

Meet the Tony Torchia Award Recipients p.4-5



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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Table of Contents

3 From the Executive Director

4-6 Meet the Tony Torchia Award Recipients

8-9 Training Calendar

10-11 Congratulations to Graduating Apprentices


12-13 All Water is Source Water

14-15 PFAS in Biosolids

On the cover: Tony Torchia Award Recipients Elizabeth Walker and Lance Colby in front of Lake Morey in Fairlee, VT.

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Recapping Our Annual Conference



by Liz Royer
Executive Director

Thank you to everyone who joined us at our conference at Lake Morey Resort this year. It was a special event for me because it was my first time back at Lake Morey since 2019! (Last year I was not able to attend because I tested positive for COVID.)

Wednesday kicked off with our 20th annual golf tournament. Congratulations to the winning golf team from Simon Operation Services: Dave West, Kevin Knapp, Lance Perlee, and Zach Golden.

Thursday was packed with five great training sessions, the trade show, and a luncheon with our membership meeting and award ceremony. We also had some new activities like a demonstration of VT WARN's emergency response trailers and a Coffee Talk about PFAS.

The trainings included sessions on emergency response, regulatory updates, and workforce development. A huge thank you to all of our presenters this year for providing some outstanding classes: Paula Jackson, Katherine Boyk, Mike Burke, Megan Young, Amy Polaczyk, Nick Giannetti, Michelle Kolb, Carrie LaFond, Ray Counter, Rodger Sheldon, Lane Simon, Michael Ganem and Chris Rogers.

At the annual membership meeting, our board president, Rod Lamothe, gave some updates about the association and announced the results of the board elections: John Lazelle was re-elected, and Ray



Clockwise from top: some of the systems that were recognized for 40 years of membership with Vermont Rural Water; Aaron Perez demonstrates equipment in the new emergency response trailer; judges sample an entry in the Drinking Water Taste Test.

Counter from Brandon Fire District #1 will be joining the board. Dick Desautels is retiring from the board after 20 years of service; his knowledge and experience will be greatly missed.

During the luncheon, we were able to recognize some of our apprentices for the first time. In attendance were Danny Whitaker from South Burlington, Steve Cote and Brad Snow from Richmond, Ryan Muratorri from Poultney, and Eli Charlton from Fair Haven.

We also had the honor of hearing from Vern Steel, National Rural Water Association's Deputy CEO and Chief Operating Officer, who travelled from Oklahoma to attend the conference.

The Vermont Drinking Water Week Committee returned to run the 2023 Drinking Water Taste Test. Water systems competed for the title of best drinking water in Vermont, and Canaan Fire District #2 was declared the overall winner.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6 »

Meet the Tony Torchia Award Recipients

Lance Colby: Dedication and Family Service



by Tim Russo
Deputy Executive Director

Lance Colby is one of the two recipients of this year's Tony Torchia Award, which is given in recognition of extraordinary contributions and dedication to the water industry.

Lance has had a busy career. You might know him as the long-time water operator for the Town of Fairlee. But as I learned when visiting him recently for this article, this is a man with no shortage of noteworthy accomplishments.

His work ethic and desire to serve the public is unmatched as a municipal employee. He is committed to continual learning, customer service, and

collaboration at the town, regional, and state levels.

Tad Nunez, Fairlee's town administrator, nominated Lance for the award. "For the past 48 years and counting, Lance continues day-in and day-out to provide the utmost care to the Town of Fairlee," Tad said in his nomination. "He is one of the rare ones, who is sincere, caring and passionate in his role as Chief Water Operator."

"It's a great feeling to be nominated," said Lance after receiving the award at Vermont Rural Water's conference in May.

Lance is a second-generation operator. His



Lance Colby (right) and Tad Nunez after the award ceremony at Lake Morey Resort in Fairlee.

father, Perley Colby, was Fairlee's first water operator starting in 1947.

Lance initially worked as a plumber, then took over for his father as chief operator in 1975. Between Lance and his father, the Colbys have given an amazing 76 years of family service to the Town of Fairlee.

Lance also spent four years in the Air Force, 26 years in the National Guard (retiring as a Major), and was a member of the fire department for 41 years.

When I asked about his favorite part of the job, he gave an answer I often hear from operators in what can sometimes feel like a thankless job:

"My favorite part is helping customers."

