ENVIRONMENTAL
Fact Sheet

NEW HAMPSHIRE DEPARTMENT OF Environmental Services

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Water Use Registration and Reporting in New Hampshire

New Hampshire has been moving toward comprehensive management of its water resources since 1983, when the Legislature declared that surface water and groundwater are an integrated public resource to be conserved, protected and managed for the public good. Fundamental to sound management is knowledge of the occurrence and utilization of the resource.

Registration and Reporting Program
Initially authorized by Chapter 402 Laws of 1983, the water user registration and reporting program went into effect in the summer of 1987. Subsequent legislation was passed in 2005 under Chapter 488 that reinforced the program purpose and clearly affirmed the authority of the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) to administer the program. NHDES revised administrative rules that implement the requirements of RSA 488 in 2008 and again in 2017.

The objective of the program is to gather accurate data on the major uses of the state's water and the demands placed upon individual aquifers, streams and rivers. To accomplish this objective, all facilities that use more than 20,000 gallons of water per day, averaged over a seven-day period, must register with NHDES. Under the program, "use" of water means the withdrawal of water from a source, transfer of water from one location to another, and/or return of water to the environment. Also included in the registration process are facilities that may receive water from a public supplier or return water to a community wastewater treatment plant. This program has provided basic baseline information regarding many types of water use in New Hampshire.

Examples of affected uses include, but are not limited to:

- Water supply for domestic, commercial, industrial or institutional use.
- Treated or untreated municipal or industrial discharges, including industrial process water.
- Contact and non-contact cooling water.
- Water for irrigation and snowmaking.
- Water used in the production of either electrical or mechanical power.
- Water transferred into and transported in bulk tanker trucks.

Water Use Registration
The registration process requires the completion of a form to provide basic information about the water user, such as name, address and location of the facility, including the name of a contact person. Information is also required on the type of use, identification of the source(s), and destination(s) of the

water. New water users must register within 30 days of commencement of use. Once registered, the user must accurately measure and periodically report the volume of water used.

Water Use Measurement
RSA 488:4 requires each withdrawal, discharge, or transfer to be metered or measured by a technically appropriate and verifiable method approved by NHDES. Withdrawals and discharges are required to be measured at the point of withdrawal or discharge, respectively. Flow meters with totalizers are generally required in most instances. However, alternative measurement techniques are allowed, provided the method is verifiable and accurate to within 10%.

Water Use Reporting
Monthly water use from each registered source and destination is to be reported to NHDES on a quarterly basis for most water users. Seasonal water users, such as irrigators and snowmaking facilities, as well as hydropower facilities may report annually. Water use is reported using an online reporting tool to allow water users to report electronically and retrieve water use information via the internet.

The public may also obtain water use information through NHDES' OneStop database. OneStop is a user-friendly, online, searchable database comprising environmental information and data compiled by various NHDES programs.

Why is an accurate water use reporting program important?
1) Basic Data: A water use reporting program provides basic baseline information regarding major water uses in New Hampshire that is critical for managing water resources in an integrated manner. The information can provide legislative or regulatory decision makers with an understanding of the effects of cumulative water uses on the water budgets of aquifers and watersheds in New Hampshire and overall demands on water resources. The data also provide information to support industrial, energy and overall development in a manner consistent with sound environmental management.

2) Understanding Water Use Trends: An accurate water use reporting program improves the management of local and statewide water resources by identifying the quantity and timing of existing water uses and enabling future water demands and associated effects to be projected. Hydrologic effects such as declining water tables and/or diminished stream-flows can only be properly assessed if all stresses on the resource are known, both manmade as well as natural. Also, by measuring and reporting their water use, registered facilities develop a better understanding of their specific water needs and potential opportunities for water conservation.

3) Regulatory Compliance and Fairness: Water use registration and reporting provides a tool for ensuring compliance with laws, regulations and water rights. Understanding the location, quantity and timing of water used is essential for NHDES to determine which water users are subject to laws passed by the legislature (large groundwater withdrawal permitting and instream flow rules) so that applicable regulations can be equitably enforced.

For More Information
Please contact the Drinking Water and Groundwater Bureau at (603) 271-2513 or dwgbinfo@des.nh.gov or visit our website at www.des.nh.gov.

Note: This fact sheet is accurate as of July 2019. Statutory or regulatory changes or the availability of additional information after this date may render this information inaccurate or incomplete.