NewsLeaks

Vermont Rural Water Association
Winter 2024–25

Honoring Some of Vermont's Long- Serving Operators p.3

Training Calendar p.8–9

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

On the cover: Jay Nadeau and Chris Robinson

Water Heroes: Jay Nadeau and Chris Robinson

by Liz Royer
Executive Director

Jay Nadeau and Chris Robinson, two of Vermont's water industry titans, will both be retiring in the near future. They each deserve much appreciation for all they have done to promote and advocate for water and wastewater with other organizations, state and federal agencies, Vermont legislature, and Congress. In addition, they have both trained and passed on their wealth of knowledge to several generations of operators and managers throughout the state.

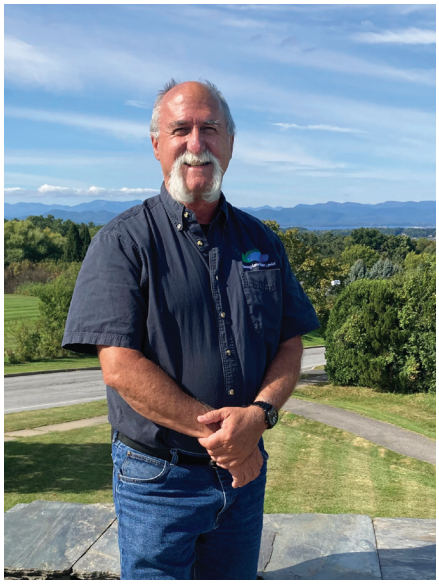
Recently, Vermont Rural Water recognized Jay and Chris on our Water Heroes blog series. Read the full interviews at vtruralwater.org/water-heroes.

Jay Nadeau has worked in the water resources field for nearly 40 years, including roles with Essex Junction, Winooski, and Smugglers' Notch. Since 2019, he's served as the Distribution Director of the Champlain Water District.

He fondly remembers his first day on the job, fixing a water leak in rush hour traffic and having the satisfaction of completing the task. "I fell in love with the job that day," Jay said.

Throughout the years, he has continued to enjoy solving the many day-to-day challenges associated with aging infrastructure.

Jay says his proudest moments revolve around teaching other distribution workers in Vermont. He saw that distribution wasn't talked about as much as other topics in training classes. "I wanted to bring what I had learned from the field and national conferences back, so everyone could become better at their call of duty," he said. Jay has been a guest instructor at a number of Vermont Rural Water's classes.



Jay Nadeau

Chris Robinson

His first mentor told Jay that he had forgotten more than Jay would ever learn. Jay took that as a challenge to learn more. Now at the end of his career, Jay's advice to new operators includes remembering we are the first line of defense in protecting public health and to keep learning and bringing new ideas to the field.

After his retirement at the end December, Jay plans to visit his kids and grandkids, take motorcycle trips, volunteer with the Vermont Old Cemetery Association, and spend time at his camp.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14»

Burr Snow's 33 Years of Dedication to Arlington's Drinking Water

by Aaron Perez
Water Systems Specialist

Arlington, Vermont may not be the biggest community out there, but one thing's for sure—it's got heart, grit, and some of the cleanest water around. And that's thanks, in large part, to Burr Snow, Arlington's sole water operator and bonafide hometown hero.

He's not just on the job; he's been on call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, for 33 years. Let that sink in. For more than 12,000 days, Burr has been ready to roll up his sleeves for whatever water-related curveball Mother Nature or human nature decides to throw.

A WATER HERO'S JOURNEY

Burr began in 1991 as the backup for then-chief operator Peter Putis. In 2005, Burr took over the reins as the lead operator, and he hasn't looked back since. Over the past three decades, he's been the first and last line of defense for Arlington's water quality, monitoring every last drop to ensure safe, clean, and reliable drinking water for every faucet, every tap, and every glass filled.

It's not an easy job, either. You've got your average daily water demand of around 140,000 gallons—a number Burr knows like the back of his hand. Arlington's water system serves 450 connections, bringing clean water to roughly 1,250 residents. So, when you add up all the families, businesses, and emergency situations that depend on his work, Burr's got the community of Arlington resting on his shoulders, and he carries that load proudly.

