

# Maine Water News

A Publication of the Maine Water Utilities Association

May 2012, Number 163

## Tourist Season Right Around the Corner

*Jon Ziegler, 2012 President*

The annual cycle of life has once again begun on the mid-coast. The first sure sign of spring has nothing to do with the returning robins or Canada geese (a.k.a. flying rats!); up and down the coast it is the summer water being turned on. For six months a year, my system is small... serving maybe 5,000 people. During the cold bleak winter it is definitely a “not for profit” operation. However, once the first glimmer of improving weather hits, look the heck out!

This year it started in March with an abnormal warm spell. Yes it felt good to break out the motorcycle two months earlier than usual, but with the illusion of improving weather came the inevitable phone calls and accompanying chaos.

Typical customer call - “When’s the water going to be turned on at *Whatever Road* in *Such and Such Colony*?”

Well rehearsed district answer - “The PUC mandates that we have all of our seasonal accounts on by May 1<sup>st</sup>.”

Real response - “Who mandates what? I am talking about MY COTTAGE here!!!”

Why it took me twelve years to figure out that I am but a small player at “Disneyland-North” I will never know. The mayhem only intensifies until the 42 miles of seasonal water main are repaired, charged, disinfected, proven clear of pathogens and the 1,800 or so meters are put on the ground.

So what does seasonal water have to do with anything relevant? It is relevant in that I know for sure what my chief industry is, that being tourism. I like to goof around with the tourists; some of the stories they tell and questions they ask are pretty funny. “*How do you line up the boats in the harbor so they all point the same way?*” or my personal favorite, “*What lake is*

*that?*” All kidding aside, I am seriously cognizant of the fact that without the tourists, my region, my state and my business would face economic collapse.

In 2006 the Brookings Institute released *Charting Maine’s Future, An Action Plan for Promoting Sustainable Prosperity and Quality Places* in which it concluded that Maine does a pretty lousy job on both the state and local level of “*exporting more of its tax burden to the millions of tourists*”. In real terms, Maine is still leaving a lot of money on the table. I find this frustrating and ironic when contrasted with the annual freak show known as the state budgeting process.

There is one huge bright spot, thanks to Representative Flood. Securing the state match for SRF funding for 2014 and beyond will be derived from booze sales, a substantial piece of which is fueled by tourism. With the state coffers always bouncing on the bottom why do we still treat tourism with kid gloves? Does the Maine Chamber of Commerce carry that kind of weight opposing local sales tax or state user/room tax increases?

I used to travel extensively for business and have been to many states and most major US metropolitan areas; what a deal our tourists get! The argument that because of a tax aimed at tourists it will force them to not come anymore is just plain bull. Due to the nose-diving dollar, for the past few years more and more foreign tourists are visiting the Boothbay region. These folks are mostly Canadians, Germans and other Europeans and compared to what they are used to, (in Germany the national sales tax is an oppressive 19%), Maine will remain dirt cheap with or without a few ticks on the room tax.

We need to get real on the state level about who we are, what our position really is and how we fund our needs with the least impact to Maine residents. Bringing our tourism tax policies up to “average” would be a good start.

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Material of interest to the water supply profession  
will be considered for publication. Copy deadline is  
the 15<sup>th</sup> day of month preceding publication.

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## **ETTI Safety Achievement**

An exciting safety milestone has recently been reached by Enterprise Trenchless Technologies, Inc.!

ETTI, a directional drilling company based out of Lisbon Falls, ME, surpassed the Quarter-Million hour mark for hours worked without a loss time injury. The milestone was reached on March 22, 2012.

The path to this achievement spanned over an 8 year period, starting in 2003. We believe that this achievement is the direct result of a work culture based on hard work and commitment to teamwork, strong management support, and the right attitude towards safety. ETTI has also recently been recognized by the Maine Chapter of Associated General Contractors for their outstanding safety record.

During these 8 years, ETTI has grown from a team of less than 10, to a team of more than 20, making this milestone a huge accomplishment due to the amount of hours logged for such a small team. The ETTI team works throughout the New England Region, and even into New York State performing construction activities that include the following: Horizontal Directional Drilling, Water and Sewer Line Installations, Natural Gas Service and Main Line Installations, and many other labor intensive projects.

ETTI is extremely proud to have a team who not only keeps their own safety in mind, but also that of their co-workers. They all deserve credit for their hard work and commitment to ETTI's safety program, including the company safety officers, Ryan Dionne, Travis Merrill, and Nick Frost. ETTI makes it a priority each and every day to ensure that each team member makes it home safely to their families.