Fairlee serves both year-round and seasonal lake-side residents. Tad said, "Lance has a way about him that puts all residents at ease and [shows] that their concerns are important."

And as I'm sure will be met with a nod of agreement from many of you, one of Lance's least favorite parts of the job is dealing with leaks during the winter.

He may not enjoy the emergency situations, but Tad insists he is good during them. "Lance puts the town first and rises to the occasion to stay

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6 »

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Elizabeth Walker: Many Firsts in a Stellar Career



by Katherine Boyk
Program Assistant

Elizabeth Walker might be the most decorated female in Vermont's water industry. Receiving the Tony Torchia Award is just the latest of her achievements. At her retirement party last September, the Green Mountain Water Environment Association presented Elizabeth with the Outstanding Service Award; she is only the third recipient of this award in the organization's history. Also, GMWEA's Elizabeth Walker Meritorious Service Award is named in her honor and has been given annually since 1997.

"Elizabeth deserves the Tony Torchia Award for setting the bar high and challenging the rest of us to strive for it," said Amy Polaczyk, program manager for Vermont's Wastewater Management Program, who nominated Elizabeth for the award.

Elizabeth was presented with the award at Vermont Rural Water's conference in May. She is just the third female to receive the Tony Torchia Award in 21 years.

"It's a special honor. The Tony Torchia Award is such a meaningful award," Elizabeth said during the conference.

Throughout her career, Elizabeth has served in many different roles: a water and



Top: Elizabeth Walker at her retirement party (photo by Ashley West Leonard). Bottom: Elizabeth and board member John Lazelle touring the Deer Island wastewater facility in Massachusetts.

wastewater operator, a utility manager, the executive director of Green Mountain Water Environment Association, and a technical assistance provider to countless systems around the state through her roles with Vermont Rural Water.

"At DEC her name is routinely used as synonymous with

exemplary technical assistance," said Amy Polaczyk. "Like Elizabeth Walker' is used in multiple divisions to refer to what the future of technical assistance should be."

When she started in 1978, Elizabeth was Vermont's first female wastewater operator. She likes to tell the story of how she got her start: she was working on ski patrol at Sugarbush Resort, where she was the only person small enough to get into the manway of the sand filter at the wastewater plant. She discovered that wastewater was pretty interesting, so she switched jobs.

Within two years of becoming an operator, she was promoted to utility manager at Sugarbush, overseeing the wastewater plant as well as Mountain Water Company, which provides drinking water. (She was now Vermont's first female utility manager.)

Elizabeth worked for Vermont Rural Water twice: from 1998

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6 »

Planning	Design	Permitting
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» **LANCE COLBY**
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

with a problem until the situation is resolved,” Tad said.

One of Lance’s proudest accomplishments was effectively working with the engineers tasked with developing a plan for a pipe replacement project in 2021. He felt there were compelling reasons to avoid using PVC for this upgrade, but it took some convincing. Now Lance is happy to be running a system comprised of only cast iron and ductile iron pipes.

I asked Lance how he felt the water industry had changed over the years. His answer, unsurprisingly, was that there is much more regulation. He highlighted the challenges of dealing with regulations that apply to all systems, even though each system is unique.

Lance’s advice for new operators, or those considering entering the field? “This is one of the best jobs you can have.”

Lance is proud of the rapport he has with his customers. And as an industry, we should all be proud of Lance and his accomplishments. 💧



Lance Colby (standing in hole) in the early 1980s.

» **ELIZABETH WALKER**
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

to 2007, she provided technical assistance to small water systems and helped with State Revolving Fund (SRF) applications; and from 2017 to her retirement in 2022, she helped wastewater systems with things like training and reducing phosphorous outputs.

In between, she returned to Sugarbush, helped the Town of Randolph with the construction of a new sequencing batch reactor wastewater system, and spent two years sailing from Vermont to the Caribbean and back with her husband, Stan.

Of all the things she’s done in her career, Elizabeth seems to take the most pride in mentoring and encouraging operators. She would make a point of being the first one in so she could greet everyone and start the day on a positive note—and often with some of her incredible home baking.

“It’s been special to mentor and provide operators with the opportunity to move up in the profession,” Elizabeth said. “There’s a huge reward in that.” 💧

» **CONFERENCE**
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

April Busfield from Canaan took home bragging rights for the second year in a row, as Fire District #1 was the winner in 2022.

