

COMMISSIONER'S COLUMN

NHDES launches first website update in 13 years

Here at NHDES, we are always looking for ways to improve communication and increase efficiency. One of the best communication tools at our disposal is the NHDES website. On December 8, 2020, we launched our first website overhaul since 2007. The new site design focuses on consolidating information to make it easier to navigate. We also looked for new and intuitive ways to present information, which led to the development of two document libraries – one for rulemaking and the other for documents, such as fact sheets, outreach materials, reports, etc. – and other dynamic content that allows us to keep information fresh while reducing website maintenance. The site search tool is much more effective and will search both pages and documents across the site. With more than 50% of people searching the web on mobile devices these days, it was also very important to us to have a website that is mobile-friendly.

The timing clicked. We were already exploring the need to develop a new site when the Governor announced his desire for a statewide rebranding initiative that would tie all state agency websites under a similar look and allow users to more quickly identify when they were on a New Hampshire government site. NHDES was able to get on board early to help define the new look, and lead the charge with innovative web tools. As we move through 2021, more state agencies will be able to use the same platform, tools

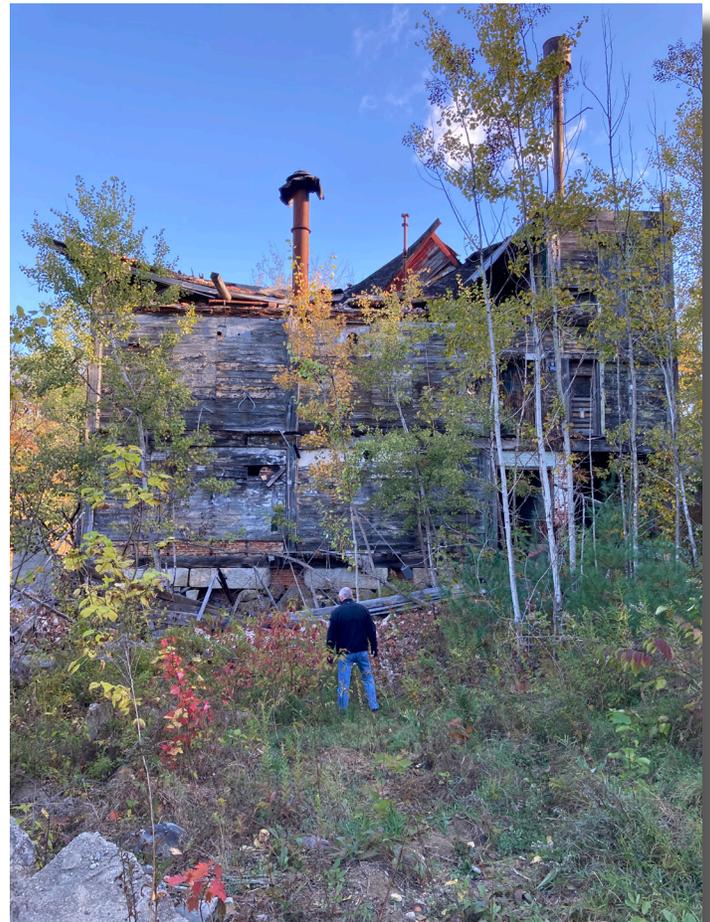
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Brownfields Cleanup Grants awarded

The NHDES Waste Management Division is pleased to announce the recipients of our 2020 Brownfields Cleanup Grants. NHDES awarded grants to the City of Concord and the City of Somersworth to facilitate the removal of hazardous building materials at two underutilized properties. The cleanups provide an environmental benefit while preparing the sites for planned redevelopment expected to lead to economic and socioeconomic benefits within these New Hampshire communities.

The City of Concord was awarded a grant for the former New Hampshire Employment Security Property. This project focuses on addressing hazardous building materials, primarily asbestos and universal wastes, in the existing site building in an effort to make it more attractive to developers whether they choose to reuse the building or demolish it. The City has been working diligently to market the property for redevelopment since they acquired it in 2014. NHDES awarded a grant of \$172,500 toward the overall estimated cleanup cost of \$345,000, the balance of which will be contributed by the City.