*Scott Kelley & Michelle Hoffman receive an award marking the milestone from Bilodeau Insurance & Travelers Insurance.*

*From left to right: Scott Kelly, President/Owner of ETTI; Jay Hurin, Traveler's Insurance; Mike Bilodeau, Bilodeau Insurance; and Michelle Hoffman, CFO/Office Manager of ETTI*

## The June Bi-monthly Meeting

The June Bi-monthly Meeting is scheduled for June 14<sup>th</sup> and will be held at Saddleback in Rangeley this year. Please see below for lodging options:

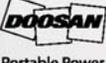
- **Saddleback Mountain Resort**
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  - 3 bedroom -> \$310.75/night (needs to be rented for multiple nights)
  - Contact is JoAnne Taylor, email: [jtaylor@saddlebackmaine.com](mailto:jtaylor@saddlebackmaine.com), phone: (207) 864-5671 ext. 115
- **The Saddleback Inn:** (207) 864-3434  
2303 Main Street  
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  - 2 Queen size beds -> \$130
- **Town and Lake Motel:** (207) 864-3755  
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  - Double -> \$85/night

Go to page 7 for the registration form and agenda. We hope to see you there!

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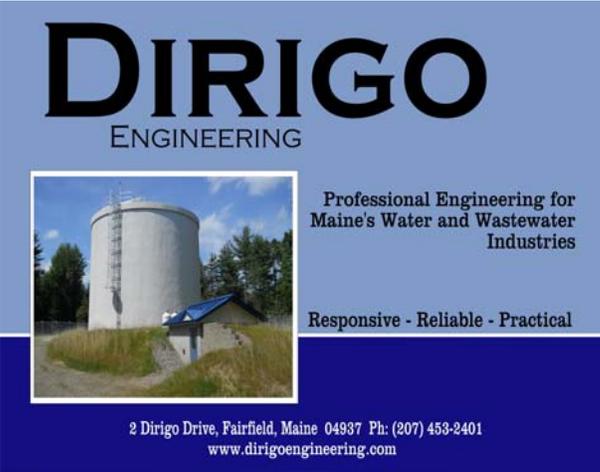
## Legislature Recesses, Set to Return Mid May

The Maine Legislature worked through the week of April 9<sup>th</sup> and then recessed until May 15<sup>th</sup>, when they will return to finalize the budget and address a bond package. A number of bills the association has been following were dealt with.

LD 1138 is An Act to Prevent Unnecessary Expulsion of Landowners from the Maine Tree Growth Tax Law Program. The March issue of Maine Water News included a discussion of the bill and highlighted

concerns relative to a proposed “attestation” provision, which stated that the landowner’s primary objective for TGTL land is to grow trees to be harvested for commercial use and other objectives such as preservation, conservation, recreation, scenic or esthetic objectives are subordinate to this primary objective.

After weeks of deliberations and maneuvering in the Taxation Committee an amended bill was reported out of committee, and ultimately enacted by the full Legislature. The final version of the attestation language holds water utilities harmless. It specifies that “the



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existence of multiple uses on an enrolled parcel does not render it inapplicable for tax treatment under this subchapter, as long as the enrolled parcel remains primarily used for the growth of trees to be harvested for commercial use”. It also affirms that land which would otherwise be included within the TGTL definition shall not be excluded because of certain situations which are referenced in the definition of forest land. One of those situations is “statutory or governmental restrictions which prevent commercial harvesting of trees or require a primary use of the land other than commercial harvesting”. Many water utilities would qualify under that provision.

LD 1820, An Act To Implement Recommendations to Provide Additional Flexibility for Funding Infrastructure Improvements for Water Utilities, was amended and enacted. This bill will allow water utilities to establish capital reserve funds and also infrastructure surcharges. Rulemaking will take place this summer and provisional rules will be submitted to the Legislature next session, for final approval.

LD 1842, An Act to Amend the Charter of the Bingham Water District, was enacted as an emergency measure. The original bill sought to authorize the board of trustees to adopt a resolution that provides that the minimum charge for water service continues to

apply to property that is disconnected from the system. The enacted amendment directs the Public Utilities Commission to convene a stakeholder group, representing a broad range of interested entities, to examine financial issues related to the loss of customers by water utilities and the effect the loss has on the utilities' ability to pay for infrastructure as well as the effects on remaining customers.

The stakeholder group has been directed to examine whether there are appropriate means by which contributions to system costs may be collected from customers who discontinue service or from property owners whose property has been served or may be served by the system and, if so, how the collection may be done in a manner that is just and reasonable. The group may also examine readiness-to-service charges and requirements to take service or other mechanisms and shall seek to develop appropriate models for addressing issues created by the loss of customers by water utilities. A report is due back to the Energy and Utilities Committee by February 15, 2013.