This year we had two Tony Torchia Award recipients: Lance Colby and Elizabeth Walker. Lance has been the chief water operator for the Town of Fairlee for 48 years. His commitment and dedication to serving the community are unmatched.

Elizabeth’s long career in the industry included 45 years spent with Sugarbush, Vermont Rural Water, and the Town of Randolph. She is an incredible mentor and has provided guidance to operators, town boards, and regulators in every corner of Vermont.

We also recognized nine systems (Woodstock Aqueduct Co., Town of Manchester, Town of West Rutland, North Bennington Water Department, Town of Springfield, Montgomery Water System, Fairlee

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7 »

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» CONFERENCE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

Town Water, Town of Fair Haven, and Williston Fire District #1) and one company (Aldrich + Elliott) that have been members with Vermont Rural Water for 40 years. Our association was founded in 1982, so these were among our first members.

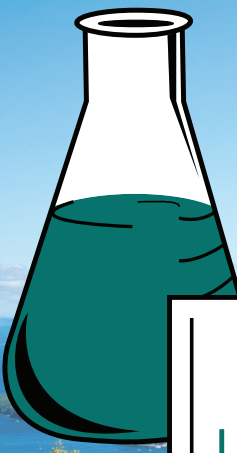
Finally, a big shout out to our conference sponsors:

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Clockwise from top: the winning golf team from Simon Operation Services; Liz Royer with panelists from the workforce development training session; operators and vendors enjoying the trade show.





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Training Calendar

Summer 2023

Date	Course	TCHs	Location	Cost (Member/Non)
Thur, July 6 9 – 11:30 am	Service Line Inventory Course	2 W	Zoom	\$14 / \$28
Tue, July 11 9 am – 12:30 pm	What to Expect at a VOSHA Inspection	3 W WW	Zoom	\$21 / \$42
Thur, July 13 8:30 am – 1 pm	Breweries and Your WWTF	4 WW	Montpelier*	\$28 / \$56
Tue, July 18 8 am – 12:30 pm	HazCom and Respiratory Protection	4 W WW	Zoom	\$28 / \$56
Wed, July 19 9 am – 1:30 pm	Traffic Control Certification	4 W WW	Montpelier*	\$28 / \$56
Thur, July 20 8 am – 12:30 pm	Confined Space and Lockout Tagout	4 W WW	Zoom	\$28 / \$56
Fri, July 21 10 am – 11 am	Excel for Service Line Inventory	1 W	Zoom	\$7 / \$14
Tue, Aug 8 9 am – 12:30 pm	Water and Wastewater Ethics	3 W WW	Zoom	\$21 / \$42
Fri, Aug 11 10 am – 11 am	Excel for Service Line Inventory	1 W	Zoom	\$7 / \$14
Wed, Aug 16 9 am – 12:30 pm	Introduction to Surface Water Treatment	3 W	Zoom	\$21 / \$42
Tue, Aug 22 9 am – 1:30 pm	Basic Math for Water and Wastewater Operators	4 W WW	Zoom	\$28 / \$56
Wed, Aug 23 10 – 11 am	Lead Service Line Replacement Plan Course NEW CLASS	1 W	Zoom	\$7 / \$14
Thur, Aug 24 9 am – 1:30 pm	Advanced Math for Water and Wastewater Operators	4 W WW	Zoom	\$28 / \$56
Sep 6 to Oct 25 9 am – 2 pm	Advanced Water Treatment Course: Class 3 & 4	48 W	Hybrid (Zoom/Essex**)	\$275 / \$450 Textbooks sold separately
Sep 6 to Oct 26 9 am – 2 pm	Distribution Course	32 W	Hybrid (Zoom/Essex**)	\$180 / \$300 Textbooks sold separately
TCH = Training Credit Hours W = Approved for Water Credit WW = Approved for Wastewater Credit				

Register Online: vtruralwater.org/training

Date	Course	TCHs	Location	Cost (Member/Non)
Tue, Sep 12 9 – 11:30 am	Service Line Inventory Course	2 W	Zoom	\$14 / \$28
Sep 12 & 13 8 am – 3 pm	Wastewater Lab Analysis NEW CLASS	12 WW	Montpelier*	\$120 / \$240
Fri, Sep 15 10 am – 11 am	Excel for Service Line Inventory	1 W	Zoom	\$7 / \$14
Tue, Sep 19 8 am – 2 pm	Pump Basics NEW CLASS	5 W WW	Bennington†	\$75 / \$150
TCH = Training Credit Hours W = Approved for Water Credit WW = Approved for Wastewater Credit				

Locations

***Montpelier:** Public Works Garage – 783 Dog River Road, Montpelier, VT

****Essex:** Vermont Rural Water's office – 20 Susie Wilson Rd, Suite B, Essex Junction, VT

†**Bennington:** Public Works – 78 Bowen Rd, Bennington, VT

Register Online: vtruralwater.org/training

Registration and Payments

Register online at vtruralwater.org/training to pay by credit card or check. Registrations received less than 24 hours prior to class are subject to a late fee.

