

Legislative Committee Report by Thomas Fargo – September 2019

At this writing, the 2019 session of NH General Court (State Legislature) is returning to work after a two-month summer recess. Legislative Study Commissions and Committees have been formed and are initiating their work toward recommendations for further legislation.

During 2019, the GSNH Legislative Committee tracked 21 bills of interest. A tabulation of these bills was included in the June Newsletter and is also posted on the GSNH website. Four of these bills have been voted by the full House or Senate as “Inexpedient to Legislate” (ITL), killing the bill.

Ten bills tracked by GSNH were either tabled, retained by or re-referred to House or Senate policy committees for further work. As of this writing, only one bill HB-543, relative to protection of wetlands, has work sessions scheduled in the House Committee on Resources Recreation and Development.

Governor Sununu vetoed one of the bills tracked by GSNH, that being HB326, relative to the definition of prime wetlands.

Since the June 2019 legislative update, Governor Sununu signed five additional GSNH-tracked bills into law. These bills included:

- HB-261 - Requiring the NHDES to revise the ambient groundwater quality standard (AGQS) for arsenic to not exceed 5 micrograms per liter (parts per billion), effective no later than July 1, 2021.
- HB- 443 - Allowing the local governing body to restrict the use of water for outdoor watering during periods of drought. This bill also provides exemptions for turf grass on recreation fields, golf courses and fields used for production of sod.
- HB-495 - Establishing a thirty-four-member Legislative Commission on drinking water. This Commission is to plan for long term goals and requirements for drinking water on the seacoast. The Commission activities will run through November 1, 2029.
- HB-617 - Establishing a four-member Legislative Committee to study recycling streams and solid waste management in New Hampshire.
- HB-737 – Establishing a twenty-member Legislative Commission to investigate and analyze the environmental and public health impacts relating to releases of perfluorinated chemicals in the air, soil, and groundwater in Merrimack, Bedford and Litchfield.

As indicated by the descriptions above, Legislative Commissions are comprised of several members of the General Court (NH House and Senate) as well as numerous stakeholders specified by the law. Legislative Committees are comprised of only members of the NH General Court, who often request expert testimony from knowledgeable individuals during the course of their investigations. Most study Committees and Commissions must issue an interim or final report their findings by November 1st.