

New Hampshire Association of Conservation Districts Position Paper  
November, 2022

NHACD asserts that protecting healthy **freshwater resources** for the coming generations begins with more effective management today.

Water is life. Soil health, vegetation, wild and domestic animals, natural ecosystems, as well as humanity, demand fresh water to survive. Current freshwater resources are scarce globally, and protecting the availability of water necessary for human consumption is a serious concern. Precipitation is less predictable, temperatures are rising, population is expanding, and human activities are stressing local watersheds. Negative effects from forest mismanagement, watershed degradation, climate change, and human activity are issues New Hampshire must tackle now.

## **Forests**

Private and state owned forests in New Hampshire cover 4.8 million acres, providing rich resources and a natural water purification system. Forested areas provide vegetation cover that cool the earth. Cool forest soils hold and filter ground water and create habitat for native flora and fauna. Tree trunks and roots slow erosion by anchoring soil and slowing runoff. Tree leaves and branches regulate the natural water cycle by storing and releasing water. Lands with healthy forest cover sustain high groundwater discharge, low stormwater runoff, and low levels of nutrients and sediment in streams, helping to sustain vital watersheds.

## **Watersheds**

Watersheds comprise those regions where fresh water drains into a common flow or catchment, such as brooks, rivers, ponds, lakes, and reservoirs, aquifers, or oceans. Water, whether clean or contaminated, begins upstream and ends downstream, affecting life quality above and below the earth's surface within the watershed. Private wells, municipal water systems, wildlife habitat, farm land, and low land forests absorb the moisture flowing through the watershed. Healthy watersheds provide natural renewable fresh water vital for life.

## **Climate Change**

New Hampshire, despite its claim of high forestation, faces forest and watershed depletion caused by changes in temperature and precipitation over extended periods of time, or climate change. Documented sources predict hotter summers and less predictable precipitation patterns for the state. Extended droughts and frequent flooding will escalate, challenging fresh water degradation intervention.

## **Human Activities**

Urbanization, deforestation, agriculture, technology, commercial and residential development, recreational activities, economic ventures, unsustainable resource demands from homeowners and businesses, careless use of herbicides and pesticides, improper waste disposal begin the list of human activities that disrupt and destroy fresh water sources. Can management practices assure that the supply of fresh water will meet the increasing demands of NH refresh water users?

### **Actions**

The NHACD recognizes the need for continued water conservation policy review and implementation. Working alongside a network of state, federal, and global conservation organizations, NHACD supports freshwater conservation practices at the local level. Currently, the NHACD actively supports all efforts to keep ground, surface, and artesian well water potable. These efforts include promoting buffer zones around surface water such as ponds, lakes, and brooks to reduce stormwater sediments and purify precipitation or run off before it enters surface water. The NHACD encourages land owners and occupiers to assure that water leaving a property is free of nutrients and other pollutants and to intervene wherever land erosion appears. However, mitigating problems as they occur may prove less effective than actively managing natural resources.

NHACD recommends that local populations put into place management practices now that have promise to protect freshwater resources for the future.

### **Resources**

US Department of Agriculture. [www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov)

US National Association Conservation Districts. [www.nacdnet.org](http://www.nacdnet.org)

US Forest Department. [www.fs.usda.gov](http://www.fs.usda.gov)

Trout Unlimited. [www.tu.org](http://www.tu.org)

World Resources Institute. [www.wri.org](http://www.wri.org)