Members of the Vermont Rural Water Association receive a 50% discount on most registration costs.

Renewal Reminder

Water Operators: Class 2 and 4 certifications must be renewed by June 30, 2023. Class 2 operators need 10 hours of continuing education and Class 4 operators need 20 hours.

Wastewater Operators: licenses must be renewed by July 31, 2023. You need 4–16 hours of continuing education (depending on your license level) in order to renew.

Cancellations/Refunds

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.

Sick Policy

As we offer more in-person classes, we ask that if you have symptoms of a contagious illness (Covid, flu, or other) you please do not attend classes in-person. If you are ill on the day of class, we will work with you to find a remote attendance option or switch to another class on a different day. We want water and wastewater systems to be able to stay fully staffed and this should help all of us stay as healthy as possible.

Accommodations

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

Congratulations to Graduating Apprentices



by Paula Jackson
Apprenticeship Coordinator

Congratulations are in order for the five apprentices that are completing the apprenticeship program this year.

Vermont Rural Water's apprenticeship program provides a structured educational curriculum and on-the-job training for new water and wastewater operators. The program provides support for apprentices to pass operator certification exams and to better understand their facility's operations and maintenance procedures. 18 apprentices are currently enrolled and in total, six have completed the program.



Amelia McClure

Amelia McClure is a Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator at the City of Burlington's Main Plant, where she has been employed for 2.5 years. Amelia continues her education by taking advanced level wastewater treatment courses through the University of Vermont.

Tyler Booska is a Surface Water Treatment Plant Operator for the City of Burlington. The Burlington Water Treatment Facility is a 5 MGD plant serving 45,000 consumers. Tyler has been employed with the



Tyler Booska

City of Burlington for a little over two years. Tyler is currently studying to pass his 4C Surface Water Treatment Plant certification exam.

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Eli Charlton (left) with mentor Carrie LaFond and Carrie's dog.

Eli Charlton started working at the Fair Haven Wastewater Treatment Facility as a high school student. A school program allowed him to get credit hours for his work time at the wastewater facility. Eli is now a Grade 1 Wastewater Operator.



Monica Braeger (left) and Danny Whitaker.

Monica Brager and Danny Whitaker both left jobs at the University of Vermont's maintenance team to become Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator Apprentices at the City of South Burlington. South Burlington has two wastewater treatment facilities: Airport Parkway is a 3.3 MGD system and Bartlett Bay is a 1.25 MGD system. Monica and Danny work at both plants. 💧

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All Water Is Source Water



by Brad Roy
*Source Protection
Specialist*

Summer is officially here, and with winter's icy lockdown a distant memory, water has become first and foremost on many of our minds. Hiking along fresh, cool mountain streams, passing roadside beaver flowages during bike rides, and enjoying Vermont's waterways by boat, kayak, or canoe keep us close to water on warm summer days.

Despite being constantly engaged with water in some form or another, as operators we often forget the importance of water sources outside of our systems. We understandably tend to focus on what we can control, or what will impact our facilities in the immediate future.

Although it's certainly important to keep your mind on the flows coming into your water or wastewater plant, it is also critical that we, as an industry, think about the broader water resources we have



Vergennes-Panton Water District's source water intake is on Lake Champlain.

here, and to remember that ALL water is, in fact, source water.

Source water protection is a critical component of any drinking water system. In Vermont, all community and NTNC water systems must have a Source Protection Plan that outlines how to reduce the risk of contamination to drinking water sources. Keeping your plan updated and implementing its action items are two good steps towards ensuring that Vermont's waters

remain clean and viable for use by all of us.

