



## Drinking Water and Groundwater Complaints Guidance Document

The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) Drinking Water and Groundwater Bureau (DWGB) regulates public water systems, NH accredited laboratories, certified operators, and water use facilities; issues permits for groundwater withdrawals and groundwater discharges; and issues approvals for sources of groundwater.

This document provides guidance and instructions on how to file a complaint pertaining to the above programs regulated by the Drinking Water and Groundwater Bureau. The DWGB is committed to responding to complaints as quickly and efficiently as possible. Before you decide to file a complaint, please read the following to ensure that you provide us with the best information to perform a thorough investigation of the issue.

- **What is regulated by the Drinking Water and Groundwater Bureau?**
  - **Public water systems** - Any water system serving 15 or more services, or 25 or more people for 60 or more days per year, is regulated by NHDES and the US Environmental Protection Agency. These systems must meet requirements pertaining to sampling, reporting, permitting, and compliance with NHDES noted inspection deficiencies. (RSA 485 and NH Admin Rules Env-Dw 100-1200)
  - **NH accredited laboratories** - Laboratories that are approved to analyze water samples from public water systems for compliance with federal and state regulations. (RSA 485 and NH Admin Rule Env-C 300)
  - **Certified operators** - Operators licensed by the DWGB to oversee the operations of public water systems. (RSA 332-E:3 and NH Admin Rule Env-Dw 502)
  - **Water well contractors** - Anyone who performs well construction as defined in RSA 482-B:2 is licensed by the NH Water Well Board. (RSA 482-B:5 and NH Admin Rule Env-Dw 302.01)
  - **Pump installers** - Anyone who engages in pump installations as defined in RSA 482-B is licensed by the Water Well Board. (RSA 482-B:5 and NH Admin Rule Env-Dw 302.01)
  - **Water use facilities** - Any facility using in excess of 20,000 gallons of water per day averaged over any 7-day period, or more than 600,000 gallons of water over any 30-day period. (RSA 488 and NH Admin Rule Env-Wq 2102)
  - **Water conservation** - All new permit applicants and applications for water withdrawals under RSA 485:3 Drinking Water Rules, RSA 485:48 Wellhead Protection, RSA 485-C:21 Large Groundwater Withdrawals, and Section 401 of the Clean Water Act are subject to the Water Conservation requirements. (RSA 485:61 and NH Admin Rule Env-Wq 2101)
  - **Best management practices for groundwater protection** - Specify best management practices (BMPs) for the prevention of groundwater contamination. These rules are enforced by NHDES and by many water systems and municipalities that inspect potential contamination sources for compliance with the BMP rules. (RSA 485-C and NH Admin Rule Env-Wq 401)
  - **Protection of water supply reservoirs, lakes, and rivers** - To protect some of the surface waters (reservoirs, lakes, ponds, and rivers) used as sources by public water systems. The restrictions vary from one surface water to another and are enforced primarily by the water systems. (RSA 485:23 and 24, and NH Admin Rule Env-Dw 902)

- **Large groundwater withdrawals** - Any withdrawal from groundwater of 57,600 gallons or more in a day that was sited after August 1998 at a single property or place of business. (NH Admin Rule Env-Wq 403)
  - **Groundwater discharges** - The construction and/or operation of a discharge of non-domestic wastewater or domestic wastewater in excess of 20,000 gallons per day to the ground or ground surface via an: unlined wastewater, septage or sludge lagoon; any land treatment-disposal facility; subsurface disposal fields (leachfields); or any reclaimed wastewater distribution and disposal facility used for any purpose (e.g. irrigation, cooling, groundwater recharge). The construction/operation of any aquifer storage and recovery facility. Certain domestic wastewater discharges that discharge volumes less than 20,000 gallons per day and cannot meet specified setbacks. (NH Admin Rule Env-Wq 402)
  - **Groundwater sources of bottled water** - Procedures and standards for the selection of new groundwater sources of water used in the production of bottled water. (NH Admin Rule Env-Dw 303)
  - **Groundwater wells** - For use as sources for small or large community water systems and non-community water systems pursuant to Env-Dw 305 Small Production Wells for Small Community Water Systems, Env-Dw 302 Large Production Wells for Community Water Systems, Env-Dw 405 Design Standards for Small Community Water Systems, and Env-Dw 406 Design Standards for Non-Community Water Systems.
  - Public records regarding some of the listed programs are available on the [NHDES website](#).
- **What activities require a permit, license, or accreditation from the Drinking Water and Groundwater Bureau?**
    - Permit to operate a community or non-transient, non-community water system
    - Large groundwater withdrawals
    - Groundwater discharges
    - Certified water system operators
    - Licensed water well contractors
    - Licensed pump installers
    - Environmental laboratories
- **How do I make a complaint to the Drinking Water and Groundwater Bureau?**

Please use one of the following methods to report a complaint falling under the jurisdiction of the Drinking Water and Groundwater Bureau.

    - Complete the online [complaint form](#). Once completed, click the submit button and the form will be sent to the Drinking Water and Groundwater Bureau.
    - Email your written complaint to [dwgb.complaints@des.nh.gov](mailto:dwgb.complaints@des.nh.gov).
    - Call in your complaint to (603) 271-2513.
    - Mail your written complaint to:
 

NH Department of Environmental Services  
 Drinking Water and Groundwater Bureau  
 Complaint Section  
 P.O. Box 95  
 Concord, NH 03302-0095

- **Will my complaint remain confidential?**
  - Please be advised that most information provided is subject to disclosure pursuant to RSA 91-A, Access to Governmental Records and Meetings Act. You may request for your contact information to be confidential; however, please be advised that NHDES may be required to reveal this information if the case proceeds to an administrative trial or hearing.