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What is the Integrated Water Resources Management Plan?

In sustain and improve Colchester's water resources, the Town created the Integrated Water Resources Management Plan (IWRMP) in the early 2000s to develop a more holistic management approach that effectively integrates land use planning, infrastructure, and natural resources. In 2013, the Town of Colchester completed this comprehensive water quality study funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The IWRMP had six tasks:

- Task One: Infrastructure Inventory (impervious area and infrastructure including stormwater, wastewater, water supply infrastructure including location, age, condition, and type).
- Task Two: Water Resources Inventory, Mapping, and Assessment
- Task Three: Needs Assessment for Onsite Wastewater
- Task Four: Detailed Needs Assessment of Priority areas
- Task Five: Stormwater Utility Feasibility Study
- Task Six (5A): Wastewater Management Feasibility Study
- Task Seven: Microbial Source Tracking Study

This study contained multiple work tasks that resulted in several key recommendations. Many of these recommendations formed the framework for the Town's Clean Water Initiative. The Town's soils, infrastructure, and development were analyzed and management solutions provided. Key recommendations from the study included to create of a stormwater utility and to sewers in the inner bay. The stormwater utility was created by the Colchester Selectboard subsequently following the recommendation of a Stormwater Advisory Committee in 2017.

The inner bay was identified as a high risk area after study of the soils, existing development, age and condition of septic systems and limited options for replacement systems. The presence of human waste bacteria was also noted in the inner bay through the use of microbial source tracking. The Town investigated the possibility of a management plan for septic with the State in 2016 following the completion of the IWRMP and found that current State Laws prohibited the Town from implementing additional management. With these circumstances, the Colchester Selectboard selected a sewer for the inner bay as the preferred alternative to address this priority wastewater issue.

This $2 million study spanned over a period of four years and included a total of 16 public meetings. The Colchester Integrated Water Resources Management Plan received the Grand Award for Engineering Excellence in February of 2014 by the American Council of Engineering Companies – Vermont (ACEC – VT). This is the highest honor bestowed by the ACEC – VT in its annual judging of engineering achievements. The following reports represent the culmination of these efforts.