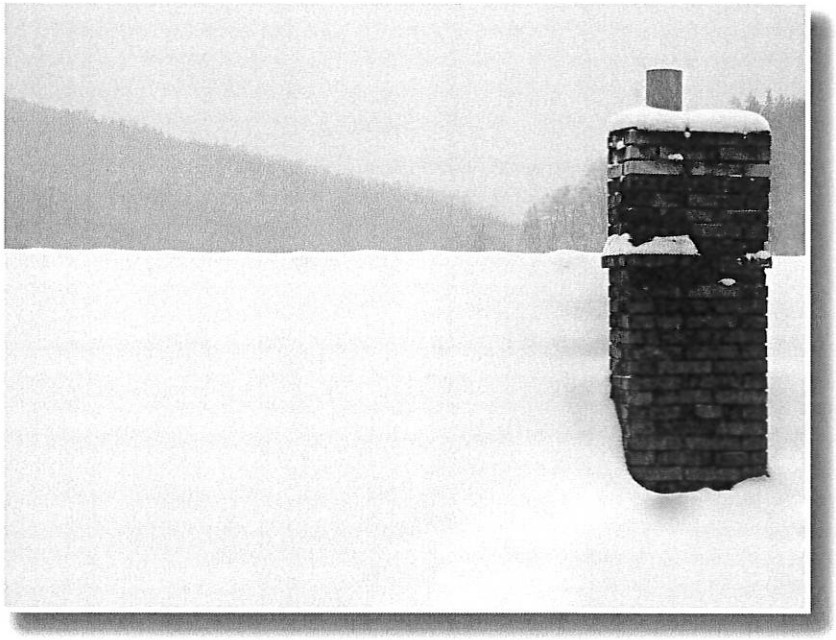


Wood Stoves *continued from page 1*

to qualify as renewable energy producers. As a voluntary program, the State's renewable energy mandate has flexibility built in so that power plants can implement programs that reduce emissions from other sources in order to qualify for renewable energy credits.

Ed Miller, Senior Vice President with the American Lung Association, calls the program a win-win. "The power company gets what they need and the people in Cheshire County get cleaner air, whether they benefit from the actual change-out or not. The new stove-owners get a more efficient stove; a stove that is improving not just outdoor air, but improving the indoor air quality in their homes as well," he explained. The new stoves burn more efficiently, which means less wood is needed for the same amount of heat, and less ash is generated.



This is the second wood stove change-out program in less than a decade that has targeted the area. In 2009, NHDES estimated that there were 2,200 wood stoves in Keene, and implemented a smaller program that changed out around 85 stoves. Since then, there has been on-going outreach and education in the region. These continued outreach efforts have been coordinated by the Southwest Region Planning Commission, Greater Monadnock Public Health Network, Cheshire Medical Center, Keene State College and NHDES.

Cheshire County residents interested in participating in the wood stove change-out can visit the program's website http://www.lung.org/associations/charters/northeast/woodstove/Northeast_WCP.html, or call (800) 548-8252. ■

Commissioner's Column *continued from page 2*

in the best interests of all citizens, businesses and municipalities.

Another concern that many have expressed is that there is little that New Hampshire alone could do to reduce carbon emissions that would have any significant impact on climate change. This is exactly why RGGI was conceived. The RGGI states represent the seventh largest economy in the world when considered as a region, and our joint efforts under this initiative will reduce annual regional emissions of CO_2 from the power generation sector by 2.5 percent per year through 2020. In fact, since the inception of RGGI in 2009, CO_2 emissions in New Hampshire, and the entire region, have already fallen by more than 40 percent from 2005 levels. This reduction, in conjunction with other measures, will help the region achieve our joint climate goals while helping to secure energy independence and promote the transition to a new energy economy with associated job creation. In short, as part of RGGI, little ol' New Hampshire is already doing a great deal to reduce the emissions that are contributing to climate change.

Implementing RGGI for New Hampshire is good policy, as it makes sense both economically and environmentally. New Hampshire does not operate in a vacuum, but rather is directly affected by the decisions made by other states. If New Hampshire alone were to discontinue its participation in RGGI, it would still incur the costs of the RGGI program without receiving any financial benefit. New Hampshire's participation in RGGI, and the investment of allowance auction proceeds in energy efficiency, puts our state well on the road to greater energy independence and a cleaner environment. ■

NHDES Staff and Program Recognized

Left-right: Jay Pimpare, EPA; Ray Gordon, NHDES; Mark Spinale, EPA

Ray Gordon, Septage Coordinator for NHDES, was recently honored with the "2014 Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant Trainer of the Year Excellence Award" by the United State Environmental Protection Agency. Ray has done an outstanding job over the years both facilitating and performing hands-on training for many wastewater treatment plant operators throughout New England.

The EPA Regional Wastewater Awards Program recognizes personnel in the wastewater field who have provided invaluable public service managing and operating wastewater treatment facilities throughout New England. In addition, Ray was recognized for his outstanding oversight of the Fats, Oil and Grease (FOG) program and his continued persistence to educate individuals on proper protocol for managing FOG waste.

