



## **Annual Report of the Commissioners for 2024**

### **Annual Water Usage**

The District pumped 133,528,000 gallons of water in 2024 from its wells. This was nearly identical to the amount of water pumped in 2023, despite having a warm and dry summer season. Much of this can be attributed to a successful program of finding and fixing leaks in the system. As in previous years, a comprehensive leak survey was performed in 2024. One small leak was discovered and fixed before it became larger.

### **Weather and Water Supply Conditions**

2024 was another dry year for the seacoast area of New Hampshire. 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 in moderate drought. Fortunately, heavy rainfall events in January and March of 2024 helped to recharge the groundwater. Rainfall in June also helped to reduce irrigation demand for that month. Therefore, our groundwater levels were close to normal for the year.

### **Chemical Water Quality Results**

Annual volatile and synthetic organic chemical monitoring program sample results for 2024 were satisfactory. A more detailed report will be sent out in June 2025 via our next annual Water Quality Report. Past and recent sampling results can be seen on our website ([www.ryewaterdistrict.com](http://www.ryewaterdistrict.com)).

### **Bacterial Water Quality Results**

Monthly sampling results for coliform and E. coli bacteria were satisfactory for 2024. The District continued its NHDES-required monthly sampling for bacteria at all three wells. No 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**

The federal government requires us to inventory the water lines from the main to our customers' homes or businesses. 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. However, out of more than 1,700 connections, we don't have records documenting the materials used for approximately 200 connections. These customers recently received a letter from the district explaining our need to investigate their line to determine the material. Although we do not think we will find any lead, we must still visually investigate any service lines where we do not have conclusive documentation. Outreach to the unknown service line customers was performed in 2024 and is also available on the district's website. The district will continue to inform our customers about the status of this program and offer free lead testing of water to any of the customers with unknown services.

## **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 2029 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 essentially all PFAS.

## **Central Treatment Facility**

Thanks to the leadership of our administrator and superintendent, we released a request for proposals (RFP) for an engineering firm to design the RWD treatment facility. After receiving proposals and interviewing prospective firms, the District selected Underwood Engineers to do the work. Underwood has a proven track record of working on similar projects in New Hampshire, most recently for the Merrimack Village District and the City of Dover.

The engineering design and permitting such a complex and critical structure is anticipated to take until late 2026, but it is time well spent. Brian Goetz's (our administrator) experience and leadership has already saved a considerable amount of money in the proposed preliminary design phase, and we're sure he will continue to be a good fiscal steward for the district. Having a solid design in place will also allow us to finalize the rates necessary to meet our loan guarantees.

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

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

## **Potential New Water Source**

We progressed with our work toward developing a potential new water source on the Brown Conservation Property off West Road. In the fall of 2024, a 600-ft deep test well was drilled at the site, and the preliminary indications were favorable. There were no detectable PFAS/PFOA chemicals, and other water quality parameters were favorable. We will be moving to the next phase in 2025, which will include an extended pump test and will also begin the long approval process with the State Department of Environment Services.

## **Budget and Water Rate Update**

The District's proposed operating budget for 2025 is \$2,093,210. Many of our line items decreased from 2024. We are thankful that our participation in Rye Community Power is projected to save the district about 22% in our "complex" costs, which are those costs associated with running our wells and pump stations. No current changes to the water rate structure have been implemented yet. Our intention for 2025 is to continue our work in reviewing the 2024 rate study performed as part of our Asset Management Plan development. We anticipate that rates will need to increase in subsequent years to begin paying the debt associated with the \$16 million water treatment project State Revolving Loan Fund (SRF) financing. The first payment of this loan is anticipated to occur one year after the completion of the new water treatment facility. Currently, \$2 million of that loan is slated to be forgiven prior to beginning payments.

## **Construction Projects**

The District upgraded motor controls and installed variable speed drives for the Garland Road wells. This will improve the sustainability of the three wells and allow for better blending control for manganese, and ultimately, PFAS treatment of these sources of supply.

## **Water Meter and Billing system Upgrades**

We replaced 265 water meters in 2024, 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 2025. We will also be updating our billing system in 2025. Once in place, billings will likely 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 2024. Five service line leaks were identified, and 13 service lines were repaired or replaced.

## **System Improvements**

Three water main gate valves were replaced and a new hydrant installed on Brackett Road. 2025 system improvement plans include the replacement of the water main serving Acorn Acres, and five or more fire hydrant replacements. Also planned for this fall, the older of the two Washington Road water tanks will be taken out of service briefly to be repainted. This work is anticipated to take six weeks to two months. No impact on water system service is anticipated.

## **Operational Activities**

Annual source meter calibrations performed, and all meters found to be in exceptional accuracy. Semi-annual water main flushing/disinfection was performed with satisfactory results. Inspection of all District fire hydrants were performed to identify any need for replacement, repair or other issues. The Breakfast Hill tank mixer suffered an electric failure in 2024 and was replaced. Cross connection surveys were carried out on residential and commercial properties throughout the course of the year to identify and address actual and or potential hazards to our distribution system.

## **RWD Staff and Commissioners**

The District welcomes our newest Commissioner Thomas Mack to the board, elected March 2024. Tom comes to us as he transitions from a longtime career with the United States Geological Survey. He was part of the team that developed a detailed hydrogeologic model of the seacoast's groundwater sources. Given the ongoing effort of the District to locate new water and better understand our existing sources of supply, his knowledge will be invaluable. Tom rounds out our commission, which includes chair Scott Marion and commissioner Rosalie Lopresto.

Our newest hire, Caleb Thibodeau, continued in his second year as an Operator in training, learning daily all the facets of operating a water system. Jacob Madore, a Licensed Operator, with three years under his belt, has acquired both Distribution 2 and Treatment 2 licenses and obtained his Backflow testing license in early 2024. Dyna Ledger, our Business Manager, has faithfully managed District financial affairs and many other duties for the past eight years. Arik Jones, our Superintendent, just completed his 18th year of service with the District. These four, together with our new Administrator, Brian Goetz, 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](http://www.ryewaterdistrict.com)**

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