



The State of New Hampshire
Department of Environmental Services



Robert R. Scott, Commissioner

January 22, 2020

The Honorable Martha Fuller Clark
Chair, Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee
State House, Room 103
Concord, NH 03301

RE: SB 517, AN ACT relative to the Public Information and Permitting functions in the Office of the Commissioner of the Department Of Environmental Services

Dear Chair Fuller Clark and Members of the Committee:

This letter is in follow up to my testimony on SB 517. This bill would change the functions of the Public Information and Permitting (PIP) Unit in the Department of Environmental Services' (NHDES) Office of the Commissioner.

The existing PIP Unit's roles are defined in RSA 21-O:12, IV. NHDES requested and supports this bill.

In 2019, NHDES underwent a performance audit conducted by the Office of the Legislative Budget Assistant (LBA). Results of the audit yielded more than fifty recommendations for action by NHDES. The purpose of SB 517 is to specifically respond to Recommendation #48, which directed NHDES to ensure that the PIP Unit practices fully comply with the law. Specifically, the LBA auditors interpreted the current statute to mean that the more than 7,000 annual permit applications NHDES receives must go through the PIP Unit for processing, and then issue all subsequent decisions back through the PIP Unit to the applicants. This practice is not practical and is cumbersome for a seven-member unit. SB 517 clarifies the PIP Unit functions as NHDES has traditionally applied, that of assistance and coordination, rather than as a bottleneck for timely permitting.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on SB 517. Should you have further questions or need additional information, please feel free to contact me at robert.scott@des.nh.gov, or (603) 271-2958.

Sincerely,

Robert R. Scott
Commissioner

cc: Sponsors of SB 517: Senators Bradley, Fuller Clark, Giuda; Representatives Smith, Renzullo