Burr Snow

As if his skills as a water operator weren't enough, Burr also happens to be a master plumber. It's a combination that's served the town well, especially when complex or unexpected issues pop up that need both technical knowledge and hands-on plumbing skills.

EVOLUTION FROM PRIVATE TO PUBLIC

Burr was front and center in 2016 when the water system, which had been owned by the Arlington Water Company, a private business founded in 1896, was purchased by the town. The system needed critical maintenance and upgrades that the private company could not afford on its own. The transition from private to

public ownership meant that the system was now eligible for state and federal grants and loans to fund these projects. Burr led the charge through this change, looking out not just for the community, but for the long-term viability of the system itself.

HEROICS DURING HURRICANE IRENE

Now, it wouldn't be a true Vermont water operator story without some legendary weather challenges, right? In 2011, Hurricane Irene brought devastation across Vermont, and Arlington's water system took a massive hit. 80 feet of transmission line fell into the river—that's 80 feet of pipe torn out of place and washed away. Burr wasn't fazed. He worked 18 hours straight to restore water service as quickly as humanly possible. When Arlington needed him most, Burr was there, and he pulled off what can only be called a heroic feat. The people of Arlington have always been able to count on him, but during Irene, he proved he's as steadfast as the Green Mountains themselves.

THE UNSEEN WORK OF A WATER OPERATOR

You likely know the routine of a water operator. Daily inspections, monitoring levels, testing for contaminants, responding to alarms, maintaining equipment, handling public questions—it's endless. But for Burr, this routine is more than a job; it's a calling. He's the one on the front lines of public health, ensuring Arlington's water quality and safety. He's managed everything from daily tests and quality checks to major system upgrades, and he's probably patched more leaks than snowflakes in a January blizzard. (And if you know winter in Vermont, you know that's no small feat.)

Burr's job is about keeping things flowing without a hitch, no matter the weather, time of day, or personal cost. And the people he serves? They don't see him often. They don't think about what it takes to get water flowing into their homes. But Burr knows every bolt, every valve, and every step it takes. He knows he's working to safeguard the health and well-being of every Arlington resident, and he takes that responsibility to heart.

33 YEARS AND COUNTING

So, here's to Burr—thirty-three years on the job, but so much more than that. He's the beating heart of Arlington's water system, the unsung protector of public health, the guy who responds to every call and never lets the town down. He's the reason you can brush your teeth, make your coffee, water your plants, and fill your pets' bowls without a second thought.

To Burr, we raise a glass of Arlington's finest—clean, safe, and reliable, thanks to the man who's kept it that way for over three decades.

Flood Resilience for Water & Wastewater Systems

by Paula Jackson
Apprenticeship Program Coordinator

Elijah Lemieux, Wayne Graham, Forest Anderson, and Edward Richard at the Hardwick Wastewater Treatment Facility after this July's flooding.

As we've seen in recent years, flooding events are becoming increasingly frequent in Vermont, and will likely continue to become more intense as climate change worsens. Flooding can cause contamination to the water supply, loss of power, damage to assets, safety hazards for operators, and many other issues.

With planning and preparation, water and wastewater systems can become more resilient to flooding. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines flood resilience as "the ability of water and wastewater utilities to withstand a flooding event, minimize damage, and rapidly recover from disruptions to service."

The EPA created a guidance document called Flood Resilience: A Basic Guide for Water and Wastewater Utilities. It provides step-by-step guidance for systems to improve their flood resilience, including worksheets, videos, and case studies.

The following steps for improving flood resilience come from EPA's guidance document:

STEP 1: UNDERSTAND THE THREAT OF FLOODING

Research past floods your town has experienced and use FEMA's flood maps to identify areas vulnerable to flooding from storms and spring runoff. Be aware that flood maps are based on historical data, so they may not fully predict the risk of future flooding due to climate change. Also consider the possibility of floods caused by dam failures or water main breaks.

STEP 2: IDENTIFY VULNERABLE ASSETS & CONSEQUENCES OF FLOODING

Compare the flood maps with locations and elevations of assets like buildings, equipment, generators, chemical/fuel tanks, storage tanks, collection/distribution pipes, and pump stations. Determine the consequences to operations and repair/replacement costs if these asset were to flood. Use this to prioritize which assets most need protection.