NHDES awarded the City of Somersworth \$97,450 to address hazardous building materials at the former Somersworth Police Station. This building is located just off the main route through Somersworth and is integral to the revitalization of their downtown area. The City indicated in their application

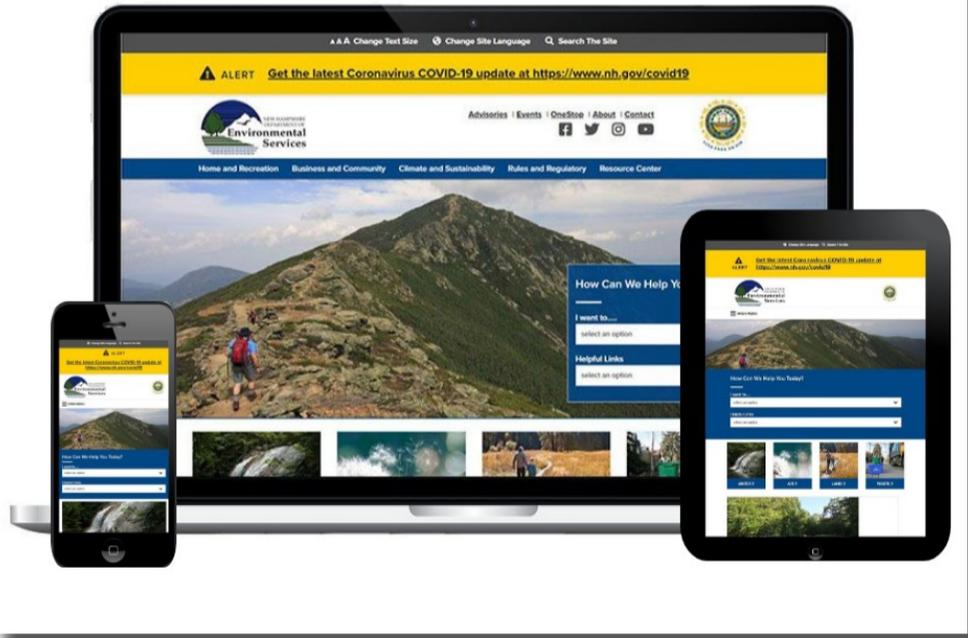


A Brownfields grant can assist in the assessment and cleanup of sites such as this.

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Since it was last updated in 2007, the old website experienced a bit of “urban sprawl” – growing to an unmanageable 3,600+ pages and containing over 17,000 documents. Additionally, the navigation was designed from an internal perspective, which had the unintended consequence of reducing communication within our programs and often, multiple copies and versions of the same information would be put out by different programs. Sifting through all of this content was an agency-wide effort that resulted in cross-program and even cross-division collaboration. Staff were able to combine like content and weed out older, forgotten documents and pages.



This new website was designed with the assistance of a Department of Information Technology-contracted website development company, Silverttech. The company looked at how our various, external web audiences would be likely to navigate the site and compared that to the analytics of what pages were actually visited each month over the course of two years. What resulted is the environmental topic-based navigation that you see today. This topic-based approach will continue to encourage internal communication between programs and reduces the likelihood of duplicative content. It also creates a much more intuitive navigation.

To help with the transition between the old and new websites, we have developed a number of short tutorial videos and a brief guided tour. All of these videos can be found on the [NHDES YouTube channel](#). For those of you who use the OneStop database, either for queries or for uploading information, that site is separate from the NHDES website and was not changed during the course of the website redesign. I hope you will take the time to explore the new site and provide feedback through our [Website Satisfaction Survey](#). We are always looking for ways to improve our processes and communication so all constructive criticism will be reviewed and thoughtfully considered. ■

Annual holiday food drive

Despite COVID-19 restrictions, NHDES employees once again helped the Capital Region Food Program's Holiday Food Basket Project by collecting \$5,300 in donations. Instead of the traditional food drive, NHDES collected donations electronically via GoFundMe, and inspired giving through some spirited challenges and a focus on the need in our communities, especially during this difficult pandemic. ■

Capital Region Food Program



ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

Environmental News is published six times a year by the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services.

Robert R. Scott, **Commissioner**

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Michael Wimsatt, **Waste Management**
Thomas O'Donovan, **Water Division**

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that several developers had inquired about the property and building but were not interested until the hazardous building materials had been addressed. At the time of application, sale of the property was not imminent but the City more recently indicated there were some potential prospects.

