Annual Report of the Commissioners for 2025

Annual Water Usage

The District pumped 134.5 million gallons of water in 2025 from its wells. This was nearly identical to the amount of water pumped in 2024. Water restrictions imposed in August helped to keep the water demand down during a hot and dry summer.

Weather and Water Supply Conditions

2025 was a very dry year for the seacoast area of New Hampshire, even dryer than 2024. Only 32.5 inches of precipitation were recorded at the NOAA weather station at Pease. This compares to a normal year of about 45 inches. According to the drought monitor, the seacoast area is currently in moderate drought. Dry conditions last year, prompted the commissioners to implement odd-even water restrictions in August. Postings were issued throughout town and via the District's website. These restrictions kept water demand from increasing and preserved water in the District's wells.

Chemical Water Quality Results

Annual volatile and synthetic organic chemical monitoring program sample results for 2025 were satisfactory. A more detailed report will be sent out in June 2026 via our next annual Water Quality Report. Past and recent sampling results can be seen on our website (www.ryewaterdistrict.com).

Bacterial Water Quality Results

Monthly sampling results for coliform and E. coli bacteria were satisfactory for 2025. The District continued its NHDES-required monthly sampling for bacteria at all three wells. No coliform bacteria have been detected since the addition of chlorine in the water.

Lead & Copper Sampling

The District continues to sample and monitor for lead and copper as required by the drinking water regulations. We are currently in compliance with those standards.

Service Line Inventory

District staff will soon start field inspections to determine water service line materials for some of the properties in the district that lack historical information. The federal government requires public water suppliers to inventory the water lines that carry water from the main to our customers' homes or businesses; this is because the presence of lead lines can present serious health concerns. The district is responsible for the lines from the main to the curb, and customers are responsible for the lines from the curb to the house. We must identify whether any of these lines contain lead; if they do, they must be replaced. In most cases, we know the materials because of the age of the homes and existing public records. The only way to verify the materials is to dig down to the pipe to confirm what type it is.

Additional Water Quality Sampling and PFAS Compliance

The District has continued to sample for PFAS (Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances) compounds quarterly. Sampling results remain consistent with previously sampled results. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) finalized the National Primary Drinking Water Regulation (NPDWR) for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) on April 10, 2024. The rule became effective on June 25, 2024. The regulation set legally enforceable Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs) for six PFAS compounds in drinking water. The rule includes new limits for four compounds and maintains limits of 4 nanograms per liter or parts per trillion (ppt) for PFOS and PFOA. The District has until 2031 to comply with this standard. Currently, the sampling of the Garland Well is over that limit, with PFOS around 6 ppt and PFOA around 8 ppt. The district’s standard operating procedure is to blend the Garland well with the Bailey well, which has much lower levels of PFAS. Therefore, water at customer taps is near the new regulatory limit. Ultimately, with the design and construction of the new water treatment system, our water will be treated to remove PFAS and keep the district in compliance with the new regulations.

Central Treatment Facility

We are currently working with Underwood Engineers to design treatment for our drinking water sources of supply. The engineering design and permitting of such a complex and critical structure is anticipated to continue until late 2026 with bidding and construction to commence in 2027. Working with Underwood, our system staff built and ran a pilot system to determine the best system for treating per and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). Currently, it appears that granular activated carbon is the best alternative. We are also investigating the best option for treating the iron and manganese present in our bedrock wells. This has proven to be more

complicated than the PFAS treatment and is requiring additional research, water quality testing and piloting to determine the best option for this process. As for the site and facilities, Underwood has recommended that the treatment facilities be constructed adjacent to the existing Garland Well site. This will allow for the most efficient use of that facility and ideally, keep final costs within the $16 million budget for this project.

The anticipated project schedule for the Central Treatment Plant is as follows:

2025 – Preliminary Design
2026 – Final Design and Permitting
2027 – Bidding and Construction
2028 – Construction
2029 – Startup and Operation

Source Water Protection

System operational staff and commissioners continue to be vigilant about protecting our current water resources. Activities in that regard included monitoring and reviewing landfill closure reports in Rye and advocating for an upgrade to the Town's DPW fueling station. This effort led to the Town approving a warrant article that recently passed that authorized a study to investigate options and recommendations for next steps. System staff are also working on outreach materials which will be sent to all properties within our well source protection areas. These materials will provide information about management practices on property to protect the wells from contamination.

