

2017 Legislative Forum: Focus on Water

Access to irrigation water has been critical for farms in the past few years.

Access to potable water is necessary for residents and businesses.

Access to process water is a key factor in most manufacturing.

1. RPC area has a number of public water supplies.

- A. Public water supplies serve ??% of our population
- B. Public water supplies serve ??% of our land area
- C. Under stress from drought, growth, contamination.
- D. Issues are generally regulated by law, managed by professionals and put before the Legislature by managers, lobbyists and customers.

2. The remainder of RPC's territory is served by private wells

- A. Also under stress from drought, contamination and growth
- B. Issues aren't well known or understood:
 - i. 2016 drought caused many wells to run dry, but NH only collects limited information about new and re-drilled wells. Much anecdotal information about well owners who could not afford to replace or re-drill their wells, but no solid data. Practice of 're-filling' private wells is unregulated and sometimes uses untreated surface water.
 - ii. Contamination from large commercial waste sites is fairly well publicized and regulated, but there is a lack of funds for remediation. Small waste sites get little attention at the State or Federal level. Contamination from unremediated waste sites, large or small, inevitably spreads and becomes more difficult to remediate.
 - iii. Private water wells constrain both residential and commercial growth; most land in the RPC area can't be economically used for multi-family residential structures or businesses employing more than perhaps 50 people.

3. What do we want our future to look like?

- A. New public water and sewer systems are very difficult for communities to fund. There was a modest State aid program, but it

was cut off during the 2008 financial crisis, with then-current commitments unresolved for almost a decade now.

- B. Private water and waste disposal, on the property, tends toward low-density residential subdivisions and primarily retail development along state roads.
- C. Unregulated, we will fill much of our land area with an automobile-centric environment. Our highways will get slower with each new traffic light, less scenic and harder to navigate with every strip mall, more congested with each new cul-de-sac subdivision.

Agriculture will not be able to compete economically or politically for limited water supplies. Even in good years it will continue to dwindle as open land is consumed by sprawl.

Outdoor activities will be more and more restricted to State Parks and other land protected from development. Tourism will narrow down toward a short list of points of interest with easy highway access.

Our elderly and youth will only be able to find public transit and walkable business and residential environments in the few towns and cities with public water and sewer. Manufacturing businesses will compete for space and water against growing urbanization.

As existing water contamination spreads, and new contamination spots develop from dumping, abandonment or accident, water well deserts will appear. At some point the State will probably try to shed the cost of providing bottled water to households suffering from contamination. Large commercial water withdrawals will expand as the demand for bottled water grows, competing with private wells and public water supplies.

- D. State support for new public water and sewer systems could accelerate and shape the development of new 'downtowns' in single communities or clusters of communities where the concept hasn't really existed in decades. These downtowns would offer services wanted or needed by our elderly and youth; high-density development in and around them would reduce the pressure on open land and state highways.
- E. A State program to attack groundwater contamination aggressively, might have a good long term payback by preserving existing public and private water supplies, and the property values and jobs that depend on them.