



Maine Joint Environmental Training Coordinating Committee

NEIWPCC South Portland
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Testimony before the Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources and the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs

Peter Zaykoski, South Portland Program Manager, NEIWPCC & Maine Joint Environmental Training Coordinating Committee Program Manager

February 16, 2023

The Maine Joint Environmental Training Coordinating Committee (JETCC) has served the citizens of Maine since 1985 by providing initial and continuing education programs for water and wastewater treatment plant operators in Maine. The New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission (NEIWPCC) has provided support to JETCC by staffing the committee and coordinating and managing its training catalog from its beginnings.

The Committee is composed of eleven members who are appointed by the Commissioner of the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). The members of the committee represent Maine DEP, Maine Department of Health and Human Services, the Maine Water Environment Association, industrial wastewater treatment facilities, municipalities, and NEIWPCC, as the training contractor.

Our core work is supported by a budget of about \$104,000 annually. For each of the state fiscal years 2022 and 2023, JETCC has received \$52,950 from the General Fund, about half of its budget for its core work. The other half is supported by a \$10,000 annual contract with Maine DEP, registration fees for courses, sponsorship funds from the Maine Water Environment Association and the Maine Water Utilities Association, and reimbursement under the Maine DHHS Capacity Development Training Reimbursement Fund.

The support from the General Fund has provided an anchor for the success of JETCC. It has allowed registration costs to remain low and provided capacity for staff to coordinate with state agency and utility partners to understand and respond to current and upcoming training needs.

JETCC leverages the funding provided by the state by engaging the community of environmental professionals throughout the state. JETCC relies on volunteers to share their knowledge and expertise as instructors for classes and relies on facilities to donate their spaces to host in-person training. Professional trainers can cost \$100 per hour of training or more and may charge additional fees for preparation. Every volunteer that contributes to JETCC's mission helps keep our programming at a reasonable cost and increases the reach of our state funding. In a year with a full suite of programming, JETCC typically relies on more than 100 volunteers to accomplish its mission.

Additionally, state funding has helped maintain JETCC as a foundational program for NEIWPCC in Maine and helps justify NEIWPCC's investment in an office in South Portland, from which all of NEIWPCC's work in Maine is coordinated.





Core Work

JETCC's core work is the coordination of an ongoing training program that is offered throughout the year and consists of at least 24 training opportunities per year. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, nearly all of JETCC's training programs were conducted in-person. At the beginning of the pandemic, all training was transitioned to a remote learning platform. This transition provided continuity in our offerings for operators throughout the state and increased the accessibility for any individual training topic. Additionally, through JETCC's affiliation with NEIWPCC, continuing education credits from all of NEIWPCC's member states (all six New England states and New York) are offered for all applicable remote JETCC trainings. This has expanded the availability of JETCC trainings beyond Maine and provided additional revenue to the program. Beginning in 2023, JETCC has resumed offering in-person training, in addition to its remote training catalog.

In the current biennium, JETCC has offered 35 classes as part of its core work, which have had 985 participants. 2,696 training contact hours were awarded for those classes. Additional remote and in-person training opportunities will continue to be offered through the winter and into the spring.

Additional Programming

In addition to its core training work, JETCC offers additional programming focused on serving the specific needs of Maine's community of water professionals. Each of these offerings is designed to be self-sufficient, with program income covering the costs associated with planning and execution.

Since 2009, JETCC has coordinated the Maine Management Candidate School. This program is designed for to prepare mid-career water and wastewater professionals for leadership and management roles. Eleven classes have graduated since the program's inception, with a total of 219 graduates. The most recent class graduated in the current biennium, in February 2022. This class began in the fall of 2019 and transitioned from in-person to remote learning after a hiatus at the beginning of the pandemic. The next MCS class is expected to begin in the fall of this year.

In 2017, JETCC began offering a Wastewater Operator School. This six-month program is designed for early career professionals and is focused on the fundamentals of wastewater treatment plant operations. The program helps prepare participants for success and longevity in the industry. Since the initial class in 2017, the WOS program has been offered in 2018 and 2020. The next class is anticipated in 2024.

Since 1990, JETCC has coordinated The North Country Convention in The County. This biennial event is focused on offering training to operators in the northern region of the state. After a hiatus due to the pandemic, the North Country Convention will return to Presque Isle on April 5-6 this year. This year's event will be held at Northern Maine Community College and will offer two full days of training for attendees, including a laboratory track held in NMCC's Water Treatment Technology Program classroom space.





ABOUT NEIWPCC

Mission Statement: To advance clean water in the Northeast through collaboration with, and service to, our member states.

Vision: Clean and sustainable water throughout the Northeast.