STEP 3: CONSIDER MITIGATION MEASURES

Mitigation measures may include construction projects, modifications to assets, standard operating procedures, or educating your consumers on what to expect. Examples include constructing flood barriers or moving electrical equipment above flood level. EPA's flood resilience guide has a great list of mitigation measures to protect a variety of assets at water and wastewater systems.

STEP 4: DEVELOP AN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Assign responsibilities to staff, board members, and other public works personnel to develop standard operating procedures, identify funding sources, and accomplish projects in-house if possible. Flood mitigation measures that require major capital and infrastructure investments should be integrated into the utility's overall asset management planning process. FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program may be a good funding source for these projects.

SAFETY

In addition to protecting the utility's assets, planning for the safety of staff during flooding events should be of the highest priority. Standard operating procedures for

Left: Forest Anderson and Wayne Graham help with repairs at the Plainfield Wastewater Treatment Facility after flooding this July.

Right: A sewer line attached to a temporary bridge over Great Brook in Plainfield. Both water and sewer services were cut off from one side of town due to flooding.

safety during a flood should be developed and implemented. Here are some recommendations to consider:

- Implement a buddy system so no one is working by themselves in a potentially dangerous environment.
- Do not drive vehicles into flood waters!
- Allow staff to secure their homes and families before coming back to the treatment plant during flooding.
- Identify safety procedures specific to your facility.
- Have proper personal protective equipment (PPE) for all workers, including:
  - Personal floatation devices that are easy to work in and comfortable
  - Hard hats with a chin strap and a light
  - Leather gloves and chemical-resistant gloves
  - Eye protection
  - Respirators and N-99 masks
  - Steel shank rubber boots

Training Calendar

Winter 2025

Date	Course		TCHs	Location	Cost (Member/Non)
Tue, Jan 7 9 am – 12:30 pm	Safety: Water and Wastewater Facility Flooding	New!	3 **W WW**	Essex[1]	$24 / $48
Jan 9 & 10 8:30 am – 2:30 pm	OSHA 10-Hour General Industry Safety Training		10 **W WW**	Manchester[2]	$80 / $160
Tue, Jan 14 9 am – 12:30 pm	Safety: Water and Wastewater Facility Flooding	New!	3 **W WW**	Zoom	$24 / $48
Thur, Jan 16 9 am – 12:30 pm	Corrosion Control: Alternatives to Phosphorus-Based Treatments	New!	3 **W**	Brattleboro[3]	$24 / $48
Thur, Jan 16 9 am – 12:30 pm	TNC Operations		3 **W**	Zoom	No cost
Tue, Jan 21 9 am – 12:30 pm	Operation and Maintenance of Groundwater Systems		3 **W**	Zoom	$24 / $48
Wed, Jan 22 9 am – 3:30 pm	Disaster Response Training	New!	6 **W WW**	Montpelier[4]	No cost
Tue, Jan 28 9 am – 12:30 pm	Water Treatment: Filtration Processes		3 **W**	Zoom	$24 / $48
Wed, Jan 29 9 am – 12:30 pm	Protecting Source Water in Forested Watersheds	New!	3 **W**	Essex[1]	No cost
Tue, Feb 4 9 am – 12:30 pm	Water Treatment: Coagulation	New!	3 **W**	Zoom	$24 / $48
Tue, Feb 11 9 am – 12:30 pm	Startup, Optimization, and Troubleshooting	New!	3 **W WW**	Zoom	$24 / $48
Feb 12 – April 10 9 am – 12:30 pm	Class 4 Water Treatment Course		48 **W**	Zoom	$384 / $768 Textbooks sold separately
Thur, Feb 13 9 am – 12:30 pm	Coagulation, Jar Testing, and Chemical Handling	New!	3 **W WW**	Brattleboro[3]	$24 / $48
Tue, Feb 18 9 am – 12:30 pm	Water System Administration	New!	3 **W**	Zoom	$24 / $48
Tue, Feb 25 9 am – 12:30 pm	TNC Operations		3 **W**	Zoom	No cost
Tue, Feb 25 8:30 am – 12 pm	Advanced WW Series: BOD, ORP, and Sludge Production	New!	3 **WW**	Zoom	$36 / $72
March 3 – April 10 9 am – 12:30 pm	Class 3 Water Treatment Course		36 **W**	Zoom	$288 / $576 Textbooks sold separately

