

Attendees at August 18, 2025 Maine NRCS Source Water Protection Subcommittee Meeting

Chair: Kira Jacobs, U.S. EPA Drinking Water Program

- Ashley Hodge, Maine CDC Drinking Water Program
- Kelsey Johnson, Saco Watershed Collaborative
- Chris Lewis, Maine NRCS
- Chris Phinney, Maine NRCS
- Amanda Pratt, Portland Water District
- Sharri Venno, Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians
- Alex Wong, Maine DEP

Source Water Protection Subcommittee Report Out

Maine NRCS STC Meeting September 10, 2025

Information about the subcommittee (including past meeting minutes) can be found at:

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/conservation-basics/conservation-by-state/maine/source-water-protection-subcommittee>

- **Next steps proposed by subcommittee in fiscal year 2026 include goals for:**
 - **Data Analysis**
 - **Updating Priority Areas**
 - **Outreach and Education**

Data Analysis:

Issue: There is a lack of information available to make informed decisions about making changes to the status quo. This is due to the need to protect the identity of producers, as well as challenges associated with aggregating data on where practices are being implemented, and which practices are most utilized.

Recommendation #1: in FY26, continue to work with NRCS staff to compile data about how/where the 10% of conservation funds for Source Water Protection were used in FY25 to inform future policy/funding decisions



Data Analysis:

Issue:

The current approach for providing increased payment rates requires NRCS staff to identify whether the proposed practice is located within a priority source water area. A broad interpretation of that definition currently is used, which may not improve water quality in source water areas. The subcommittee discussed the need to implement a realistic and feasible solution to modify the planning guidance for NRCS staff.

Recommendation:

A revised approach needs to be developed for ensuring that source water protection practices receiving the higher payment rate actually fall within the mapped source water protection areas. By doing so, it will allow NRCS staff to query state systems and generate the needed implementation data in-state for decision making.

Recommendations for Updating Priority Areas:

Issue: Ashley Hodge from Maine CDC noticed that some of the

Maine Public Water Systems with Waivers to Filtration (currently on list)

- Portland Water District (Sebago Lake)
- Auburn Water District (Lake Auburn)
- Lewiston Water & Sewer Division (Lake Auburn)

Recommendation #2: add the following systems to the list of priority areas

Maine Public Water Systems with Waivers to Filtration (not on the list)

- Bangor Water District (Floods Pond)
- Brewer Water Department (Hatcase Pond)
- Great Salt Bay Sanitary District (Little Pond)
- Presque Isle Utilities District (has wells, but is a groundwater under the influence (GUI) system, pulling from Presque Isle Stream)
- Mount Desert Water District – Northeast Harbor (Lower Hadlock Pond)
- Mount Desert Water District – Seal Harbor (Jordan Pond)

Recommendations for Outreach and Education:

1. **Develop a Maine NRCS Source Water Protection (SWP) fact sheet** – will use NH and VT fact sheets as examples to model
2. **Provide a map of the priority SWP areas** on the Maine NRCS website (need to wait until HQs approves state office recommendations in fall 2025)
3. After developing outreach materials, **work with NRCS district offices/conservation district staff** to provide information about priority areas, increased payment rates for most practices, and to promote using NRCS funds to protect priority drinking water supplies
4. **Schedule a presentation on Source Water Protection at a future STC meeting** to teach partners about Maine drinking water supplies and opportunities to protect them

Maine NRCS State Technical Committee (STAC) Source Water Protection Subcommittee

Questions?

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