Funds for these grants were made available from the Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund (RLF), which provides financial support for the cleanup and redevelopment of contaminated properties. Program income from this RLF was utilized to make these funds available in an effort to clean up Brownfield sites and position these properties for redevelopment. NHDES anticipates making cleanup funds available again in 2022 for similar opportunities.

Brownfields Partnerships

In addition to issuing these grants, NHDES' Brownfields Program has been working statewide through partnerships with EPA, regional planning commissions (RPCs), and local municipalities on a variety of cleanup and assessment projects. During 2020, seven of the nine RPCs were awarded, or

had existing assessment grants through EPA. NHDES Brownfields staff work as liaisons with New Hampshire grantees to help maximize the effectiveness of their grant dollars and the success of their efforts. Of these grantees, several have reapplied to EPA to be considered for 2021 funding. Others are in the midst of completing their assessment activities. The Strafford Regional Planning Commission (SRPC), for example, is accepting site nominations for assessment and/or cleanup planning under their current EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant, which runs through September 2022. The targeted area for this grant is the Route 125 corridor from Rochester to Wakefield, but projects in all 18 SRPC communities will be considered for assessment under this grant or could form the focus area of a future assessment grant application. To add your project to SRPC's inventory, please contact James Burdin at jburdin@strafford.org. If you are outside the SRPC area, but are interested in a Brownfields assessment, contact your [regional planning commission](#) to learn if they currently have assessment funding available. ■

NHDES 'Data to Dollars' Asset Management webinar

On Tuesday January 19, the NHDES Water Division Asset Management Team will be presenting a FREE, two-hour Asset Management webinar focusing on how to turn all your data into dollars.

The goal of the webinar is to provide New Hampshire drinking water, wastewater and stormwater system managers and operators with ideas and examples on the value of data once that data is converted into a decision-making tool.

Through this webinar, participants will understand how to:

- Expand and grow your knowledge of asset management.
- Get answers to your questions regarding asset management.

Please [register](#) if you plan to attend the Data to Dollars webinar. NHDES will also be presenting the 2nd annual Asset Management Program Award during the webinar. This award recognizes individuals or entities that have developed and implemented an outstanding asset management program for their water infrastructure.

For more information on the upcoming Data to Dollars Asset Management webinar or NHDES Asset Management Pro-



grams, please reach out to the appropriate program at the contacts below.

Drinking Water: Luis.Adorno@des.nh.gov or (603) 271-2472

Wastewater: Daniel.Lewis@des.nh.gov or (603) 271-1989

Stormwater: Deborah.Loiselle@des.nh.gov or (603) 271-1352 ■



[facebook.com/
NHEnvironmentalServices](https://facebook.com/NHEnvironmentalServices)

2020 King Tide Photo Contest

The New Hampshire Coastal Adaptation Workgroup is a collaboration of 20+ organizations working to ensure that New Hampshire's coastal watershed communities are resourceful, ready and resilient to extreme weather and long-term climate change.

Now a regular event, the King Tide contest aims to raise awareness of New Hampshire's rising tides. "King tide" is a term used to describe astronomically high tides, which occur when the Moon is full or new. These exceptionally high tides illustrate how coastal areas will be impacted by sea level rise. The most recent contest received over 90 eligible submissions. Members of the public were invited to vote online for their favorite submissions in each of the three contest categories from November 18 through December 2, 2020. The following submissions received the most votes in each category and are hereby declared the winners of the 2020 King Tide Contest.

Contest winners have been notified and will receive a \$100 gift card to a local restaurant of their choosing.

Please direct all questions to Nathalie Morison, Resilience Project Manager with the NHDES Coastal Program, at nathalie.morison@des.nh.gov or (603) 559-0029. ■



Atlantic Category Winner

Awarded to the photo that best showcases the vulnerability or resilience of people, places, and things impacted by the high tide flooding in New Hampshire's Atlantic communities.



Great Bay Category Winner

Awarded to the photo that best showcases the vulnerability or resilience of people, places, and things impacted by the high tide flooding in New Hampshire's Great Bay communities.



