



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 1142 An Act relative to the requirements for work experience that is necessary before taking the exam to be a septic designer or installer

Dear Chairman Renzullo and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 1142. This bill would require individuals to work under the supervision of a licensed septic system designer for two years, or under the supervision of a licensed septic system installer for a one-year period, prior to submission of an application to take the septic designer or installer exams. The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) takes no position on this bill and provides the following information for your consideration.

Under RSA 485-A:35 and 485-A:36, septic system designers and installers are required to be permitted by NHDES. To obtain a permit to design or install septic systems, candidates must pass an exam on topics such as: septic system design and installation procedures, drafting plans to scale, regulations regarding sewage loading and setbacks, and acceptable field adjustments from approved plans. This permitting program protects public health and the environment because, if a septic system is not designed or installed properly, the system will fail prematurely resulting in an immediate health hazard.

Currently, there are no prerequisites for taking the exam. In 2023, the NHDES administered the exams to 195 prospective installers and 54 prospective designers. However, eighty percent of people taking the exams did not pass because they lacked training and experience. Many people retake the test multiple times, which increases the number of people signing up each time the exam is offered, and the associated state resources expended to administer the exam.

People often think they can pass the test by just reading the NHDES regulations. However, these rules do not have all the information candidates need. Candidates also need a foundation in preparing and reading plans and construction techniques. On-the-job training is the most effective way to gain these skills because there are limited educational opportunities.

www.des.nh.gov

29 Hazen Drive • PO Box 95 • Concord, NH 03302-0095
(603) 271-3503 • Fax: 271-2867 TDD Access: Relay NH 1-800-735-2964

The Honorable Andrew Renzullo
Chair, Resources, Recreation and Development Committee
January 23, 2024
Page 2

Should the Committee decide to move this bill forward, the NHDES recommends amending the bill with the following:

Amend RSA 485-A:35 by adding after paragraph II: "III. The commissioner shall adopt rules pursuant to RSA 541-A relative to the administration of the permitted septic system designer program."

Amend RSA 485-A:36 by adding after paragraph II: "III. The commissioner shall adopt rules pursuant to RSA 541-A relative to the administration of the permitted septic system installer program."

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on HB 1142. 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: Sponsor of HB 1142: Representative McConkey