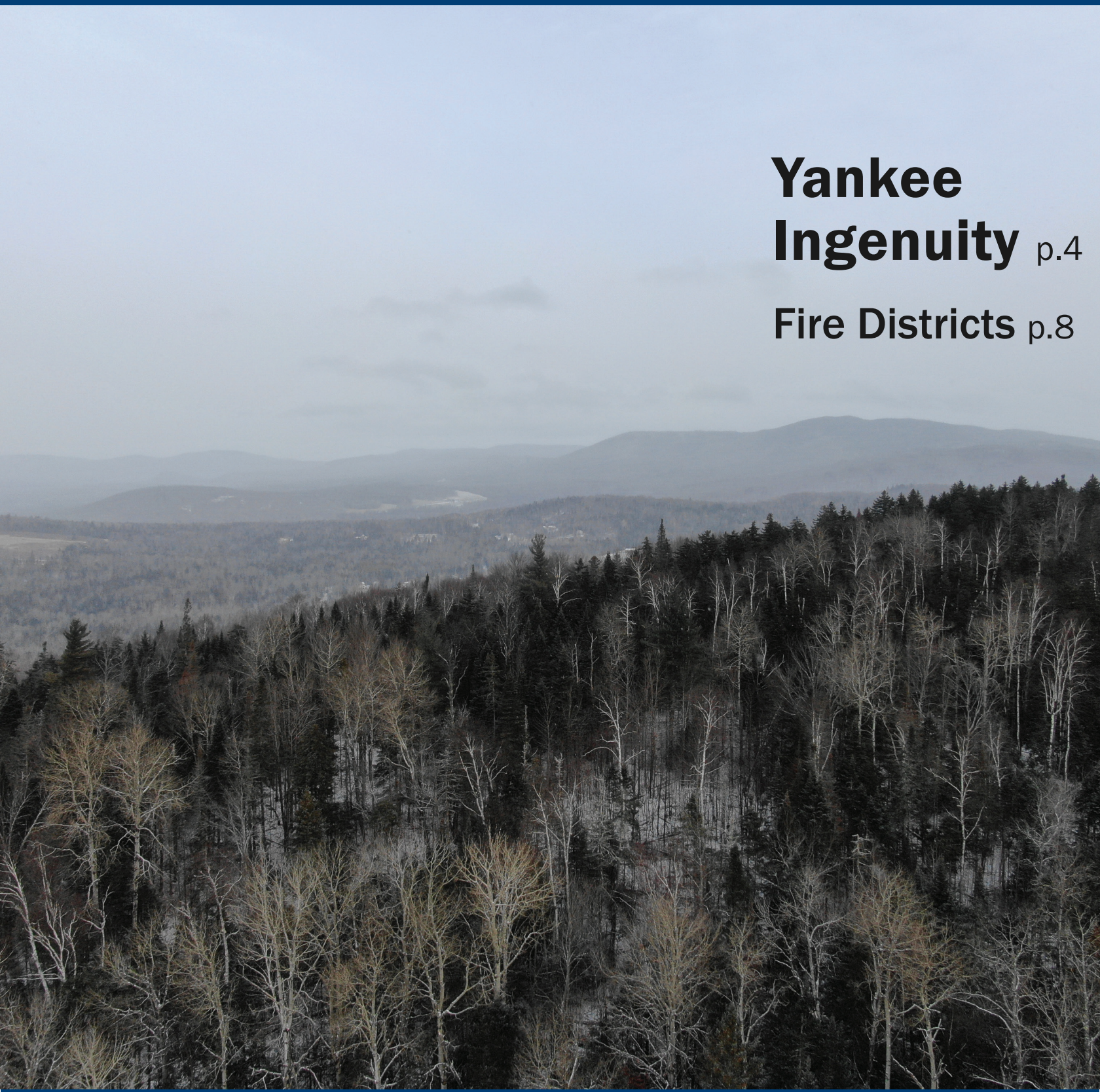
# NewsLeaks

Vermont Rural Water Association

Spring 2022



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The Vermont Rural Water Association provides training and support to drinking water and wastewater systems to promote healthy communities, rivers, and lakes across Vermont.

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**On the cover:** Drone photograph of the Burke Mountain source protection area by Diana Butler

# New Water Assistance Program Launches

by Liz Royer
*Executive Director*

With a plethora of utility customer assistance programs popping up since the start of the pandemic, there is finally one focusing entirely on water and wastewater bills.

The Low Income Household Water Assistance Program, or LIHWAP, is intended to help eligible households pay their water and wastewater bills, avoid shutoffs, and ensure their services stay active. LIHWAP is a national two-year program established by Congress under the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 to help families experiencing financial hardship.