TCH = Training Credit Hour **W** = Approved for Water Credit **WW** = Approved for Wastewater Credit

Register Online: vtruralwater.org/training

Date	Course	TCHs	Location	Cost (Member/Non)
March 5 – April 15 9 am – 12:30 pm	Water Distribution Course	36 **W**	Zoom	$288 / $576 Textbooks sold separately
Thur, March 6 8:30 am – 2:30 pm	Water Operator Math Course: Day 1 **New!**	5 **W**	Essex[1]	$40 / $80 Textbook sold separately
Thur, March 13 8:30 am – 12 pm	Advanced WW Series: Septage and Toxicity **New!**	3 **WW**	Zoom	$36 / $72
Wed, March 19 9 am – 12:30 pm	Calibration of Weirs, Flumes, and Flow Meters **New!**	3 **W WW**	Montpelier[5]	$24 / $48
Thur, March 20 8:30 am – 2:30 pm	Water Operator Math Course: Day 2 **New!**	5 **W**	Essex[1]	$40 / $80 Textbook sold separately
Tue, March 25 9 am – 12:30 pm	TNC Operations	3 **W**	Zoom	No cost
Thur, March 27 9 am – 12:15 pm	Small, High-Strength Dischargers **New!**	3 **WW**	Montpelier[5]	$24 / $48
Thur, March 27 8:30 am – 2:30 pm	Water Operator Math Course: Day 3 **New!**	5 **W**	Essex[1]	$40 / $80 Textbook sold separately

TCH = Training Credit Hour **W** = Approved for Water Credit **WW** = Approved for Wastewater Credit

Locations

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

2. Manchester: Town Hall – 40 Jeff Williams Way, Manchester Center, VT

3. Brattleboro: Fire Department – 103 Elliot St, Brattleboro, VT

4. Montpelier: Association of General Contractors – 1 Graves St, Montpelier, VT

5. Montpelier: Dewey Building – 1 National Life Drive, Montpelier, VT (furthest building in National Life Complex)

Renewal Reminder

Water Operators: Class 3 and D certifications must be renewed by June 30, 2025. You will need 20 hours of continuing education. Please note that the renewal process for water operators will be slightly different in 2025. DWGPD will be providing more details in the coming months. In the meantime, we encourage all operators to save their certificates from training classes and track their training credit hours (TCHs).

Wastewater Operators: Wastewater licenses must be renewed by July 31, 2025. You need 8–16 hours of continuing education (depending on your license level) in order to renew.

Introducing the Advanced Wastewater Treatment Series

by Elijah Lemieux
Wastewater Systems Specialist

Students in the Basic Wastewater Course this fall tour the Montpelier Water Resource Recovery Facility.

Not too long ago, I was studying for my wastewater exams. I took the Basic Wastewater Course (twice) when studying for my lower-level license exams, and I quickly recognized that I would benefit from a course for the higher-level exams, too. I knew I needed more training, but I didn't know which classes to take.

Since then, I have joined the team at Vermont Rural Water and we've been designing a program of studies to help wastewater operators prepare for higher-grade exams. We are pleased to announce that starting in 2025, we will be offering a series of advanced wastewater classes.

We are calling this new offering the Advanced Wastewater Treatment Series, and it will be comprised of a curated menu of classes for operators who are looking to enhance their understanding of wastewater treatment. If you are preparing for a Grade 3, 4, or 5 wastewater exam, or are seeking a management position at a wastewater treatment facility, this series is for you. These trainings will also help wastewater operators keep up-to-date with advancing technology as plants become more complex.

This series is a work in progress so we haven't finalized all of the topics yet. Our initial goal is to offer classes on clarifiers, digesters, activated sludge, disinfection and chemical addition, sequencing batch reactors (SBRs), and laboratory analysis.

HOW WILL THE SERIES WORK?

There is no formal enrollment in the Advanced Wastewater Treatment Series—just sign up for each class you want to take. Classes will have "Advanced WW Series" in the title. You are not required to take every class in this series.

Some classes will be in-person and some will be held on Zoom. They will range in length from 3 or 4 hours to multiple days. Like our other trainings, these classes will provide TCHs for license renewal.

