

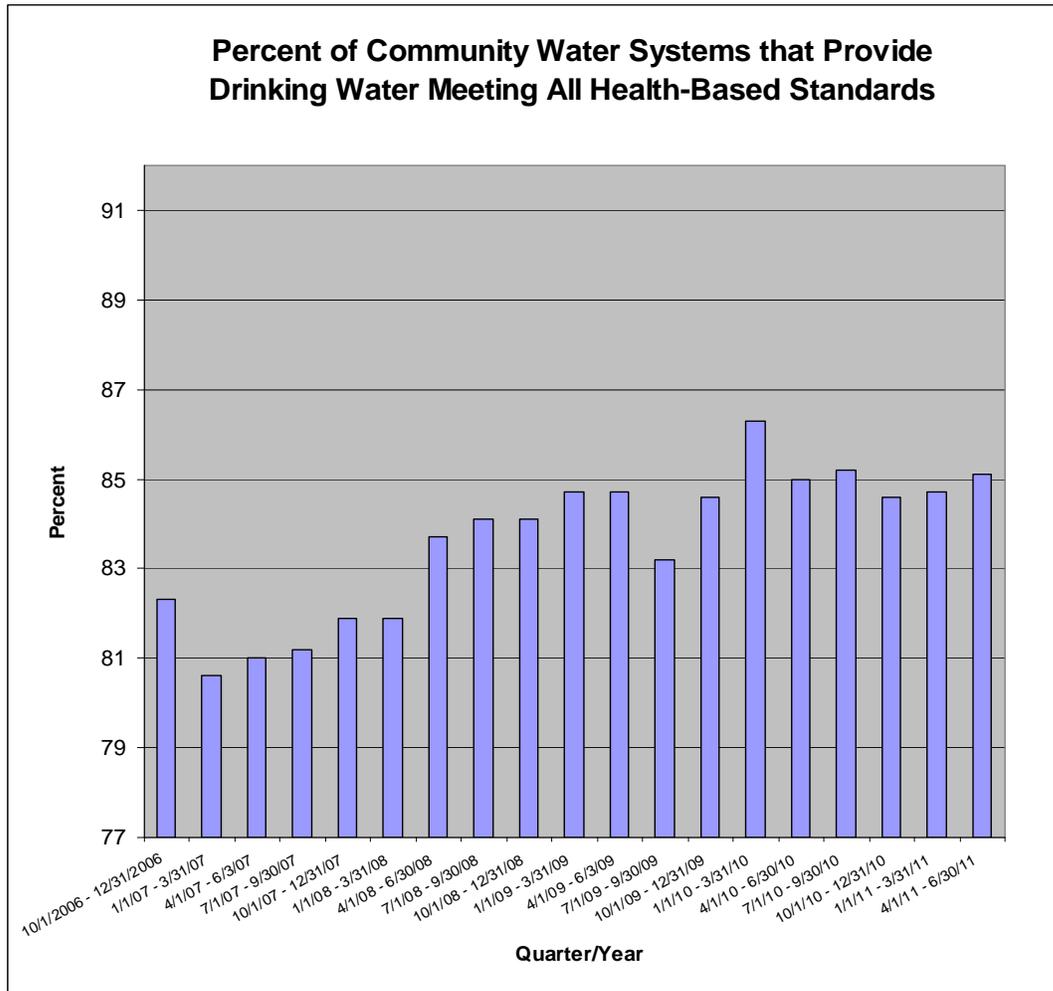


Trends in New Hampshire's Environment Drinking Water: Public Water Systems

A public water system's capacity to continuously provide drinking water meeting all health-based water quality standards demonstrates the system's ability to prevent human exposure to natural and man-made contaminants. Public drinking water quality standards have been established for organic, inorganic and synthetic organic compounds, radiological contaminants and microbiological agents. Tracking the percentage of community water systems meeting these health based standards is one way to measure the overall drinking water quality provided to approximately 60% of our state's residents; 40% of the populace uses private drinking water wells, which are not regulated.

Indicator statement of current condition

Approximately 85% percent of community water systems currently meet all health-based standards.



Data source: Information is generated quarterly by EPA using violation data submitted to them by DES.

Explanation of Indicator and Trend

The percentage of systems meeting all health-based standards has generally risen from just over 82% to just over 85% in the last five years. The target goal, established by the US Environmental Protection Agency, is 90%.

Meeting all drinking water quality standards established under state and federal regulations reduces public health risks. These standards are defined by regulations that establish "maximum contaminant levels" in drinking water. Most contaminants are naturally occurring, such as arsenic and radon, fluoride. Coliform bacteria are commonly found in the environment and their presence in drinking water suggests that other disease causing organisms may also be present. The presence of these microorganisms may be increased due to flooding, land use and other human activities. Organic and inorganic contaminants can be naturally occurring due to the underlying geology of the area or the result of human activities such as runoff from farming or releases from underground storage tanks.

How Does DES Address This?

The key functions of the DES Drinking Water and Groundwater Bureau include administering the federal Safe Drinking Water Act and state statutes to ensure that safe drinking water is reliably being provided at approximately 2,400 public water systems throughout the state; protecting groundwater by permitting and regulating large groundwater withdrawals and discharges to groundwater; working with municipalities and water systems to implement local groundwater protection programs; coordinating the efforts of other DES programs to protect drinking water sources; and implementing the state's Water Well Program; promoting conservation and ensuring accurate water use reporting; and evaluating and certifying laboratories that test water.

For More Information, Including What You Can Do to Help

DES Annual Compliance Report

http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/dwgb/annual_report.htm

Drinking Water Advisories http://www2.des.state.nh.us/Advisories/Drinking_Water/

DES Drinking Water and Groundwater Bureau

<http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/dwgb/index.htm>

DES Drinking Water and Groundwater Bureau Fact Sheets

<http://des.nh.gov/organization/commissioner/pip/factsheets/dwgb/index.htm>

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