

Voting Members:

Michele L. Tremblay

Chair
Conservation
Community

Larry T. Spencer

Vice Chair
Conservation
Commissions

Edna Feighner

Historic/Archeological
Interests

Christopher Hodgdon

NH Fish & Game
Commission

Mark Lombardi

Granite State
Hydropower
Association

Frederick J. McNeill

Municipal Officer

Allan G. Palmer

Business & Industry
Association

Norman Sims

Recreational Interests

Ruth Ward

Local River Management
Advisory Committees

Donald L. Ware

Public Water Suppliers

Vacant

Agricultural Community

Non-Voting Members:

Jennifer Gilbert

NH Office of
Strategic Initiatives

Mark Hemmerlein

NH Department of
Transportation

Kayla Henderson

NH Department of
Safety (Interim)

John Magee

NH Fish & Game
Department

Gail McWilliam Jellie

NH Department of
Agriculture,
Markets & Food

Vacant

NH Department of
Natural and Cultural
Resources

Staff:

Tracie Sales

Program Manager

Jen Drociak

Watershed Coordinator

Mariah Mitchell

Program Assistant

N.H. Rivers Management and Protection Program

N.H. Rivers Management Advisory Committee

February 5, 2019

The Honorable Clyde Carson, Chair
House Municipal and County Government Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 301
Concord, NH 03301

RE: HB 443 *Relative to municipal watering restrictions.*

Dear Chair Carson and Members of the Committee:

The Rivers Management Advisory Committee (RMAC) is writing to express its support for House Bill 443, which allows the local governing body to restrict the use of water for commercial outdoor watering during periods of drought.

Currently, municipalities may restrict the discretionary water use of private homeowners who draw water from public water systems and private wells during a state or federally declared drought. This restriction preserves limited water resources for drinking and other essential uses. This bill would add commercial entities under those restrictions. Private homeowners and commercial entities often draw water from the same public water system or have private wells in close proximity which draw water from the same groundwater aquifer. It is therefore important that commercial entities also conserve water during draughts so that basic drinking water needs can be met.

Groundwater, like the surface water in rivers and lakes, is a shared resource and should be managed as a community asset. Groundwater is also one of the primary sources of stream flow during drought conditions, the same stream flow on which many public water systems rely. The Instream Flow Program, which is a component of the Rivers Management and Protection Program that the RMAC oversees, relies on municipalities' ability to restrict discretionary water use during droughts to ensure that the state's designated rivers continue to flow. The Program helps water users equitably distribute the available water when flows are low, and find alternate sources to ensure that drinking, industrial, and agricultural irrigation water needs are met. This equitable distribution of water can only be achieved if commercial entities are subject to the same restrictions on non-essential water use to which homeowners are subject.

The RMAC is a legislatively created body charged to work with the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) to administer RSA 483, the Rivers Management and Protection Program. The Governor and Council appointed Committee is comprised of members from business, agriculture, hydroelectric, municipal government, water supply, conservation, recreation, fish and game, and historical interests. Among its other responsibilities, the RMAC is charged with reviewing legislation relevant to the Program and with advising the NHDES Commissioner on the merits of such legislation.

In conclusion, the RMAC supports HB 443, allowing the local governing body to restrict the use of water for commercial outdoor watering during periods of drought.

Should you have any questions regarding our testimony, please feel free to contact me at 603.796.2615 or MLT@naturesource.net.

Sincerely,



Michele L. Tremblay
RMAC Chair

cc: Rep. Rebecca McBeath
Rep. Constance Van Houten
RMAC Representatives
Robert R. Scott, Commissioner, NHDES
Rene Pelletier, Assistant Director, Water Division, NHDES
Ted Diers, Administrator, Watershed Mgmt. Bur., NHDES
Tracie Sales, Rivers and Lakes Programs Manager, NHDES
Local River Management Advisory Committee Chairs