

THE CONCORD BRIDGE

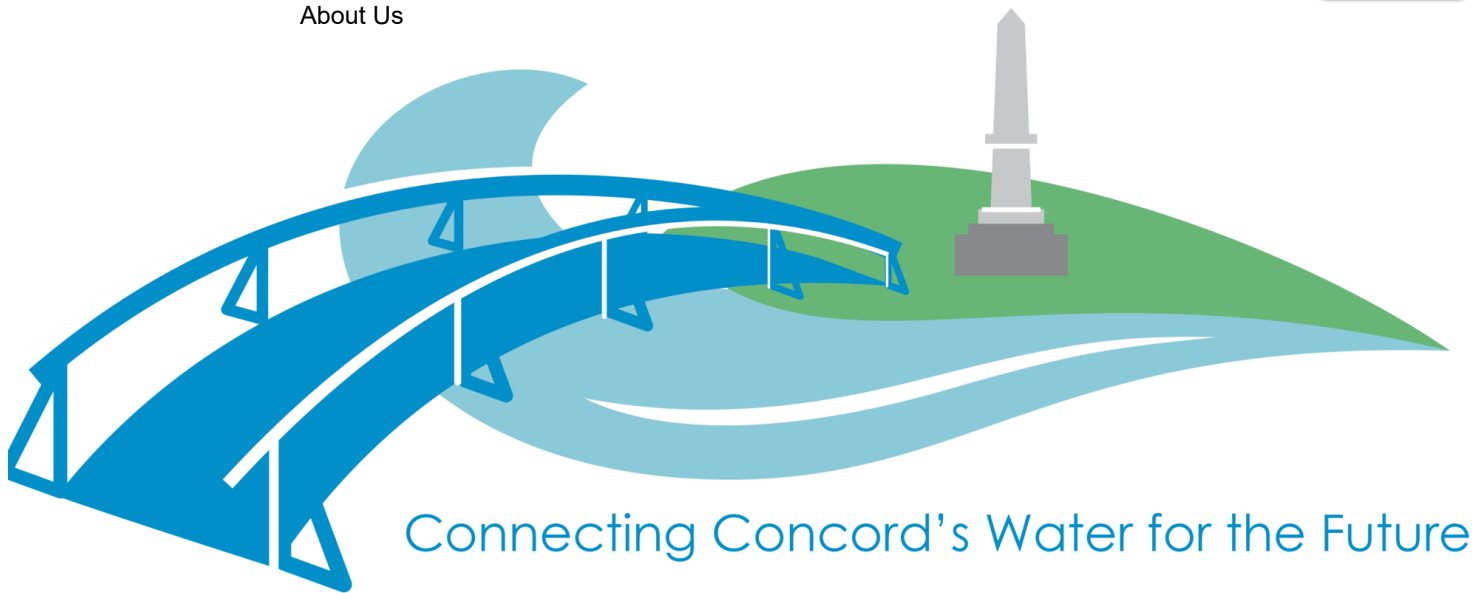
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Expensive infrastructure changes are on the horizon

By Anne O'Connor Anne@theconcordbridge.org

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Concord has already seen some of the effects of climate change. This August, two storms dumped several inches of rain in a matter of hours, causing flooding across town.

Last summer, the region was in a drought, the fourth time since

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Concord Public Works, working from the 2020 Climate Action and Resilience prepared by town staff and volunteers, is looking into the future, to put plans and infrastructure in place to address drinking water, sewerage and stormwater management.

“There’s real money we’re going to be looking at over the next ten years,” said CPW Director Alan Cathcart.

The CPW is looking for community input as it identifies both short- and long-term challenges and opportunities during a December 5 forum at 7 p.m. at the Harvey Wheeler Center Auditorium.

The evening with Cathcart and consultants will include an overview of the existing conditions of the drinking water, stormwater and wastewater resources and what changes can be made.

Scientists are predicting wetter weather, more extreme flooding and more prolonged droughts, introducing interesting risks to the community, he said.

When it comes to water management, all aspects are intertwined. Homes and businesses need clean water from public supplies or private wells. They discharge water which must be cleaned, either through the town sewer system or private septic, and then

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Stormwater is often an overlooked part of the challenge of an integrated water resource management plan, Cathcart said. Water that once flowed through culverts now washes over manmade infrastructure like buildings, sidewalks and streets during severe precipitation.

At the same time that the effects of flooding and droughts are becoming more problematic, scientists continue to identify dangerous chemicals in drinking water, such as PFAS.

The chemicals, [which are linked to health issues](#), have entered the spotlight over the past decade. Concord's [drinking water contains the chemicals](#), which the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency now advises can cause negative health effects when present in levels near zero.

Concord is looking at what it needs to do to [keep the water safe](#).

The effort will require town departments to work strategically and across divisions, Simms said.

The resilience plan calls for new policies for building standards, increasing water conservation, conducting threat assessments, updating stormwater regulations and more green infrastructure.

Creating a stormwater utility is part of the resilience plan. Such utilities are becoming more popular across the state, Cathcart

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