### Bond Package Being Contemplated by AFA Committee

With the full Legislature in recess, the Joint Standing Committee on Appropriations and Financial

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Affairs spent much of the week of April 23<sup>rd</sup> discussing the potential for a bond package to fund infrastructure and other projects.

One of the issues considered was the state matches needed in order to secure the Drinking Water and Clean Water State Revolving Fund (SRF) capitalization grants for the next two years.

Early in that week the association provided the committee with an updated document (originally provided to them in February) which included the required 20% match amounts. There was also an

opportunity to give a quick update and answer questions from the committee. Later that day, and at their request, current Drinking Water and Clean Water project lists and other information were e-mailed to the committee members.

On Thursday the committee approved a bond package totaling more than \$95 million that would fund highway projects, research and development, drinking water and wastewater infrastructure, higher education and the Land for Maine's Future. Approximately \$7.9 million of that package would provide the required SRF capitalization grant matches.

Governor LePage has indicated that he does not want to consider bonding until the Legislature addresses the shortfalls in the 2013 Department of Health and Human Services budget.

The association will continue to advocate for the required SRF match amounts.

### Your Water Utility and You!

The Public Awareness Committee has created a new brochure for Drinking Water Week. The brochure covers a broad range of topics to help customers better understand how their water utility protects, treats, and



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distributes safe drinking water. Topics include: Where does my drinking water come from?, How do I know my water is safe to drink?, How is my water treated?, Who takes care of my water system?, How can I conserve water?, as well as other topics. Funding for the brochure was provided in part by New England Water Works Association and the Maine CDC Drinking Water Program. The brochure will be available to member utilities of the MWUA and will be available on [www.mwua.org](http://www.mwua.org).

HOST: Vernon Bean, Superintendent, Rangeley Water District

LOCATION: June 14<sup>th</sup>: Saddleback, 976 Saddleback Mountain Rd., Rangeley, ME 04970 (207) 864-5671

GOLF: June 13<sup>th</sup>: There are plans for a golf outing on Wednesday. If you are interested, please contact the MWUA Office at (207) 623-9511.

DIRECTIONS: To Saddleback from points south: Take I-95 to Exit 75 in Auburn. Take Route 4 North through Farmington to Rangeley. Then follow the signs to Saddleback. -or- Take I-95 to Exit 44 in Portland. Follow I-295 to the Gardiner toll. Merge on I-95 and proceed to Exit 112B in Augusta. Follow directions below from Augusta. To Saddleback From Augusta: Take Route 27 North to US 2 West. In Farmington, take Route 4 North to Rangeley and follow the signs to Saddleback. To Saddleback From Bangor: Take I-95 South to Exit 157. Take US 2 West to Skowhegan and Farmington, then follow Route 4 North to Rangeley. Then follow the signs to Saddleback.

**PROGRAM**

- 8:00AM – 8:30AM **Registration & Continental Breakfast**
- 8:30AM – 9:30AM **Welcome to Rangeley & Overview of Water System**
- 9:30AM – 10:00AM **Regulatory Update**  
*Maine Drinking Water Program*
- 10:00AM – 10:15AM **Break**

**TECHNICAL PROGRAM - Emergency Preparedness**

- 10:15AM – 11:15AM **Ray Lussier**, *President/CEO of Life Safety Specialists*
  - Identifying threats to your water system – surface water, wells, distribution system
  - Overview of incident command system
  - Real world incidents good/bad
  - Are you prepared to deal with emergencies?
- 11:15AM – 12:00PM **Michael F. Grant**, *Chief SAA/STO Operations & Response Specialist of Maine Emergency Management Agency;*  
**Tim Hardy**, *Emergency Management Agency Director for Franklin County*
  - Overview of State/County resources
  - Other resources (DEP, MeWARN, FEMA, etc.)
  - Local examples of how the system should/has worked
  - Awareness of resources that are available to you

- 12:00PM – 12:15PM **Q & A**
- 12:15PM **Luncheon**

Jon Ziegra  
*President*

Christopher Curtis, Sid Hazelton & Keith Levasseur  
*Program Coordinators*

-----  
*Registration for June 14, 2012 Bi-Monthly Meeting*  
**PLEASE RETURN REGISTRATIONS BY: June 7, 2012**  
**2.0 Training Contact Hours**

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\_\_\_\_\_  
Affiliation \_\_\_\_\_

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