"The professionals operating these wastewater treatment plants, as well as the municipalities and the state environmental agencies that support them, are essential to keeping our environment healthy by protecting water quality. I am proud to acknowledge Mr. Gordon's outstanding contributions to help protect public health and water quality for so many years and to give him the credit he deserves," said Curt Spalding, regional administrator of EPA's New England Office.

EPA's New England office formally acknowledged Ray for his outstanding work during the annual New England Water Environment Association Conference at the Boston Copley Marriott Hotel on January 28.

For more information: http://www.epa.gov/ne/topics/water/wwater.html and http://www.epa.gov/owm/mtb/intnet.htm

Ken Noyes, Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator at the Winnipesaukee River Basin Program, was recently awarded the New England Water Environment Association's (NEWEA) Operator Award. The NEWEA Operator Award is given annually to an individual who has shown a high interest and performance in wastewater operations and has made a significant contribution to the wastewater field. Ken was presented his award the NEWEA Conference, held in Boston on January 28.

The **Winnipesaukee River Basin Program** was presented this year's George W. Burke, Jr. Safety Award from NEWEA. The George W. Burke, Jr. Safety Award was established in 1982 in honor of George W. Burke, Jr. for his many years of service both to the water pollution control field and the Water Environment Federation as staff manager of technical services. Mr. Burke was instrumental in developing the Federation's annual safety survey and assisting in the production of several safety training aids and promotional packets. The purpose of the award is to encourage an active and effective safety program in municipal and industrial wastewater facilities and to stimulate the collecting and reporting of injury data. The documented and illustrated safety program and safety record of the facility for the preceding calendar year are the primary criteria for the award. ■

A recent "Don't Flush That" Public Service Announcement that Keene Wastewater Treatment Plant worked on with Keene High School's Film Studies Students is an entertaining way of discovering what can and cannot be flushed!

Workshop: Talkin' 'Bout Future Flooding in New Hampshire

The New Hampshire Coastal Adaptation workgroup will be hosting a workshop, "Talkin' 'Bout Future Flooding in New Hampshire," which will highlight the recommendations from the New Hampshire Coastal Risks and Hazards Commission's Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel's report. The report provides guidance and planning scenarios for preparing for sea level rise, coastal storm surge and the impacts from more extreme weather events associated with a changing climate. The workshop will take place on **April 30, 2015** from 5–7:30 PM at the Hugh Gregg Coastal Conservation Center on Depot Road in Greenland. For more information call (603) 294-0416.

Local Energy Solutions Conference 2015

March 21, 2015 at the Grappone Conference Center in Concord. With dynamic energy costs, never enough grants and rebates available, and so many buildings in need of energy-efficiency upgrades and renewable-energy projects, it is time to leverage and activate private investment solutions. This presentation will introduce energy-finance programs administered by the NH Community Development Finance Authority and The Jordan Institute and provide project scenarios to illustrate how they operate and how to navigate them.

Brought to you by the New Hampshire Local Energy Work Group and NH Sustainable Energy Association, the annual LES Conference provides critical resources, information, and guidance for individuals, energy committees, local governments and school districts across the state seeking to implement an energy reduction or renewable energy project in their municipality. The conference provides an ideal forum to meet and learn from other New Hampshire residents who have successfully implemented an energy project, hear best practices, identify financing options, and much, much more.

http://lesconference.nhenergy.org/

Business Continuity and Economic Resiliency

Despite a snowy and cold day, over 65 participants attended the February 3 Business Continuity and Economic Resiliency Forum hosted by the Upper Valley Adaptation Workgroup. The attendees included business and organizational leaders from the Upper Connecticut River Valley Region. A group of students from the University of Vermont (UVM) participated as background for their continued work, serving as consultants, for Upper Valley businesses. The UVM students will be creating business continuity plans for a select group of businesses in the Upper Valley Region.

The forum opened with a presentation on climate change trends and implications for businesses in the region. This served to highlight the importance of business continuity planning. A panel discussion followed, focusing on lessons learned from Hurricane Irene. The audience was further engaged in a table top scenario planning activity with group collaboration. "Businesses in the Upper Valley are concerned about climate change impacts, like flooding, and are eager to learn how they can be more prepared," said Alex Jaccaci of Hypertherm and co-chair of the Upper Valley Adaptation Workgroup.

The Upper Valley Adaptation Workgroup is a collaborative of 19 organizations working to build resilient communities in the Upper Valley through research, information sharing and education. NHDES is a part of and co-chairs the workgroup.

Aquatic Resources Mitigation 2015 Grant Announcement

Photo of beaver impoundment on the West Hill Propety in Keene, NH, preserved as part of an ARM Fund grant.

The NHDES Aquatic Resources Mitigation (ARM) Fund is now accepting pre-proposals for the 2015 Grant Round. The ARM Fund Program provides wetlands permit applicants with the option to contribute payments to this fund in lieu of implementation of several other possible and more traditional compensatory mitigation alternatives. These other wetlands mitigation options might include restoration of existing impaired wetlands, land acquisition and preservation, or construction of new wetlands. In many circumstances, these other options may be more costly, time consuming or complex to implement for the wetlands permit holder as compared with an ARM Fund contribution.