It is easy to understand the importance of working diligently to ensure the sources at our treatment plants remain uncontaminated, but it is just as critical to work to protect

our many other water sources as well. Many of us remember learning about the water cycle in grade school, which was likely your first exposure to the idea that water is not created or destroyed, but rather cycles through the landscape where it changes forms, picks up contamination, and may be used by people along the way.

Our water and wastewater facilities are one small cog in a much larger wheel. Water in all its forms, from what's inside our distribution and collection pipes to the snow that falls on a ski slope, is important to protect, both for the good of the environment as well as the good of our treatment plants. We are constantly under pressure to remove new contaminants from both drinking water and wastewater, but the more work we can do to prevent these contaminants from entering the water cycle in the first place, the easier our jobs will be in the future.

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Maintaining the attitude that all water is source water is vital to ensure that we, as operators, will continue to be able to meet the public's demand for clean, drinkable water in perpetuity. Bolstering the public's awareness and dedication to keeping waterways clean is paramount, and there are many ways you can get involved. Outreach to school groups; conservation, municipal, and regional

environmental groups; and the general public is a great start.

Outreach is not the only tool we have though, and as professionals in the field we should also look to support environmental projects designed to increase water quality and quantity on a larger scale as a means to benefit our goal to provide clean, drinkable water to all who need it in perpetuity. 💧

A stream intake for surface water collection at a water system in central Vermont.

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PFAS: Coming Down the Pipes



by Elijah Lemieux
Wastewater Specialist

Disposing of wastewater solids is about to get more expensive, and the reason is PFAS. Wastewater facilities weren't designed to remove these "Forever Chemicals," so they make it all the way to the discharge at our receiving waters, and into the sludge. PFAS-contaminated solids is what we're left with.

PFAS are an emerging public health and water quality concern, and we can expect more regulations that affect how we dispose of PFAS-contaminated biosolids. This is going to be a challenge for all of us so we need to be aware of it now.

WHAT ARE PFAS?

PFAS refers to a class of thousands of synthetic chemicals which

do not break down easily and can accumulate in both the environment and the human body. Concern is growing about the adverse health effects from exposure to these chemicals.

PFAS are used in such a wide variety of products that they are likely to be found in every home in your community. As professionals in the wastewater field, we know that chemicals that exist in our communities will make their way to our treatment facilities.

At all levels of government, the production and distribution of PFAS are being restricted and banned, but it will be a long time before those efforts can have notable effects on our end of the pipe. While legislators are working

upstream to reduce the levels of these contaminants in consumer products, we will continue to deal with PFAS in our wastewater for years.

PFAS IN BIOSOLIDS

All of our wastewater treatment plants produce sludge, and we all need to get rid of it. Many of Vermont's facilities that have relied on beneficial reuse in the past have already reduced land application or ceased altogether because of concerns about crops or groundwater being contaminated with PFAS.

Many Vermont facilities send their solids to our only active landfill, but some send their

solids out of state. This dependence on out-of-state disposal sites means that we are at the mercy of the evolving environmental restrictions of other states. As more states enact restrictions on beneficial reuse due to PFAS contamination, we could find ourselves in a predicament. (If you think finding last-minute childcare is hard, try finding someplace to take the end product from a wastewater treatment facility!)

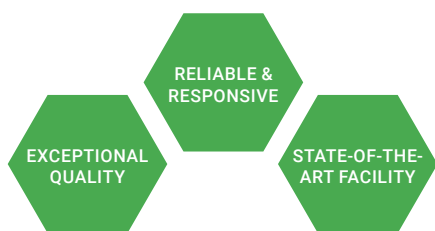
Maine recently banned the practice of land application of biosolids altogether. And in February, Quebec paused receiving biosolids from the US, which means that the Vermont plants that sent their solids to Quebec have had to seek alternatives.

AN EXPENSIVE PROBLEM

Our facilities were not engineered to remove PFAS from either water or solids. We know that we are discharging PFAS into our receiving waters. Looking ahead, it's not hard to imagine a world where PFAS levels in our discharge water are regulated, which would require significant and costly upgrades to our facilities.

If beneficial reuse is further restricted, Vermont may be faced with a surplus of sludge and biosolids with nowhere to put them. Shipping biosolids out-of-state is costly in and of itself. As demand increases for limited disposal locations, the cost of disposal will only increase.