Values: Leadership • Education • Collaboration • Service • Science

Areas of Work and Impact

- Connections: We engage and convene water quality professionals and other stakeholders across the Northeast to collaborate on clean water and environmental science challenges across shared regions, ecosystems, and areas of expertise.
- Protection: We conduct research into water-related topics, monitor environmental factors, and fund such work by others. We also implement and fund environmental restoration and other on-the-ground projects.
- Training: We develop, coordinate, and conduct training courses that serve water quality professionals regionally and nationwide.
- Education: We fund and/or staff programs that engage the public through events, exhibits, web and print publications, and other outreach activities.
- Engagement: We actively represent the interests of member states at meetings with federal and state officials and in regional and national water and wastewater associations.

NEIWPCC's Work in Maine

In addition to support of JETCC, NEIWPCC works for the state of Maine on several programs.

Wastewater Operator Certification

In early 2006, Maine DEP transferred to NEIWPCC all administrative duties of Maine's Wastewater Operator Certification program. These duties include coordinating certificate renewal, record keeping, and applications for Maine's Computer-based Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator exams.

Nonpoint Source Training Resource Center Support

NEIWPCC South Portland staff provide administrative support Maine DEP's training and certification program in basic and advanced erosion control.

Department of Health and Human Services

NEIWPCC supports the Maine Drinking Water Program by providing eight full-time staff under a contract with the Maine Department of Health and Human Services.

Collaboration & Communication Across the Region

NEIWPCC hosts almost twenty work groups that are composed of state and federal staff from throughout the Northeast region, including many staff from agencies in Maine. These work groups are designed to help state agency staff communicate with our federal partners and share information and success across state lines. NEIWPCC's regional training and certification work group is coordinated by staff in the South Portland office.





February 14, 2023

Appropriations/Environment & Natural Resources Committee Members
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

RE: Support for JETCC

Members of the Appropriations & Financial Affairs and the Environmental & Natural Resources Committees,

My name is Travis Peaslee and I am General Manager of the Lewiston-Auburn Water Pollution Control Authority (LAWPCA). We are the second largest wastewater treatment plant in Maine, handling millions of gallons of water daily and discharging the cleaned effluent to the Androscoggin River. Clean water is one of Maine's greatest attractions for residents, businesses, and travel/recreation. Wastewater treatment and water distribution services are integral pieces of maintaining this vital resource for years to come.

It is a state requirement that our plant operators maintain licenses in order to carry out this critical work; therefore, we rely on the high-level training courses offered by the Joint Environmental Training Coordinating Committee (JETCC). This training provides everything from basic treatment concepts, equipment operation and maintenance, current industry issues, and new treatment technologies. The value of this training is immeasurable, but the effects that would be seen without it would be detrimental to our workforce.

At minimum, JETCC should continue to be funded at its current level. In actuality, an increase should strongly be considered in order to adequately address the needs presented by the aging workforce (influx of new water professionals) as well as the increasing number of issues water professionals must be trained on and respond to (e.g. contaminants of emerging concern, new and more stringent discharge limits).

I appreciate your time and consideration on this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Travis Peaslee", is written over a horizontal line.

Travis Peaslee, P.E.
LAWPCA General Manager

District Office
Telephone: 324-5313
Fax 324-5087

Treatment Plant
Telephone: 324-0047
Fax: 324-9830

SANFORD SEWERAGE DISTRICT

281 River Street * P.O. Box 338
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February 14, 2023

Appropriations/ Environment & Natural Resources Committees Members
100 Sate House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

RE: Support for JETCC

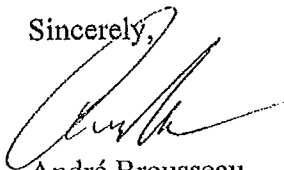
Dear Prestigious Members of the Appropriations & Financial Affairs and the Environment & Natural Resources committees,

My name is André Brousseau – Superintendent for the Sanford Sewerage District. I have been employed in the wastewater field for 29 years. I am writing to you to express how important JETCC training is to the water and wastewater field. The District has eight certified operators. The state statute mandates the operators obtain 18 hours of training every two years. Training provided by JETCC includes a wide variety of subjects from blue print reading, pump repair, basic laboratory skills and much more. More importantly, the training usually includes the latest technology advances within our industry.

The water industry is in a precarious employment situation where our operators are now retiring. It is vitally important to continue to provide the necessary training for the new operators who are entering the field. The State of Maine relies on clean water for economic commerce from the small businesses that supports tourism to the large businesses that manufacture a multitude of products. Every business and resident generates wastewater that must be properly collected and treated so that our water ways remain pristine. It is the operators who provide the first line of defense in the protection of the health of humans and wildlife therefore training for our operators is vital.

