



2024 Fryeburg Water District Annual Report

1. District Leadership

- **Chair:** Nels Liljedahl
- **Clerk:** Bill Leathem
- **Treasurer:** Steve Anthony
- **Other Directors:** Eli Goodwin, Luke Sekera-Flanders

All involved in governance, oversight, and community engagement throughout 2024.

2. Training & Organizational Development

- All District members completed **Freedom of Access Act (FOAA)** training, ensuring full compliance with Maine's public records and meeting laws.
 - Continued membership with the **Maine Rural Water Association**, granting access to technical assistance, training, and best practices
centralmaine.combridgton.comdigitalcommons.library.umaine.edu.
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3. Community Fundraisers

- **Flatbread fundraiser:** Fundraiser took place in June, 2024. Drew strong local support and helped fund FWD operations.
 - **Saco River Brewery event:** Fundraiser took place May 23, 2025. Another successful evening, fostering community ties while raising awareness and funds for future water stewardship.
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4. Infrastructure & Reporting Enhancements

- Initiated **direct receipt of Poland Spring aquifer withdrawal reports**—streamlining oversight and transparency.
- Collaborated with Fryeburg Historical Society to begin building a **public well project**, aiming to provide free, locally sourced FWD water to residents and visitors.
- **Remapped the FWD District using GPS** to ensure accurate, up-to-date boundary information.
- Launched a campaign to **update the FWD's email contact list** among Fryeburg residents to improve alerts and communication.

5. Guest Speaker & Educational Outreach

- Hosted **Rick Bennett**, groundwater expert, who spoke on:
 - The importance of **groundwater protection, regulatory vigilance**, and combating over-extraction.
 - Impacts of **aquifer-degradation**, current lack of monitoring, and **long-term extraction contracts** with for-profit corporations—emphasizing vigilance to uphold public access and water quality.
 - Legal implications of “**absolute dominion**” concepts in water rights, offering guidance on safeguarding community control over water resources.
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6. District Expansion Dialogue

Explored the potential to **extend Fryeburg Water District boundaries** to encompass the entire town rather than current FWD public water zones—motivated by concerns over comprehensive coverage and equitable access. All town residents, whether in the district or not, are impacted by aquifer pumping, possible over-extraction, and lack of public oversight. Even residents within the district who have wells are very much impacted during times of low water or drought.

7. Scientific & Regulatory Updates

- Supported the **2024 USGS Aquifer Study**, which related to the findings of the 2017–18 Emery & Garrett Aquifer Study.
 - That study had originally included a 20% safety margin, now found depleted: current extraction limit of **603,000 gallons/day** must be considered the *maximum safe threshold*, not a target with buffer. This should be followed up on with independent water experts to discern the implications and what needs to happen to protect the aquifer and town from over-extraction. bridgton.com.
 - This critical new cap is **not widely publicized**, underscoring the District's responsibility to:
 - Identify and communicate possible risks to the community.
 - Study implications for future water usage.
 - Advocate for enhanced press coverage and deeper public awareness.
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Looking Ahead: 2025 & Beyond

Planned District initiatives:

1. **Formalize public aquifer monitoring** to track water quality indicators currently not measured.
 2. **Gauge the feasibility** of District-wide expansion, assessing technical, regulatory, and financial implications.
 3. **Strengthen oversight and contract review** around Poland Spring and other extraction agreements, advocating for community-first terms and public input.
 4. Continue strategic **fundraising and public outreach**, including expanding the free well project.
 5. Engage with legislators and media to highlight the **real limit of 603K gallons/day** as a firm ceiling for sustainable water use. Examine implications of having no buffer in place. Examine implications of 20% buffer having declined to zero between the 2005 initial study and the 2018 updated (minimal) study (13 years). If 20% of water declines in 13 years, what will happen in the next 5 years? 10 years? 15 years? Implication is extraction limits will have to be lowered.
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Acknowledgments & Contact Info

Thank you to:

- Fryeburg Historical Society – for the well project collaboration
- Saco River Brewery & Flatbread teams – for community fundraising events
- Maine Rural Water Association – for ongoing technical support
- Rick Bennett – for expert guidance
- District officials and friends of FWD for active participation

Stay informed and connected:

- Visit the **Fryeburg Water District website**, the “**Friends of Fryeburg Water District**” / **Water Waves Facebook pages**, and **Conway Sun** for news updates
- Email alerts: please ensure we have your current address. Your input matters.