*Jackson Landing Seagulls
Seek High Ground –
Credit: Julia Belshaw*



High Tide November 16, 2020 on the Marsh side of Hampton Beach
Credit: Marie Sapienza

Creative Category Winner

Awarded to the creative photo or video that best showcases the vulnerability or resilience of people, places, and things impacted by the high tide flooding in New Hampshire's Atlantic or Great Bay communities.



Where did the dry land go?
Credit: Tonya Law



How to Properly Dispose of Disposable Masks

Let's discuss mask etiquette. Don't worry, this is not an article discussing whether or not you should wear a mask; we will leave that up to others. Instead, this article is about proper handling of your disposable mask when you are done with it.

One-time use masks are NOT to be placed in the recycle bin, on the ground or flushed down the toilet. Masks should be securely thrown in the trash can. Here's why:

Disposable Masks are not Recyclable. Although some face masks may seem like they are made of paper, they are commonly made of synthetic fabrics like polypropylene and polyester. Therefore, tossing masks in your paper recycling can be a source of contamination that solid waste facilities and recycling companies will ultimately need to manage, costing time and money.

Masks on the Ground = Litter. If you drop your mask, pick it up. If there is no trash can where you are, hold onto your mask until you get home and throw it away. When you leave your used mask on the ground, not only are you littering, but you also increase the chance that someone or something will come into contact with your germs. Under normal circumstances this is

just plain disgusting, but with COVID-19, it is particularly risky.

Masks are not Flushable. The material in these masks is not dispersible, which means that no matter how many times a mask is swirled down the toilet, through the pipes and into either your septic system or sent to a wastewater treatment plant, it will not break down like toilet paper. Flushing masks can cause clogged toilets, drains and malfunctions at wastewater treatment plants.

Please dispose of your masks properly in the trash can with the rest of your solid waste. And when the bag is full, make sure you tie it tightly so the waste stays contained. ■



2020 Employee of the Year – Kelsey Marquez

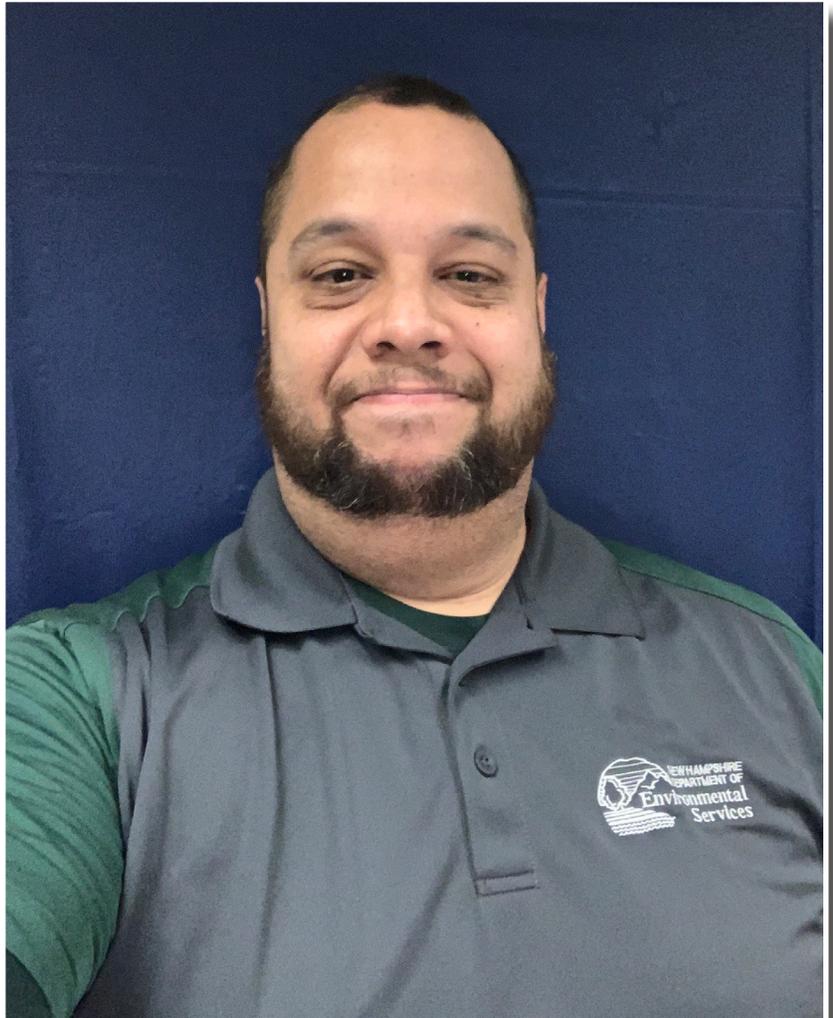
In addition to Kelsey's ongoing and outstanding contributions to the productivity of the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) and its staff via his role as Facility Services Manager, Kelsey Marquez has been perhaps our most consistent in-house presence at NHDES' Concord offices. He makes a positive daily impact on the activities and operations within NHDES and all of the State agencies with which we work. In a position where every member of the NHDES staff is his "customer" (in addition to his other "customers" from the Departments of Health and Human Services, Information Technology, and Safety, parcel delivery services, etc.), Kelsey works with little direction and has weathered the stress of a pandemic by applying all of the changes in COVID-19 protocols, guidance and protective measures developed by the in-house Continuity of Operations (COOP) COVID-19 Planning Team (of which he has served as a valued member). Kelsey has consistently anticipated potential problems and found ways to work through them.