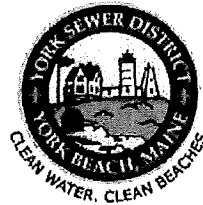
I am in hopes that this committee will continue to fund JETCC at its current level. Additionally, it would be very beneficial to consider an increase with regards to the essential roll wastewater operators play every day in the State of Maine.

Sincerely,



André Brousseau

BOARD OF TRUSTEES:
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February 14, 2023

Appropriations/Environment & Natural Resources Committee Members
100 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

RE: Support for JETCC

Dear Prestigious Members of the Appropriations & Financial Affairs and the Environmental & Natural Resources Committees,

My name is Philip Tucker and I am the Superintendent for the York Sewer District. I have been employed in the wastewater field for over 25 years. I would like to express the importance of the budget allocation for the Joint Environmental Training Coordinating Committee (JETCC). The training sessions that JETCC offers to the roughly 800 licensed wastewater operators throughout the State is exceptional and would not be possible without this allocation.

With a wide range of topics to cover in the clean water, drinking water and stormwater fields, JETCC keeps members up to date with changing technologies, regulations and processes while keeping training costs to a minimum. In addition, JETCC recognized a need to address the growing number of managers at or near retirement in the profession and with partners, developed the Management Candidate School.

I appreciate the funding that JETCC has received over the years and hope this funding continues. Additionally, it would be beneficial to consider an increase as the State of Maine relies on qualified and trained drinking water and clean water operators to keep our drinking water, rivers, streams and oceans clean for this and future generations.

Sincerely,

Philip J. Tucker

**Letter of Support
for the
Maine Joint Environmental Training Coordinating Committee (JETCC)**

February 13, 2023

I have been in the waste water field for nearly 40 years as a Certified Waste Water Treatment Facility (WWTF) Operator here in the State of Maine and I have relied on the JETCC program for approximately 90% of the required continuing education units (CEU's) of training that I have received.

As per the requirements of the State of Maine, certified WWTF operators must receive 18 hours of ME DEP approved training every 2 years in order to keep their certifications up to date and active. Certified Water Operators must receive between 18 to 24 hours (based on level of certification) of ME DHHS approved training every 2 years to keep their certifications up to date and active. The JETCC Program is one of the largest sources of approved training for approximately 750 Certified WWTF Operators and approximately 950 Certified Water Operators across the State of Maine.

Since 2017, the JETCC program has offered individuals new to the waste water industry a multi-week course of studies entitled the "Waste Water Operator School" where students learn the basic principles of waste water collection and treatment. To date, approximately 60 students have graduated from JETCC's Waste Water Operator School. (Note that the C-19 pandemic reduced the number of graduates due to the difficulties in attending classes in-person – otherwise, more individuals would likely have received training.)

Since 2009, the JETCC Program has offered individuals interested in becoming future Superintendents and Business Managers in the water and waste water fields a multi-week course of studies entitled the "Management Candidate School" where the students learn the intricacies of budgeting, licensing, personnel, and related management strategies pertaining to the overall operation of Maine's Water and Sewer Departments and Districts. To date, approximately 200 students have graduated from JETCC's Management Candidate School. (Note that this program would likely have had more graduates had it not been for the C-19 pandemic.)

During the C-19 pandemic, the JETCC Program transitioned to a virtual on-line training platform to supply the water and waste water industry professionals their required training in a timely manner. This was a tremendous feat to accomplish because nearly 100% of the training offered prior to the C-19 pandemic was attended in person. Transitioning to an online platform, in only a few short months, is a testament to the dedication, depth of knowledge and overall quality of the Staff of the JETCC Program. If not for the funding from the State of Maine coupled with the bottom-line budgeting savvy of the JETCC staff, the required training would not have reached Maine's certified water and waste water professionals.

Without the training that has been provided by the JETCC Program for more than 3 decades, today's water and waste water professionals would not be able to obtain the necessary training at an affordable cost. Attaining quality training that is pertinent to the day to day operation of the facilities at a reasonable cost is important to all Maine communities in order to keep local usage rates as low as possible while keeping staff well trained and up to date on trending issues.

Supplying affordable and relevant training has been, and will continue to be, the type of training that the JETCC Program offers Maine's Water and Waste Water Operators. However, JETCC relies on the funding received from the State of Maine to keep the cost reasonable for its trainees. This is why it is important for the JETCC program to receive its requested funding on an annual basis from the State of Maine.

Please consider this my request for the State of Maine to continue, at a minimum, its current level of financial support for the Maine JETCC Program.

Respectfully,

Mark L. Holt

Maine Grade 5 WW Operator

Supt., Livermore Falls & Jay Sewer Departments

Vice-Chair, JETCC Board