



State of New Hampshire
Town of Kensington

95 Amesbury Road
Kensington, NH 03833

March 20, 2023

David Hisz
Community Well Siting | Large Groundwater Withdrawal Permitting
NHDES Drinking Water & Groundwater Bureau
25 Hazen Drive
Concord, NH 03302-0095

RE: Town of Exeter Large Groundwater Withdrawal Permit

Dear David Hisz,

On behalf of the town of Kensington, this Board would like to officially register our concern regarding the Large Groundwater Withdrawal Permit applied for by the Town of Exeter.

It is important to note that Kensington is a small town, lacking the commercial or industrial tax base that would both necessitate and enable a municipal water system. Our residents, small businesses, and public operations are entirely dependent upon private wells. Those wells draw from the aquifer system that exists beneath the town of Kensington and extends into neighboring communities. Two of those towns, Seabrook and Exeter, draw from that shared groundwater to supply their municipal water systems. The primary pumping station and treatment facility for Seabrook sits just across our southeastern border and extracts nearly 400 million gallons of groundwater annually. By means of comparison, the operating budget for the Seabrook water system is roughly equivalent to the operating budget for the entire town of Kensington. As Seabrook continues to grow and develop, including contemplation of extension of commercial water supply into Hampton Falls, our residents and officials are wary of the increased demand on our shared aquifer.

Exeter also continues to experience growth and the potential for exportation of water to the commercial district along Portsmouth Avenue in Stratham. The removal of Great Dam and the reduction in impounded surface water for municipal treatment has also accelerated the demand for groundwater to supply the Exeter system. Like Seabrook, Exeter currently pumps nearly 400 million gallons of groundwater per year from the aquifers beneath our towns. Combined, these two neighbors already draw close to a billion gallons of water every year from our shared groundwater supply. Obviously, we understand that state law, judicial precedent, and common sense consider this water to be a shared resource. Our only concern is that as such, it is stewarded wisely and sustainably so that all of us can continue to access safe and clean drinking water.

Specifically, the Town of Kensington would like to request the following:

1. That any preliminary testing of wells be offered to the residents of Kensington with wells located within the broadest defined potential impact zone.

2. That testing be conducted to determine what impact, if any would occur in regard to the pond located on Drinkwater Road and under the shared ownership of James and Susan Varn and Unitil. This body of water is a primary fire pond for the Kensington Fire Department and a critical resource for public safety.
3. Clarification as to whether the introduction of this well would trigger the creation of any federal or state overlay districts for aquifer protection that could potentially impact the property rights or values of any Kensington residents within such a zone.
4. Clarification as to what restitution options would exist for any residents in the potential impact area who experience negative effects on their well performance should this project be approved.

Looking at what is happening in the western United States and around the world, access to fresh water is a significant and worsening issue, aggravated by the pressures of population growth, commercial development, and climate change. Our residents, and we as their elected representatives, are anxious that the water needs of smaller communities like ours, that lack the financial resources or political clout of our larger neighboring towns, are not casualties of the growing needs of those municipalities.

We appreciate your prompt response to the above and look forward to working together to ensure that this proposed project will have no impact on the people of Kensington.

Respectfully,

The Kensington Board of Selectmen



Joe Pace, Chairman



Robert Solomon



Robert Gustafson

Cc: Town of Exeter Town Manager and Board of Selectmen
James Emery, Emery and Garret
State legislators for Kensington and Exeter
Donahue, Tucker & Ciandella