



News Release

RI Department of Environmental Management
235 Promenade St., Providence, RI 02908
(401) 222-2771 www.dem.ri.gov

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Contact: Gail Mastrati 222-4700 ext. 2402

DEM ANNOUNCES MARCH 31ST MEETING TO DISCUSS LAUNCH OF SOURCE WATER PROTECTION INITIATIVE FOR NEWPORT'S DRINKING WATER RESERVOIRS

PROVIDENCE - The Department of Environmental Management will hold an informational public meeting on Tuesday, March 31 to discuss a Source Water Protection Initiative for the Newport Water System's drinking water reservoirs. The meeting will take place at 4 p.m. in the lower level program room at the Newport Public Library, located at 300 Spring Street in Newport.

The Source Water Protection Initiative for the Newport Water System's Supply Reservoirs is an effort initiated by the Department of Environmental Management in coordination with the RI Department of Health (HEALTH), to restore the quality of the Newport Water System's nine source reservoirs located in Newport, Middletown, Portsmouth, Little Compton and Tiverton.

The effort compliments the recent completion of improvements at the Station 1 Water Treatment Plant and the construction of the new Lawton Valley Water Treatment Plant, which included the addition of advanced water treatment processes at both sites. The new water treatment facilities became operational in the summer and fall of 2014. Since that time, as expected, Newport Water System's wholesale and retail customers have seen significant improvements in the quality of water flowing from their taps.

Though the "finished" water has improved, the quality of the raw water that necessitated these improvements has not changed. The nine source reservoirs are nutrient-enriched and experience frequent algal and cyanobacteria blooms – which impact aquatic life and the reservoirs' use for drinking water purposes. Protection of the source waters is considered by HEALTH as the front line in protecting public health, and is essential to the long-term viability of Aquidneck Island's water supply.

The primary objective of the Source Water Protection Initiative is to ensure that the water quality in each of the nine reservoirs is suitable for drinking water use with conventional treatment, and that it supports aquatic life uses. The Initiative will focus on determining acceptable phosphorus concentrations for the reservoirs, such that algal growth and total organic carbon concentrations are reduced to a level that supports these uses. Reducing algal abundance in the reservoirs is anticipated to lessen Newport Water System's use of the advanced treatment processes, and thus the associated operational costs.

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DEM is committed to working collaboratively with Island communities and organizations in the development of their water quality restoration plans. DEM has been working closely with the City of Newport and other Aquidneck Island communities and organizations on several water quality monitoring and/or watershed management initiatives within the Newport Water Supply watersheds. These efforts are seen as essential to protection of these valuable source reservoirs.

Additional information about the March 31st meeting or the source water protection initiative is available by contacting Brian Zalewsky at 401-222-4700 ext. 7145 or via email at brian.zalewsky@dem.ri.gov.