The ARM Fund program has been very successful for permit applicants and has resulted in the funding of many significant wetland preservation and restoration projects across the state. Projects that have been awarded funds include those that provide significant wetlands restoration or land conservation and are focused on areas of important and/or vulnerable wetlands with regional significance. In the past six years, the ARM Fund has funded 48 projects that include preservation and restoration opportunities, as well as stream passage improvement projects. These projects have resulted in approximately 11,000 acres of land conservation, 15 acres of wetland restoration and enhancement, and over one mile of stream restoration.

NHDES accounts for ARM Fund payments on a major watershed basis. When sufficient funds are accrued for a watershed, NHDES issues a request for proposals, evaluates the proposals received and awards grants for the projects determined to have the highest long-term environmental benefits in the specific watershed. The ARM Fund is soliciting grant proposals for $2.3 million dollars which is available in watersheds throughout the state. Please see our website http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/wetlands/wmp/index.htm for the amount available in each watershed, and for more information about the program. Pre-proposals are due April 30, 2015. The pre-applications will be reviewed in the month of May and feedback given to each applicant. Full applications are due August 14, 2015. Contact Lori Sommer at (603) 271-4059 for more information. ■

Photo of Berry Brook, Dover New Hampshire, restored as part of an ARM Fund Grant. Photo courtesy of the UNH Stormwater Center.

New Water Quality Training Opportunities for Landscapers

Efforts to improve water quality in Great Bay emphasize the importance of reduced nutrient use on lawns and landscapes, combined with installation of practices to infiltrate stormwater on site. Soak Up the Rain NH, a water quality program spearheaded by NHDES, is partnering with UNH Cooperative Extension (UNHCE) to develop and deliver a tiered training program in stormwater management practices for professional landscapers called Soak Up the Rain: Landscaping for Water Quality.

This program will build upon UNHCE's previous Landscaping at the Water's Edge curriculum, and will consist of a two-day short course where participants will learn about water quality related to landscape practices, then develop recommendations for a sample site. Topics will include designing and installing stormwater management practices suitable for small sites, such as rain gardens and dry wells, as well as drainage and site considerations. The first training short course will be held on April 8 & 9, 2015, at the Urban Forestry Center in Portsmouth.

Later this year, a series of short, hands-on programs will focus on the "how to" of related installations and practices for water quality protection and improvement, including rain garden and buffer installations, erosion control strategies, porous pavement, turf fertilization and management, and tips on marketing landscape services for water quality protection.

More information will soon be available at http://extension.unh.edu/Sustainable-Landscapes-and-Turf/Landscaping-Waters-Edge. For more information on Soak Up the Rain NH, visit the program website at www.soaknh.org. ■

Reduce, Reuse and yes, Recycle those plastic bags...

First of all, let's make it perfectly clear that the solution to plastic bag pollution is to eliminate or reduce the use of this type of packaging whenever possible. But sometimes plastic is unavoidable. It seems like plastic packaging is everywhere. The good news is the process of recycling has made it possible to create something new from most of the waste we generate. Plastic bags are no exception, and not just those single-use grocery and retail bags, but also bread and produce bags, sandwich bags, the overwrap on paper products such as toilet paper, paper towels and even plastic cereal box liners. There are a few items, such as "biodegradable" or "compostable" bags, frozen food bags, and crinkly or foil-type bags for chips and other goodies, that are not included in this waste stream. Generally, if the plastic film stretches when you pull it with your fingers, it's okay to recycle it at certain designated locations. When cleaned, dried and brought back to participating stores, these items can be combined with recycled wood products and made into the plastic lumber used to make decks or reprocessed into pellets or resin used to make new bags, pallets, containers, crates and even pipes.

Recycle Responsibly

Plastic bags and thin film plastics are troublesome for most recycling facilities. These items are considered 'contamination' of single stream recycling, not only jamming up sorting machines but also resulting in higher hauling rates for municipalities when there is a large percentage of them in the single stream collection. The bags and film can be difficult wastes to recycle because they need to be clean, dry and sent to a recycling facility specifically designed for them. In fact, many foreign countries, U.S. cities and the State of Hawaii have even placed a ban on plastic bags at retail outlets.

Plastic pollution is a huge problem for the environment so avoid the use of unnecessary plastic when possible. If you do end up with a collection of plastic bags and plastic film items, do not throw these items in with your plastic or single stream recycling. Make sure they are clean and dry, then stuff them in a plastic bag from the grocery or retail store and place into bins located in participating stores.

Remember:

Reduce the amount of plastic you consume by choosing items that use the least amount of packaging and by using reusable tote bags. Reuse or repurpose the bags as much as possible and when all else fails, recycle those bags properly!

For more information on how and where to recycle this waste, check out: http://www.plasticfilmrecycling.org/s01/s01dropoff.html. ■

Discover Wild NH Day

April 18, 2015

Celebrate Our Environment!

Admission to this family-friendly event is FREE.

Event location: 11 Hazen Drive, Concord, NH

NEW HAMPSHIRE DEPARTMENT OF Environmental Services

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