

# VALLEY NEWS

Enfield Selectboard approves new septic rules



*Enfield, N.H., resident David Thibodeau questions the town's selectboard about proposed septic system regulations for residents with property on the town's protected lakes and ponds on Monday, Nov. 18, 2024. Under the new rules passed by the board at the meeting, Thibodeau, who lives near Spectacle Pond, is required to have his septic system inspected every six years, pumped every three, and report each to the town's health officer. "We're your first and best defense against contamination," Thibodeau said of lakefront property owners. He added that the rules should include properties along tributaries to and in the watersheds of the protected bodies of water. (Valley News - James M. Patterson) Valley News – James M. Patterson*

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ENFIELD — The Selectboard unanimously approved septic system regulations for those who live near the town's four major water bodies at its Monday night meeting.

The rules — scheduled to go in effect Jan. 1, 2025 — require property owners to have their septic systems inspected once every six years by a state-licensed inspector and pumped every three years, according to a copy of the regulations posted to the town’s website. Property owners will be required to file reports of those activities with Enfield Health Officer Vinny Tursi.

The rules will apply to hundreds of residents with septic systems within 250 feet of George Pond, Spectacle Pond, Crystal Lake and Mascoma Lake shorelines. Those who violate the rules can be fined up to \$250 per day “for each day that the violation continues.”

The Selectboard vote came after months of discussion among town officials, input from residents and a review by the town’s attorney. The purpose of Monday night’s meeting was for the board to look over a draft approved by the town’s attorney before voting on the regulations. The Selectboard did not spend much time discussing them on Monday.

“I think this makes sense,” Selectboard member Kate Plumley Stewart said.

During the conversations about the regulations, which began over the summer, reactions among residents have been [mixed](#). Some see it as a way to protect Mascoma’s resources, while others see it as addressing a problem that does not exist.

The idea for the new regulations came about after a Planning Board forum last June about potentially creating a lakeshore district in town, during which residents expressed concerns about water quality.

While town officials do not have data about how many, if any, septic systems have failed, the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services has stated that faulty septic systems can contribute to cyanobacteria blooms, which in past years have appeared on Mascoma and Crystal lakes.

In crafting Enfield’s new regulations, town officials studied Sunapee’s septic rules, which require those who live in the Shoreline Overlay District to have their systems pumped every three years. Sunapee does not require inspections like Enfield’s new regulations will.

One of a few residents who spoke in opposition of the regulations during Monday’s meeting was David Thibodeau, who lives on Spectacle Pond, which also is part of Grafton.

“I as a homeowner am not going to allow my system to contaminate water that I swim in, that I play in with the kids, devalue my property or anything,” he said, adding that he was concerned the Selectboard was “singling out the people that live directly on the water.”

He said he felt they were not taking into account those who live on streams and other parts of the watershed in Lebanon, Canaan, Grafton and Enfield.

Those four communities “all should agree on the same rules. It shouldn’t be just one town doing one thing and another town doing another thing,” Thibodeau said. “There’s a lot of water that comes off the watershed that feeds these bodies of water, not just the homeowner that’s living on the shoreline.”

The septic regulations are one of a few ways town officials are focusing on water quality concerns. Enfield is currently working with Lebanon on a watershed management plan for Lake Mascoma. There are plans to pursue a grant for a similar plan for Crystal Lake, Enfield Town Manager Ed Morris said during Monday's meeting.

"I think it is a powerful move in the right direction," Glyn Green, president of the Crystal Lake Association, said about the new regulations in a phone interview Tuesday. "It's my hope they will soon expand it to the streams running into these waters."

That includes Bicknell Brook, which empties into Crystal Lake.

Green is also encouraged by the plans for watershed management plan for Crystal Lake and addressing how other contaminants get into the water.

"Part of protecting the water in our lakes is making sure nothing is introduced to the lakes by septic systems or outside avenues," Green said.

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