In addition to working cooperatively with the NHDES internal COOP-COVID Planning Team, he continues to receive and distribute agency mail, maintains the NHDES vehicle fleet, continuously provides staff with vehicle reservations, stays ahead of the curve with managing personal protective equipment supplies, including hand sanitizer stations, masks and signage. He implemented common sense changes that saved time and expense to the agency, operated under conditions that have limited purchasing options and just in general been his usual helpful self by providing clear and practical direction and answers to all NHDES staff.

Kelsey is also a member of FAST (the First Aid Stabilization Team) and while, fortunately, there have been few call outs of the team this year, he has been the sole "boots on the ground" NHDES person since March to respond to emergencies.

Kelsey has been at the office almost every day; a highly essential staff member with an ongoing presence whenever we needed assistance with room layouts, measurements, access to office rooms and storage areas, making suggestions based on reality and experience, and whatever else was needed. Kelsey has served us all as an excellent manager of Facility Services for NHDES and has had a remarkable year at a time when we've all needed his contributions the most.

Kelsey does a remarkable job daily even when there is not a pandemic. He has his hands into many areas of the department and ensures services are provided seamlessly so much so that staff forget the many tasks he does daily to ensure the smooth running of our Hazen Drive facility as well as our other facilities and daily activities. He is part of the Safety



Committee and ensures any maintenance needed is done in the building. He does shipping and receiving to ensure that all orders received are delivered to staff the same day. He also ensures that computer orders are delivered safely to IT staff, which helps keep deployments of new computers and other IT equipment moving. He ensures sample shipments go out so items can be analyzed and NHDES staff can keep their datasets current. He ensures that Governor and Council packages are delivered downtown in time for cutoffs so contracts and other items get on the soonest agenda. He works with staff to keep storage rooms clean and usable and to ensure that staff have space available. He cleans off NHDES vehicles whenever there are storms and coordinates with other vehicle managers to ensure the job gets done quickly and efficiently, so staff can get out in the field to perform their inspections and other duties. One of the biggest unseen tasks that Kelsey does is providing language interpreter services for staff not only at NHDES but multiple departments across the state. This skill is especially helpful for assisting contracted vendors to have instructions and communications that are easily understood. Congratulations, Kelsey! ■

David S. Chase Award for Extraordinary Achievements in Science – Ken Kessler



In his most recent 10 years here at NHDES, Ken Kessler has served as the Supervisor of the Operations Section of the Wastewater Engineering Bureau.

Ken is a scientist to his core; it is what defines him, and why he is so well respected throughout the state's wastewater community. He strives to find answers and solutions to New Hampshire's most difficult wastewater questions and issues. If a facility is experiencing an issue, Ken does not hesitate to perform a site visit, investigate and study the issue until a solution is determined and achieved. Ken is often seen at the microscope station looking at bacteria and other microorganisms trying to figure out what little creature may be wreaking havoc on the biological process under investigation.

Through the years, wastewater treatment has become increasingly challenging. Ken has taken on these challenges over the years, and become a highly respected technical expert to his industry peers. Most recently, Ken and his staff have been working on achieving biological phosphorous removal at a New Hampshire facility, potentially eliminating the need for the use of chemicals to achieve phosphorous removal.