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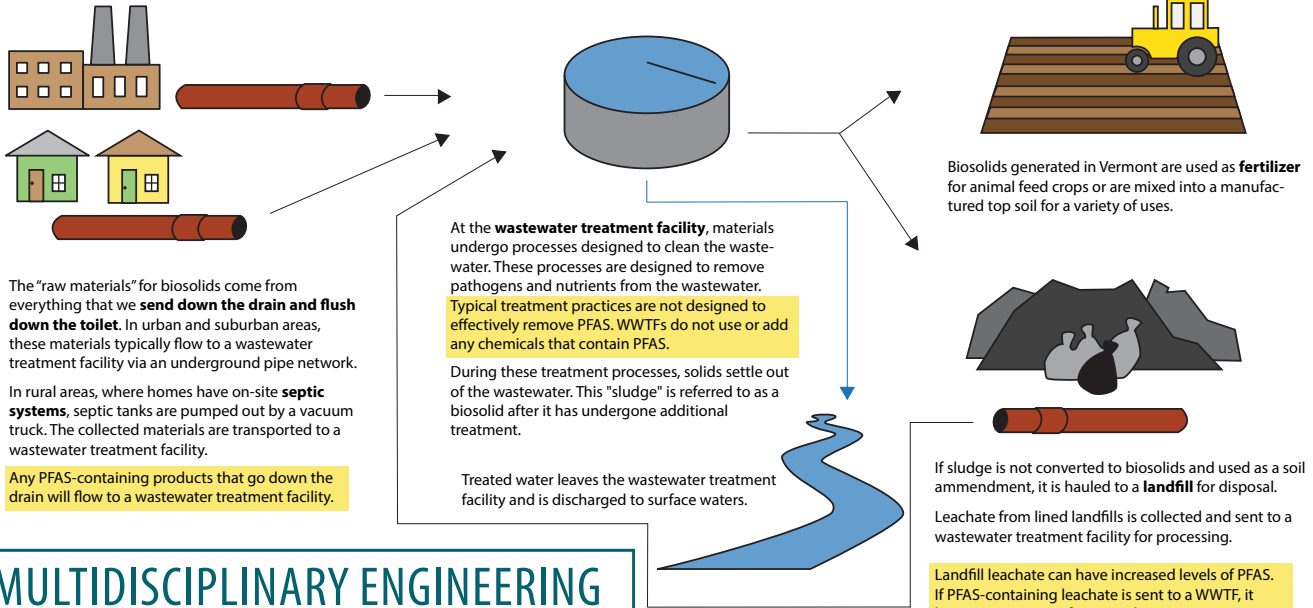
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PFAS and Biosolids in Vermont

PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) are a class of chemical used in many products. They have become ubiquitous to our modern life and are found in food packaging, furniture, water repellent products, dental floss, non-stick cookware, and many other consumer products. A growing body of science has found that there are potential adverse health impacts associated with PFAS exposure, including liver damage, thyroid disease, decreased fertility, high cholesterol, obesity, hormone suppression, and cancer.

Biosolids are the nutrient-rich organic byproducts of wastewater treatment. Biosolids have been treated and tested and meet strict federal and state standards for use as fertilizers and soil amendments. Biosolids were once considered a waste product, but are now a recycling success story. They can be beneficially reused on farms.



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Graphic created by Vermont Rural Water and GMWEA's Government Affairs Committee.

These increased costs will be a burden on our communities. As with any expense, it is better to see it coming and to plan for it than to be caught unawares.

WHAT CAN I DO?

A few months ago, Vermont Rural Water created a template letter that can be customized and sent to the decision makers in your area. This letter was sent to all of Vermont's wastewater facilities in an email dated March 17, 2023. If you cannot find it, email info@vtruralwater.org to request another copy.

This letter can be sent to your town manager or selectboard members to inform their budgeting process. It can be sent to your State legislators to encourage them to support legislation that will regulate PFAS "upstream" at the production and distribution levels. It is also important to inform legislators of how laws governing PFAS in wastewater and biosolids will impact our industry and communities. 💧

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FOR SMALLER APPLICATIONS AND LIFT STATIONS

Goulds GFK and GFV Series Sewage Pumps

- Non-clog impellers handle
wipes and 2" solids

FlowRake Rag Catchers

- Catch and retain flushables



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FOR LARGE MUNICIPAL LIFT STATIONS

Deming Demersible Chopper Pumps

- Slice the most troublesome solids
into small pieces

StationGuard Manual Bar Screens

- Capture damaging wipes and debris

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