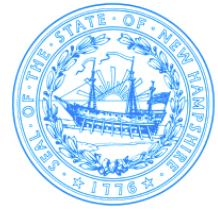




The State of New Hampshire
Department of Environmental Services



Robert R. Scott, Commissioner

January 23, 2024

The Honorable Andrew Renzullo
Chair, Resources, Recreation and Development Committee
State House, Room 305-307
Concord, NH 03301

RE: HB 1139 - An Act relative to the location of conventional septic systems relative to the seasonal SHWT

Dear Chairman Renzullo and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 1139. This bill would allow for conventional septic systems for residential properties to be constructed 24 inches above the seasonal high water table (SHWT). The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) supports this bill.

RSA 485-A:29, II is the statute that pertains to the requirements for individual sewage disposal systems (septic systems). Currently, the bed bottom of a conventional septic system effluent disposal area (a.k.a. leach field) must be 48 inches above the SHWT. This requirement has been in place for decades and has proven effective at treating onsite wastewater; however, it can result in significant costs to property owners when constructing a septic system that needs to be raised above ground to achieve this vertical separation.

Onsite wastewater treatment technology has evolved significantly over the last 50 years. NHDES has gained experience with conventional systems installed 24 inches above the SHWT which are allowed when they are replacing a failed system. These systems have been effective at treating the wastewater provided there is a 6-inch layer of sand below the leach field. Also, NHDES has approved many innovative technologies for onsite wastewater treatment where the leach field is 24 inches above the SHWT, even though these systems tend to have smaller leach fields than conventional systems. Therefore, the NHDES does not have concerns that passage of this bill will result in inadequate treatment of onsite wastewater. It will give developers more options for onsite wastewater treatment.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on HB 1139. Should you have questions or need additional information, please feel free to contact Philip Trowbridge, Administrator of the Land Resources Management Program (Philip.R.Trowbridge@des.nh.gov, 271-4898) or Scott Hazelton, Administrator of the Subsurface Systems Bureau (Scott.A.Hazelton@des.nh.gov, 271-2904).

Sincerely,

Robert R. Scott
Commissioner

ec: Sponsors of HB 1139: Representatives McConkey, J. Smith, Avellani, Milz, and Wallace