We anticipate offering one class from this series every month or so. We are collaborating with expert

instructors from around the country to provide you with the best training possible.

The Advanced Series will kick off in February 2025 with a class on BOD, ORP, and Sludge Production, and another in March on Septage and Toxicity. Both classes are taught by Michael Gerardi, a wastewater expert from Pennsylvania. Michael has been operating plants and troubleshooting wastewater treatment for 45 years. He has also been training wastewater operators for 35 years and has authored 11 books on wastewater biology.

Additional classes will be posted soon on our website. Some will be new classes that we haven't offered before, and some will be new takes on existing classes, revised to meet the goals of this series. Register on our website at vtruralwater.org/training.

WHY CAN'T YOU OFFER A COURSE FOR HIGHER-GRADE EXAMS?

Operators seeking higher-grade licenses are frequently asking us for an advanced version of the Basic Wastewater Course. Why can't we "teach to the test?" The higher-grade license exams encompass a wide range of topics and consist of very specific questions. The exams for grades 3, 4, and 5 become increasingly technical. Any one course could not cover the complexities required for these exams.

Instead, we are creating this series that includes classes on many of the topics required for the higher-grade licenses. This will allow us to dive deeper into individual topics with leading experts in the field.

It is our hope that operators will find this series helpful for preparing for higher-grade exams, and find the information useful for their work at wastewater facilities. Because this is new, we will work to refine and develop the series and appreciate your feedback.

If you have suggestions for future trainings, as always, please reach out to VRWA by emailing info@vtruralwater.org.

What is a Sanitary Survey?

GUEST ARTICLE
by Meredith Maskell
Drinking Water and Groundwater Protection Division

Sanitary surveyors inspect water system components.

A sanitary survey is a review of a public water system to assess its capability to supply safe drinking water. The State of Vermont's Drinking Water and Groundwater Protection Division (DWGPD) is responsible for performing sanitary surveys at public water systems in Vermont.

There are two teams of staff at the DWGPD who perform sanitary surveys. The Community Operations Section, which includes Matt Hunt, Kenna Dwinell, Matt Caldwell, Michael Langham, and Ted Fela, conducts sanitary surveys every three years at Community Water Systems (CWS).

The Non-Community Operations Section, which includes Meredith Maskell, Ashliegh Belrose, Amanda Faust, and Sarah Bolaski, conducts sanitary surveys every five years at Transient Non-Community (TNC) and Non-Transient Non-Community (NTNC) water systems.

PREPARING FOR THE SANITARY SURVEY

The sanitary surveyor will contact the water system's Administrative Contact and Designated Operator when it is time to schedule the sanitary survey. Typically sanitary surveys will be scheduled within two weeks or a couple of months, depending on when everyone is available. The Designated Operator must be present at the sanitary survey, but it is strongly recommended that other water system representatives also attend who have knowledge of or questions about the operation of the water system.

Prior to the sanitary survey, water system representatives should conduct an administrative file review and a visual inspection of the water system.

File Review: Verify that you have all the water system's documents on file and available for review by the sanitary surveyor if requested. These documents include the Permit to Operate, Operation and Maintenance Manual, Source Protection Plan, water quality sampling plans, past Monthly Operations Reports, and past water quality data.

Visual Inspection: Conduct a walk-through of the water system to verify that all facilities and components are accessible and in good working order. The sanitary surveyor must have access to all the system components during the inspection, including the well, storage tank overflows, and drains. Vegetation and/or snow must be cleared from the components prior to the sanitary survey. If the water system components are not accessible during the sanitary survey, the lack of accessibility will be identified as a sanitary deficiency and the water system will be required

to submit photographs of the components that were not accessible during the sanitary survey.

CONDUCTING THE SANITARY SURVEY

There are eight required components of a sanitary survey that your inspector will evaluate and discuss with you at the inspection:

1. Source (quality, quantity, construction, condition, land uses)
2. Treatment (chemical application, monitoring, reporting, storage and handling, backwash)
3. Distribution system (pressure, cross-connections)
4. Finished water storage (inspections, cleanings, condition, access)
5. Pumps, pump facilities, and controls
6. Monitoring, reporting, and data verification (sampling plans, monthly operations reports, monitoring schedules)
7. System management and operation (Operating Permit, Operation and Maintenance Manual)
8. Operator compliance with State requirements

Beginning in 2025, sanitary surveys will also include a cybersecurity evaluation. The specific requirements for, and components of, the evaluation will depend on the type and extent of operational technology the water system uses. Stay tuned for more information from DWGPD and Vermont Rural Water.

