

Rye Water District

Budget Message to the Rye Budget Committee

January 28, 2026

Before diving into the numbers, we highlight some major activities of the Rye Water District.

1. The central treatment plant design
2. The new water investigation on West Road
3. Service line inventory
4. Washington Road Tank Painting and site restoration
5. Ongoing drought
6. Hire of additional Water System Operator/Sampling Agent

Central treatment plant

We are currently working with Underwood Engineers to design treatment for our three existing wells. The engineering design and permitting of such a complex and critical structure is anticipated to continue until late 2026 with bidding and construction to commence in 2027. Working with Underwood, our system staff built and ran a pilot system to determine the best system for treating per and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). Currently, it appears that granular activated carbon is the best alternative. We are also investigating the best option for treating the iron and manganese present in our bedrock wells. This has proven to be more complicated than the PFAS treatment and is requiring additional bench scale testing to determine the best option for this process. We anticipate that work being complete in the spring of 2026. Underwood has recommended that the treatment facilities be constructed adjacent to the existing Garland Well site. This will allow for the most efficient use of that facility and ideally, keep final costs within the \$16 million budget for this project.

Potential New Water Source

We are continuing to work toward permitting a new drinking water source on the Brown Conservation Property off of West Road. A 600-ft deep test well was drilled at the site in 2024, and the preliminary indications were favorable. There were no detectable PFAS/PFOA chemicals, and other water quality parameters were good. Work in 2025 involved finalizing the well permit application and meeting with regulatory staff to get their feedback to assure that the submittal will meet their requirements. Submittal of that application is anticipated in the spring/summer of 2026. After NHDES's review, including public input, the next phase will include an extended pump test, monitoring and water quality testing before a final permit is issued.

Service Line Inventory

The federal government requires public water suppliers to inventory the water lines that carry water from the main to our customers' homes or businesses; this is because the presence of lead lines can present serious health concerns. The district is responsible for the lines from the main to the curb, and customers are responsible for the lines from the curb to the house. We must identify whether any of these lines contain lead; if they do, they must be replaced. In most cases, we know the materials because of the age of the homes and existing public records. The district records show that we have 188 water lines that we do not have specific information about the connector material. District staff will be doing field investigations to dig down to these lines and determine the material.

Washington Road Tank Painting and Site Restoration

The Washington Road Tank 1 (tank closest to Washington Road) had its exterior totally repainted in 2025. The interior will be repainted in 2027. The life of this repainting is expected to last twenty-five years. The intended work in 2026 will involve removing and replacing some of the soils around the tank due to metals in the soil and installing a security fence around the perimeter of both tanks.

Ongoing Drought

2025 ended up being one of the driest years on record for the Seacoast of New Hampshire. Normally, this region receives about 45 inches of precipitation. Last year, we received only 27 inches. Every month except May was below normal. Due to this, the district commissioners issued odd/even water restrictions in August 2025. District customers did a good job complying with these restrictions. The intent of the commissioners is to further the irrigation efficiency policy by making the odd/even schedule permanent. Most landscapes and lawns will do just fine with watering every other day, but the district will consider and potentially grant exceptions when warranted.

Hire of additional Water System Operator/Water Quality Sampling Agent

In December 2025 we welcomed our newest employee, Molly O'Neil, to our team. Molly has a degree in Environmental Studies and three years of experience as an Environmental Health and Safety Manager. Molly will be taking on the role of Operator/Water Quality Sampling Agent and will handle a lot of the district's water quality sampling and reporting duties. This rounds out our operations team prior to the construction and operation of our new Central Treatment