In Vermont, the program was launched in November 2021 and is being administered by the Department for Children and Families (DCF). Funds have also been provided through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

Vermont has been allocated almost $2.1 million in one-time funding to provide assistance through LIHWAP, with 15% of that total going towards administrative costs.

The program is currently scheduled to run through September 2023, but may be extended.

A household is eligible if they pay for water or wastewater services and their gross household income is below 60% of the state median income. Customers can find the application online and mail or email it to DCF, along with a copy of their current water and/or wastewater bill. Payments will be made directly to utilities.

Water and wastewater systems don't need to preregister for the program. You should be contacted by DCF if one of your customers applies. Systems will be asked to certify as a "vendor" before the payment is made. You will need to fill out the Utility Provider Certification Agreement and sign the Terms and Conditions document.

Vermont Rural Water hosted an information session on LIHWAP last month. You can watch the recording and find more information at vtruralwater.org/lihwap

In addition to LIHWAP, there are two other utility bill assistance programs currently running. The Vermont Emergency Rental Assistance Program for Utility Services (VERAP-U) provides water/sewer bill assistance to low-income residential renters. The Vermont Homeowner Assistance Program (HAP) provides water/sewer bill assistance to homeowners. The Vermont COVID-19 Arrearage Assistance Program (VCAAP) has closed.

# YANKEE INGENUITY

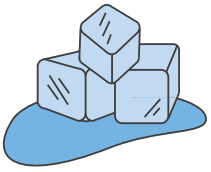
by Wayne Graham
*Wastewater System Specialist*

*This column details clever solutions that operation specialists come up with every day. Below are several cases of them solving problems, saving money, and making life at their second home—the treatment plant—a little easier.*

## Elevated Idea

Mitchell Holland, chief operator at the Readsboro WWTF (**VRWA Member**) and I spent two summers replacing the entire aeration system in their lagoons. The new air header (above, top) is mounted to the guardrail that runs the length of both lagoons. With the header off the ground, mowing is much easier. It is also more stable than putting the header on cement blocks. The black flex pipes move back and forth, so Mitchell made sleeves from PVC drain pipe to protect the flex pipe (above, right).

The third picture shows me chest deep in lagoon sludge—sometimes you just have to get into your job!



## Three Uses for Ice

A few facilities have found unique ways to take advantage of the small ice makers that are now pretty affordable. Use the ice to pack your sample coolers and avoid the dreaded message from the lab that your samples are above 6 degrees Celsius. You can use ice to clean fine screens—some manufacturers actually recommend this. The crew at Randolph WWTF (**VRWA Member**) sends ice through the centrifuge auger to clean that as well.

## Power Down

I have highlighted the following before, but I like it so much here it is again. Danville's (**VRWA Member**) aerated lagoon plant uses ultraviolet disinfection. They have a unique way of dealing with power failures and avoiding non-disinfected discharges. There is a powered open valve (red in the picture) immediately after the ultraviolet in-vessel unit. If the electrical power goes out, the valve automatically and instantly closes, stopping the effluent discharge. Due to this feature the facility does not need an emergency generator. Keep in mind that you need to have storage capacity within your plant in order to stop effluent discharge. It's perfect for a lagoon plant though!

## An Extra Hand

I really enjoy working with my friend Everett Hoyt from Barre City public works (**VRWA Member**). Everett and I were smoke testing the collection system and we needed to plug one pipe in the catch basin to direct the smoke to the area we were interested in. He very quickly fashioned a pipe plug from a traffic cone and a rubber glove. The glove plugs the hole in the end of the cone, and the shape of the cone makes it a one-size-fits-all solution. We were able to avoid a confined space entry! This is just one of Everett's many quick thinking, in-the-field hacks to get the job done.

Send your interesting ideas to me for future columns. I also encourage you to tour other facilities; you will find that networking with fellow operators can be very beneficial. Several organizations can also provide help: VTWARN, GMWEA, VT Watershed Management Division, and of course, Vermont Rural Water.