During the sanitary survey, the sanitary surveyor will notify you if they identify any sanitary deficiencies at the water system. Sanitary deficiencies are actual or potential problems in a water system's infrastructure, design, operation, maintenance, or management that have or may impact the water system's ability to produce safe and reliable drinking water. A significant sanitary deficiency is one that is causing, or has the potential to cause, the introduction of contamination into the water delivered to users. A deficiency can be a physical problem, operating condition, or management practice.

FOLLOW-UP TO THE SANITARY SURVEY

The sanitary surveyor will issue a letter to the water system within 30 days of the sanitary survey that documents and summarizes the visit. The letter will identify any sanitary deficiencies, requirements, recommendations, or comments that were found during the sanitary survey and will propose due dates to resolve the sanitary deficiencies or requirements. The water system must submit the required documentation by the due dates identified or propose alternative due dates for review by the sanitary surveyor.

»CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Chris Robinson currently serves as the Water Quality Superintendent of the Shelburne Wastewater Department. He has worked in wastewater for over 25 years and will be retiring in the spring of 2025.

Prior to entering this field, he worked as an electrician and then opted for a career change and went to college for environmental science.

His career has included service to several water industry organizations. He has held various roles with Green Mountain Water Environment Association (GMWEA), as well as on the New England Water Environment Association's (NEWEA) Executive Board.

Some of Chris's favorite memories were competing in the Water Environment Federation's (WEF) Operations Challenge. He got to travel to Chicago and Los Angeles with the New England team to compete at the national level.

Chris encourages new operators to get involved in industry organizations. "My time spent on the GMWEA board and the NEWEA Executive Board were some of the greatest memories of my career," he said. "I made some lifelong friendships along the way."

Chris would like to thank the Shelburne residents and town selectboard for their ongoing support and Shelburne's wastewater employees for their friendship.

After retiring, Chris and his wife are looking to move south. They also plan to spend time at their camp in the Adirondacks and a take a few cross-country trips in their camper. And of course, he will be bringing his fly rod along!

We thank Jay and Chris, as well as all of Vermont's water and wastewater heroes who perform essential services to protect the health and environment of our communities.

Do you know a Water Hero who should be featured on our blog? Email info@vtruralwater.org.

Funding Available for Asset Management Planning

GUEST ARTICLE

by Carmen Zwack

Drinking Water and Groundwater Protection Division

Developing an Asset Management Plan (AMP) can help your public drinking water system overcome the challenges it faces.

The Capacity Development Program at the Department of Environmental Conservation and the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) are offering loans to municipal water systems to develop a full asset management plan. A municipality may receive up to $50,000 in planning loan forgiveness to develop and implement a DEC-approved asset management plan.

Brad Roy, Paul Sestito, and board members from East Hardwick Fire District #1.

HOW CAN AN ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN HELP YOUR WATER SYSTEM?

- Build an inventory and assess the condition of all assets
- Meet customer demands with a focus on system sustainability
- Develop a long-term financing strategy
- Prepare for shifts in regulatory requirements
- Prepare for asset failure and emergency situations
- Create a map of all assets

ARE THERE ANY TERMS AND CONDITIONS FOR THE FORGIVABLE LOAN?

The forgivable loan is only available to municipalities. A board member AND the water system's Designated Operator must attend our AMP workshop series before the loan goes into repayment. Additionally, the AMP must adhere to the guidelines outlined by Guidance 26. Please reach out to us for more information on these conditions.

IS THERE AN APPLICATION DEADLINE?

There is no fixed deadline. Applications can be submitted at any time.

ARE THERE ANY INCENTIVES FOR WATER SYSTEMS TO COMPLETE AN AMP?

Yes, future construction projects will receive 75 additional points on the DWSRF priority funding list after a water system has completed an Asset Management Plan.

For more information on how to develop an AMP and the requirements for loan forgiveness, please contact cheryl.choge@vermont.gov or carmen.zwack@vermont.gov.

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