



Win with Water!

A multi-part series about public water for sector leadership

A Day Without Water – Why Should You Care and What Should You Do?

Clean, reliable, and affordable water is the foundation of modern society and public health. Nationwide, drinking and wastewater infrastructure [contributes 20% of our economic growth](#) and is considered [one of the greatest public health benefits of the 20th century](#). Roughly 700,000 New Hampshire residents use public water services for drinking, bathing, irrigation, and waste disposal. Yet public water is so dependable and out of sight that most people have no idea where it comes from. Do you?

Start by [imagining a day without water](#): no water to drink or wash your hands with. No water to shower, bathe, flush the toilet, or do laundry. No way to make coffee, water your lawn, feed your pets, or process food. Hospitals, schools, and businesses would close without water. Firefighters couldn't put out fires and farmers couldn't irrigate crops. Disease would spread. Not a pretty picture!

For over a century, we have benefitted immensely from abundant water sources, advanced treatment technologies, robust distribution systems, and a community of talented and dedicated professionals. Our public drinking water is so dependable that interruptions to water supplies are extreme exceptions to the rule. In many ways, public drinking water is hidden in plain sight.

Public water is in local hands. Systems are managed by towns, districts or precincts that serve from a few hundred to tens of thousands of customers. Municipalities establish water rates, capital budgets, employee salaries, and land-use controls to protect their sources. Sometimes they partner with other towns to add supply capacity or emergency backup, or to protect a shared watershed.

Decades of deferred maintenance that amount to more than most towns can afford to invest are being offset by recent, generational levels of federal infrastructure funding.

With these new resources, Towns should take the following actions to insure they never face a day without water:

- Work with water, sewer, and highway departments to assess water system needs.
- **Approve authorization to accept federal funds and expend required match at Spring 2022 town meeting.** The NH Department of Environmental Services offers numerous [loan and grants programs](#) for public water infrastructure, with much of it available on a very short schedule.
- Review and update town Master Plans and ordinances that protect your source water. You can't treat and distribute what you don't have, and clean source water greatly reduces treatment costs.
- Review employee compensation policy and job descriptions to compete for the best and the brightest to operate your water systems. Make your systems and their operators a highlight of your community!

We wish you good fortune in your efforts to continue supplying clean, safe, and affordable water to your fellow citizens. Please contact [Boyd Smith, President and CEO of the NH Water Works Association](#) if you have any questions about this article.

Upcoming articles in this 2022 **Win with Water!** series include a deeper dive into drinking water systems and how you can support them (NH Water Works Assoc.); wastewater treatment value and management (NH Water Pollution Control Assoc.); current and pending water regulations, policy, and funding (NH Department of Environmental Services); and a strategic look at the future (NH Water Works Assoc.) We hope you enjoy the series!