Stay safe out there, we need you! 💧

# Training Calendar

## Spring 2022

| Date | Course | TCHs | Cost (Member/Non) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Tue, April 5<br>9 am – 12:30 pm | Lead Service Line Identification, Inventory, and Replacement | 3 **W** | $18 / $36 |
| April 6 & 7<br>9 am – 12:30 pm | Biological Nutrient Removal | 6 **WW** | $36 / $72 |
| April 7, 12, 26 & 28<br>8 am – 12:30 pm | Small Systems Class 2 Water Operator Certification Course | 16 **W** | $0<br>Textbook sold separately |
| Tue, April 12<br>9 am – 12:30 pm | Water and Wastewater Ethics | 3 **W WW** | $18 / $36 |
| Thur, April 14<br>9 am – 12:30 pm | Metering in the 21st Century | 3 **W** | $18 / $36 |
| Tue, April 19<br>9 am – 12:30 pm | Chemical Feed Pumps | 3 **W** | $18 / $36 |
| Tue, April 19<br>9 am – 12:30 pm | Microbiology of Anaerobic Digesters | 3 **WW** | $18 / $36 |
| Wed, April 20<br>12 pm – 3:30 pm | Anaerobic Digester Biogas Systems and Operational Considerations | 3 **WW** | $18 / $36 |
| Thur, April 21<br>9 am – 1:30 pm | Traffic Control Certification | 4 **W WW** | $24 / $48 |
| Tue, April 26<br>9 am – 1:30 pm | Basic Math for Water and Wastewater Operators | 4 **W WW** | $24 / $48 |
| Thur, April 28<br>9 am – 1:30 pm | Advanced Math for Water and Wastewater Operators | 4 **W WW** | $24 / $48 |
| May 3 – June 22<br>9 am – 12:20 pm | Basic Wastewater Course | 48 **WW** | $497<br>Includes Textbook |
| Tue, May 3<br>8 am – 11:30 am | Small Systems Class 2 Exam Preparation Course | 3 **W** | $0 |
| Tue, May 3<br>9 am – 1:30 pm | Class 3 & 4 Exam Preparation Course | 4 **W** | $24 / $48 |
| Wed, May 4<br>9 am – 1:30 pm | Distribution Exam Preparation Course | 4 **W** | $24 / $48 |
| Thur, May 12<br>8 am – 3 pm | 2022 Annual Conference | 3 **W WW** | $55 / $110<br>Includes Lunch |
| Tue, May 17<br>9 am – 12:30 pm | Issuing a Boil Water Notice | 3 **W** | $0 |
| Tue, May 17<br>9 am – 12:30 pm | Basic Excel Course | 3 **W WW** | $18 / $36 |

**TCH** = Training Contact Hours **W** = Approved for Water Credit **WW** = Approved for Wastewater Credit

| Date | Course | TCHs | Cost (Member/Non) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Thur, June 2<br>9 am – 12:30 pm | Creating and Updating your Operation and Maintenance Manual | 3 **W** | $18 / $36 |
| Tue, June 7<br>9 am – 12:30 pm | Preparing for a Sanitary Survey | 3 **W** | $18 / $36 |
| Thur, June 9<br>9 am – 12:30 pm | Chemical Feed Pumps | 3 **W** | $18 / $36 |
| Tue, June 14<br>9 am – 12:30 pm | Operation and Maintenance of Groundwater Systems | 3 **W** | $0 |
| Wed, June 15<br>8 am – 12:30 pm | Refresher Class for Water Operators | 4 **W** | $0 |
| Thur, June 16<br>9 am – 12:30 pm | Corrosion Control and Polymers | 3 **W WW** | $18 / $36 |
| Tue, June 21<br>9 am – 1:30 pm | Traffic Control Certification | 4 **W WW** | $24 / $48 |
| Thur, June 23<br>9 am – 12:30 pm | Metering in the 21st Century | 3 **W** | $18 / $36 |
| Tue, June 28<br>8 am – 12:30 pm | Operation and Maintenance of Water Distribution Systems | 4 **W** | $0 |

**TCH** = Training Contact Hours **W** = Approved for Water Credit **WW** = Approved for Wastewater Credit

Register online at VTruralwater.org/training to pay by credit card or check, or mail in the form below. Registrations received less than 24 hours prior to class are subject to a late fee.

Members receive a 50% discount on registration fees for all employees.

Cancellations received at least 24 hours in advance can receive a refund or transfer to another class. No-shows will be charged the full course fee.

To request accommodations, call 802-660-4988 or email info@vtruralwater.org prior to the day of class.

## Register Online: VTruralwater.org/training

## Registration Form

Duplicate this form to register for multiple classes.

Course and Date:_____

Attendee Name(s): _____

System/Organization: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____
(number where you can be reached during class)

**Mail this form and payment to:**
VRWA
20 Susie Wilson Rd, Suite B
Essex Junction, VT 05452

**Questions?**
info@vtruralwater.org
(802) 660-4988

# What is a Fire District?

by Paul Sestito
*Water Systems Specialist*

Many years and a few careers ago, I was employed by a company that was headquartered in New Jersey. Occasionally, I would have to travel there for training or meetings. I'd notice signs in my travels through the Garden State that I was entering a certain "township". Not being familiar with the term, I asked what it meant, and the explanation that I got was, "It is kind of like a county, but not really." I have since looked up the definition and now understand why a township is difficult to explain.

Where am I going with this? Two words: fire district.

