



**SPRINGFIELD WATER AND SEWER COMMISSION  
P.O. BOX 995, SPRINGFIELD, MA 01101**

Date of Issuance: October 21, 2022

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Springfield Water and Sewer Commission Hosts Congressman Richard Neal at Cobble Mountain Reservoir**

*Congressman Richard Neal Tours the 22-billion gallon Cobble Mountain Reservoir  
in Honor of Imagine A Day Without Water 2022*

The Springfield Water and Sewer Commission (Commission) was pleased to host Congressman Richard Neal (MA-1) for a tour of Cobble Mountain Reservoir in honor of [\*Imagine A Day Without Water\*](#), a national day of advocacy and education about the value of water.

As part of the tour, Congressman Neal visited the 22-billion gallon Cobble Mountain Reservoir, the Commission's primary water supply that provides drinking water to Springfield and nine other communities in the lower Pioneer Valley. The reservoir is located in Blandford and Granville, surrounded by more than 14,000 acres of protected watershed forest.

*Imagine A Day Without Water* asks the public to consider what it would be like to go a day without water, something essential to daily life and public health. Recently, residents in Puerto Rico, Jackson, Mississippi and areas impacted by Hurricane Ian have had just that experience for weeks on end, underscoring the increasing and all-too-real risks posed to the nation's aging water infrastructure, and the need for funding for and innovative solutions to modern water and wastewater challenges.

During Congressman Neal's visit, the Commission highlighted the proactive efforts it is making to modernize its water and wastewater infrastructure, much of which was originally built approximately 100 years ago. In 2021 the Commission initiated the \$550 million [Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Renewal Program](#), financed by a highly competitive loan from EPA's Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act ([WIFIA](#)). The WWIRP is portfolio of more than 20 capital projects to reduce risk, enhance climate resiliency, and improve water and wastewater service reliability. The Commission was the first water utility in Massachusetts to receive a WIFIA loan.



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Among the projects included in the WWIRP are recently completed upgrades to the Diversion Gate (built in 1930), which directs raw water flow to the water treatment plant, as well as planned upgrades to the Cobble Mountain Hydropower Station (also built in 1930), which generates enough renewable energy to power 25,000 households as water flows from the reservoir to the treatment plant. Both facilities were highlighted on the tour.

**Congressman Richard Neal** remarked, “Today’s visit to Cobble Mountain Reservoir with the Commission not only highlights the tremendous importance of maintaining healthy water and wastewater infrastructure, but also the great work that has been done in the 50 years since the signing of the Clean Water Act. This week marked the enactment of the landmark legislation that has protected our streams, rivers, lakes, estuaries, and wetlands from pollution. Because of this law, we are able to preserve these treasured resources for current and future generations.”

**Executive Director Josh Schimmel** stated, “Springfield and the region are beneficiaries of the immense ingenuity and foresight of previous generations that built Cobble Mountain Reservoir and the rest of the water and wastewater systems to such high and enduring standards. But the clean, safe water we enjoy today was never meant to be taken for granted. When we “Imagine a Day Without Water” in Springfield, we are imagining what might happen if we do not renew our critical infrastructure to ensure it reliably serves future generations, particularly as the risks posed by age and climate change increase. We thank Congressman Neal for his ongoing support as the Commission addresses those risks head-on through our generational, \$550 million re-investment in our region’s water infrastructure.”

**Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Renewal Program (WWIRP)**

The WWIRP is a \$550 million infrastructure renewal program that includes more than twenty water and wastewater capital improvement projects that span the Lower Pioneer Valley. The WWIRP is advancing on an accelerated schedule due to the Commission securing a \$250 million highly competitive, low-interest loan from EPA’s Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act ([WIFIA](#)) program as well as through financing from the Massachusetts Clean Water Trust State Revolving Fund (SRF).

Projects include upgrades to the raw water conveyance system (Diversion Gate) and Cobble Mountain Hydropower Station, which were highlighted on the tour, as well as construction of the [new West Parish Drinking Water Treatment Plant](#). The new \$238 million drinking water treatment plant will help address regulatory compliance, improve overall water quality, and service reliability. Design of the new plant is underway and on schedule. Construction is expected to begin in 2024 and be complete in 2027.

More information on the WWIRP and the portfolio of projects is available here:  
<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/5d6420cc44ed477eaaba63d8108f04d4>.



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**About Cobble Mountain Reservoir, the Diversion Gate House, and Cobble Mountain Hydropower Station**

Cobble Mountain Reservoir was constructed in 1931 to serve the growing City of Springfield. Cobble Mountain Dam, which creates the reservoir, was the largest earthen dam in the world at the time of construction, at 243 feet high. The reservoir is fed by the Little River and Borden Brook Reservoir, which was constructed in 1909. Cobble Mountain Reservoir holds 22.5 billion gallons, which is roughly a two-year supply at today's consumption rates, and is surrounded by 14,000 acres of protected watershed forest that is actively managed by the Commission to protect water quality.

The Diversion Gate was constructed to "divert" the Little River while Cobble Mountain Dam was under construction. Today it is used as a redundant path for raw water to flow from the reservoir to West Parish Filters Water Treatment Plant in Westfield. The Diversion Gate was recently modernized as part of the Commission's Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Renewal Program to prevent freezing in winter, increasing year-round system redundancy.

Cobble Mountain Hydropower Station was constructed in 1930 as a critical piece of the water system and to harness the renewable energy of flowing water from Cobble Mountain Reservoir to West Parish Filters Water Treatment Plant. Energy sold to ISO New England from the station is enough to power 25,000 homes in a year. Revenue from renewable power generation is applied to the Commission's capital improvement program. Plans are currently underway to replace and modernize equipment original to the power station.

**About the Commission**

Established in 1996, the Springfield Water and Sewer Commission is an independent, public regional utility. The Commission serves 250,000 customers in the lower Pioneer Valley with safe and reliable drinking water and wastewater service. The Commission provides retail drinking water service to Springfield and Ludlow; wholesale drinking water service to Agawam, Longmeadow, and East Longmeadow; and emergency/peak service to Westfield, Southwick, West Springfield, Chicopee, and Wilbraham. The Commission provides retail wastewater service to Springfield and wholesale wastewater service to West Springfield, Agawam, Longmeadow, East Longmeadow, Wilbraham, and Ludlow.

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