Potential New Water Source

We are continuing to work toward permitting a new drinking water source on the Brown Conservation Property on West Road. A 600-ft deep test well was drilled at the site in 2024, and the preliminary indications were favorable. Note, initial sampling showed no detectable PFAS/PFOA chemicals, and other water quality parameters were good. Work in 2025 included installing three additional observation wells at the site at the request of the NHDES. Our consultant is working on finalizing the well permit application together with meeting regulatory staff to get their feedback to assure that the submittal will meet their requirements. Submittal of that application is anticipated later in 2026. After NHDES's review, including public input, the next phase will include an extended pump test, monitoring and water quality testing before any permit is issued.

Budget and Water Rate Update

A public hearing was held at the Rye Junior High School on January 29, 2026 to present the rate changes that Underwood Engineers recommended as part of a comprehensive rate study they performed for the district. Underwood recommended that the annual allotments be changed to quarterly and that adjustments to the overage rates be implemented. A detailed copy of their presentation and recommendations is included on the district's website. Commissioners voted in February 2026 to adopt the new rates. Additional adjustments are anticipated to increase rates by 2030 in order to begin paying back the 20-year loan and additional operating costs for the new water treatment facility, a cost estimated to be approximately $1 million a year.

The District's proposed operating budget for 2026 is $2,378,139. The primary increases over 2025 are as follows:

- The addition of the new position of Treatment Operator/Water Quality Sampling Agent in anticipation of the increased workload associated with the new Central Treatment Facility
- $162,609 for the Washington Road Tank Painting project agreement (1st of 4 years for this payment)
- $25,000 in increases to the Portsmouth wholesale water cost

To offset some of these increases, the district has reduced the amount of capital outlay this year by $150,000 and instead plans to use some of their reserved funds to pay for project costs.

Construction Projects

The District upgraded motor controls and installed three new pumps at the interconnection between the Rye and Portsmouth water system. This will improve backup supply capability in the event of a major disruption to the Rye water supplies. Water through this interconnection can also serve the Portsmouth portion of Rye if needed in an emergency.

District staff and our contractor successfully replaced the old waterline serving Acorn Acres. This will improve pressure, flow and water quality in that area.

Other projects included:

- The complete painting of the Washington Road Tank #1, along with installing a new ladder and vent system.
- Breakfast Hill tank had the mixing system replaced.
- New meter reading equipment was installed on the cell tower located at the end of Port Way.

Water Meter and Billing system Upgrades

We replaced 348 water meters in 2025, ranging in sizes from 5/8” thru 2.” The new meters enable daily usage readings and fault alarms associated with (leaks, high use, low temperature, etc.). These meters have been very beneficial in aiding customers and the district staff in tracking and sharing customer usage trends that assist in detecting high water use and, in some cases, plumbing leaks. The District will continue with these upgrades in 2026. We will also be updating our billing system in 2026. Once in place, billings will also shift to quarterly. This will enable more feedback to our customers regarding water usage trends and payment details.

Water Main Breaks & Service Line Leaks

Three water main breaks transpired in 2025. One service line leak was identified, and 10 service lines were repaired or replaced. The were also 37 new service lines installed.

Seacoast Emergency Interconnection Study

Administrator Goetz continues to represent the water district on the Seacoast Drinking Water Commission. He currently chairs that commission’s Emergency Interconnection Study subcommittee. A report is soon to be delivered regarding the work that has gone into this report, identifying needs and opportunities for the various public drinking water systems to continue to improve their infrastructure and work with adjacent water systems on emergency interconnections.

Commission and Staff

Commission Chair Scott Marion was re-elected to a new three-year term in 2026. Together with Vice Chair Lopresto and Commissioner Mack, they attended numerous monthly meetings and work sessions to help guide the district through the major projects we have underway.

In December 2025, we welcomed our newest employee, Molly O'Neil, to our team. Molly has a degree in Environmental Studies and three years of experience as an Environmental Health and Safety Manager. Molly will be taking on the role of Operator/Water Quality Sampling Agent and will handle a lot of the district's water quality sampling and reporting duties. This rounds out our operations team prior to the construction and operation of our new Central Treatment.

Dyana Ledger, our Business Manager, has faithfully managed District financial affairs and many other duties for the past nine years. Arik Jones, our Superintendent, just completed his 19th year of service with the District. These four, together with our new Administrator, Brian Goetz, (in his second year with the district) will continue to strive to improve system operations, customer service and the design and construction of a new water treatment facility to address PFAS and manganese water quality.

Contact us via Email: Please do not hesitate to e-mail the office anytime day or night with your questions or concerns or view our website at **www.ryewaterdistrict.com**

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