I first heard the term "fire district" when I was an operator attending trainings, where I would meet other operators who worked at fire districts. Once again, I was confused. Having grown up in a city, I was always accustomed to a city/town form of government. There was a mayor, a fire chief, a police chief, and a public works department. Like many people, when I heard the term fire district I thought it was synonymous with fire department. Do an internet search of fire district, and you will see that in many cases, fire departments or emergency services are sometimes involved.

> In short, a fire district is a form of municipality created to provide certain services, like drinking water.

So, what is a fire district? I have scoured the internet and print materials for a definition, and believe it or not, a simple definition is difficult to find. I came across a guidance document—produced by our own state, I might add—titled "How to Form a Fire District: A Step-By-Step Guide to Help a Community Get Organized". (The document includes quite a good deal of relevant information about providing water service and can be found at https://bit.ly/firedistrict-guide)

In short, a fire district is a form of a municipality created to provide or manage certain services or functions not provided by a town or city. Providing clean, safe drinking water may be one, but not necessarily the only, of those services. So I guess you could say, "It is kind of like a water system, but not really." All kidding aside, fire districts play an important role in providing services, including drinking water, to communities.

Fire districts that provide water are currently facing the same struggles that most, if not all, water systems in Vermont are dealing with: aging infrastructure, funding challenges, workforce shortages, and an aging or declining customer base.

However, fire districts, from my perspective, have additional challenges. In many ways fire districts are "out on an island". The reasons for this vary, from what I've observed. It can be as simple as geography: some fire districts are remote. Others are located within a village or within the boundaries of a town—or multiple towns—but operate independently from the local government, and may not have the managerial, financial, and technical capacity of a town or city.

Fire districts are managed by a board, typically referred to as a prudential committee. These committees are made up of civic-minded volunteers who have a stake in,

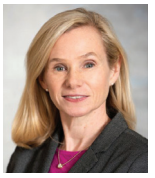
Though the concept of a fire district may be confusing, it is clear that they are vital to providing Vermonters with clean water. We at Vermont Rural Water support your efforts. Many thanks to all of you who keep our water systems running! 💧

Paul Sestito (right) and Buddy Ball search for a water leak at Lunenburg Fire District #2 (**VRWA Member**).

and care greatly about, providing safe, clean drinking water to the community. Often, these individuals have been serving on the board for a long time. Just as it can be difficult to hire new water operators, recruiting new committee members is a challenge, but is it important to the long-term success of the fire district.

In any water system, and especially fire districts, it is important to keep the customers engaged and to share the message of the important role that a water system plays in the health, vitality, and sustainability of the community. This support is important when it comes time for a bond vote or rate increase.

# 11 Water Systems Win Fluoridation Award



**Guest Feature**
Robin Miller, RDH, MPH
*Oral Health Director*
*Vermont Department of Health*

Good oral health is essential to our overall health and well-being. Tooth decay can be painful to live with and expensive to treat. Community water fluoridation is one of the best and most cost-effective ways to prevent tooth decay for everyone, regardless of age or income.

While most water has some naturally occurring fluoride, it's usually not enough to prevent tooth decay. Since communities began adding the right amount of fluoride to their water systems over 75 years ago, it is estimated that tooth decay has dropped by 25% in US adults and children.

In Vermont, 29 water systems adjust their fluoride level; that's about 137,000 Vermonters who are getting the protective dental benefits of added fluoride. Each year, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) presents Water Fluoridation Quality Awards to water systems with the ideal fluoride levels for 12 months in a row.

The Vermont Department of Health's Office of Oral Health would like to congratulate this year's 11 Vermont award recipients:

- Barre City
- Bradford Village
- Burlington Water Resources
- Champlain Water District
- Hinesburg Water Department
- Montpelier
- St. Albans
- St. Johnsbury
- Norwich Fire District #1
- Jericho Underhill Water
- Enosburg Falls

(All of these systems are **Vermont Rural Water Members**.)

Thank you for your excellent work and commitment to your community! Through community water fluoridation, we recognize that good oral health is fundamental to our quality of life and is a right for all Vermonters.

To learn more about the CDC's community water fluoridation program, and find information for water systems, visit cdc.gov/fluoridation. Water operators can receive 4 TCHs for taking the free Fluoridation Learning Online (FLO) course at www.cdc.gov/fluoridation/engineering/training.htm

# Vermont Rural Water's
# Annual Conference & Trade Show

May 11–12, 2022
Lake Morey Resort • Fairlee, VT

We are excited to return to Lake Morey Resort for an in-person event! Join us Wednesday, May 11 for the Golf Tournament and Thursday, May 12 for the conference, trade show, luncheon, and more.

Training topics include:
- Recruiting & Hiring
- Internet Safety
- Drinking Water Regulatory Updates
- Wastewater Regulatory Updates
- Frequently Asked Legal Questions
- Board Procedures

**Register Online:** VTruralwater.org/conference

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