Ken understands the importance of his program and its positive effects on the environment. He is a tremendous steward of the environment, and the overall mission of the Wastewater Engineering Bureau and NHDES. Congratulations, Ken!

The David S. Chase Memorial Award for Extraordinary Achievements in Science is presented to a deserving NHDES scientist who possesses the special skills and dedication necessary to continue the pursuit of scientific discovery at the agency. The award is named in honor of the late Dr. David S. Chase, who served as the Radon Program Manager at NHDES and the Department of Health and Human Services for 16 years. His devotion to his work made a significant impact on our understanding of radon, and how the public can mitigate the risks associated with this compound. After Dr. Chase's passing, this award was established to recognize other NHDES employees who have made important accomplishments in the field of science. ■

Service Time Awards

The following NHDES employees celebrated a milestone in years of service to the State of New Hampshire in 2020. Congratulations!

35 YEARS

Lisa Fortier

30 YEARS

Anne Keach
Mark Corliss
Rick Skarinka
Alan Moulton
Mary Ann Tilton
Arthur O'Connell
Kendall Perkins
Stergios Spanos

25 YEARS

James Poisson
Robert Scott
Harrison Mackey
Jocelyn Degler
Grace Levergood
Raymond Gordon

20 YEARS

Todd Moore
David Neils
Craig Rennie
Maria Michel
Brandon Kernen
Michael O'Brien
Leah McKenna

Craig Shippee

Elaine Bolduc
Padmaja Baru
Dale Keirstead
Laura Filiau
Timothy Sweatt
Sara Johnson
Debra Sonderegger

15 YEARS

Darren King
Genevieve Al-Egaily
Eben Lewis
Jane Murray
Glenda Gagnon
Edward Walsh
Bruce Harless
Stephen Roy
Cynthia Klevens
Robert Daniel
Paige Relf
Neil Bilodeau
Dean Robinson
Eric Skoglund
Dawn Buker
Pamela Sopczyk

10 YEARS

Karla McManus
Samuel Comeau
Jacob Ruitter
Melissa Zych
Craig Day
Zachary Barton

RETIREMENTS

Gretchen Hamel
Sarah Pillsbury
Brett Rand
Clark Freise
Daniel Dudley
Debra Brown
Debra Patterson
Donald Watson
Felice Janelle
Joyce Sawicki
Patricia North
Theresa Sabbia
Harrison Mackey
Timothy Sweatt
Kenneth Kessler
Timothy Drew
Grace Levergood
Peter Brunette
Tim Ainsworth



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NHDES Awards \$2,942,022 to 16 Wetlands Protection and Stream Restoration Projects



The NHDES Aquatic Resource Mitigation (ARM) Fund Program has awarded a total of \$2,942,022 to 11 conservation and five stream restoration projects.

One example is a project in Walpole that will use ARM funds to replace a perched culvert on Houghton Brook that is a complete barrier to all aquatic animals. The 13-foot metal pipe is greatly undersized, which has caused a four-foot perch at the outlet with a large scour pool downstream. The current crossing is a flood hazard and hydrologic models show that it cannot convey the 100-year flood. The new crossing will be a 24-foot wide span structure that will provide full passage for aquatic animals and will accommodate 100-year storm flows. The project will also benefit brook trout by restoring access to upstream spawning and foraging habitat. Houghton Brook is within the Highest Ranked Habitat on the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department's Wildlife Action Plan and connects the Connecticut River to up-

stream Tier 1 and Tier 2 areas.

The ARM Fund, established within federal and state law, is a mitigation option for projects impacting wetlands and streams that cannot avoid or minimize impacts and are not able to provide other suitable forms of mitigation. An ARM Fund Site Selection Committee is charged with identifying proposals to be funded by selecting high priority projects that most effectively compensate for the loss of functions and values from the projects that paid into the Fund. According to the law, the projects determined to be appropriate for receipt of ARM Fund monies are subject to approval by the US Army Corps of Engineers and the New Hampshire Wetlands Council. For more information on the NHDES Aquatic Resource Mitigation Program, visit the [ARM Fund website](#) or contact NHDES Mitigation Coordinator, Lori Sommer, at lori.sommer@des.nh.gov or (603) 271-4059. ■