



About the Drinking Water and Groundwater Trust Fund

“...to provide for the protection, preservation, and enhancement of the drinking water and groundwater resources of the state.”

History of the Trust Fund

In 2013, the State of New Hampshire (State) went to trial against ExxonMobil Corp. as part of its 10-year lawsuit against refiners and suppliers of gasoline to seek compensation for damages associated with [methyl-tertiary butyl ether \(MtBE\)](#) contamination of groundwater and drinking water resources. The State prevailed in a jury trial and was awarded \$236 million in damages. During the appeals process, the New Hampshire General Court (Legislature) established the Drinking Water and Groundwater Trust Fund (DWGTF) to receive these funds ([RSA 485-F](#)). In June of 2016, after all appeals were exhausted, and verdict proceeds plus interest had been disbursed in accordance with state law, \$277 million was deposited into the Trust Fund.

The Advisory Commission

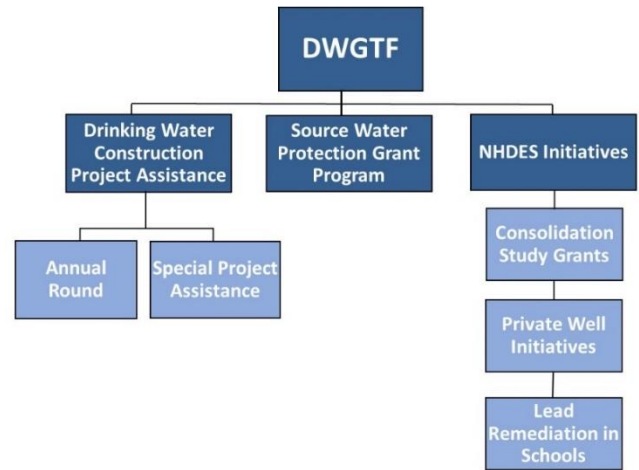
The Drinking Water and Groundwater Advisory Commission (Advisory Commission) was established to consult with and advise the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) on the administration and management of the DWGTF. The Advisory Commission consists of 19 members, including members of the House of Representatives and Senate, representatives from five state agencies, municipal officials and members of the public. The Advisory Commission strategy designed to ensure the continued availability to safe drinking water for all New Hampshire residents, and to lead the processes for selecting the award of loans and/or grants to qualifying applicants while maximizing the return on investments to support the longevity of the DWGTF.

Roles and responsibilities of NHDES

The Advisory Commission administers the DWGTF through the [NHDES MtBE Remediation Bureau](#). A significant responsibility of NHDES is to manage a competitive funding program for drinking water infrastructure and source water protection projects. In addition, NHDES provides administrative support by investigating, managing, and remediating contaminated groundwater; assisting local and regional entities in local wellhead protection efforts; maintaining a statewide map identifying classes of groundwater; measuring contamination and generating maps; and maintaining an inventory of public water supply wells.

Funding programs

The DWGTF provides grants and loans through its core programs, the Drinking Water Construction Project Assistance and Source Water Protection Programs, and NHDES initiatives to support projects that will provide safe and accessible drinking water to New Hampshire residents. NHDES administers these funding programs in accordance with [RSA 485-F:3](#) and [Env-Dw 1300 – Administrative Procedures for Grants and Loans from the Drinking Water and Groundwater Trust Fund](#).



- **Drinking Water Construction Project Assistance**

Program: Awards grants and loans on a competitive

basis to projects that build and enhance drinking water infrastructure. Projects that improve water quality, increase the longevity of an existing water system, or expand existing or create new water systems to enable the State to meet present and future drinking water needs. The [Rules for Construction Projects](#) outline the eligibility and criteria for evaluating the merits of a project for funding. NHDES solicits for proposals each fall for the Annual Round, or applicants may apply anytime if they meet the qualifications of a Special Project Assistance.

- **Source Water Protection Program:** Offers competitive grants annually to permanently protect lands that contribute source water to public drinking water systems. Eligible lands are identified by NHDES as “High Priority Water Supply Lands” and displayed in an [interactive online mapper](#). This program will fund up to 50% of total project costs, including land acquisition, conservation easement purchase, legal fees, and surveys, with a maximum award of \$500,000. See the [Rules for Source Water Protection Grants](#) and [fact sheet](#) to learn more.
- **Consolidation Study Grants:** provides grants up to \$10,000 for eligible water systems to evaluate the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of connecting to another community water system, to support informed decisions regarding long-term options for maintaining a safe, reliable drinking water supply. Grants can be used for an engineering analysis comparing connecting to another community water system versus treating, maintaining, and operating a system’s own well sources. [Visit the Planning Grants for Small Systems webpage to learn more.](#)
- **Private Well Initiatives:** The DWGTF has funded several initiatives to support safe and clean drinking water for private wells, including, educational workshops and water testing; the [PFAS Removal Rebate Program](#) to install treatment for contaminated wells; and assistance to low-income homeowners experiencing irreversible impacts to their wells from a natural disaster such as a drought or flood.
- **Lead Remediation in Schools:** this program offers grants to reimburse schools the costs for remediation of lead in drinking water at outlets testing at 5 ppb or above. Funding can reimburse schools for costs install filtered drinking fountains or replace fixtures with certified lead-free fixtures. [Visit “Get the Lead Out” for more details.](#)

Program success and milestones

Since 2017, the DWGTF has funded 111 drinking water infrastructure projects across the state, totaling \$103 million in grants and \$67 million in loans for general infrastructure upgrades, interconnecting small systems with municipal water, watermain replacements, and treatment for emerging contaminants. This program provided significant financial support for the Southern NH Region Connection, a monumental project that brought water from Manchester Water Works to five communities in southern NH with groundwater impacted by MtBE contamination. The Source Water Protection Program has awarded \$7.5 million in grants to 40 land protection projects, totaling 6,477 acres conserved for drinking water. Since 2022, the PFAS Rebate Program has provided grants to 560 homeowners for the installation of treatment or connection to a public water system. The DWGTF has provided 161 low-income New Hampshire homeowners whose wells had been impacted by drought, with grants to drill a new well and have a source of safe and clean drinking water.