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ABOUT THE COVER
Water infrastructure is an issue that can’t be ignored in the Garden State as deferred maintenance and increased demand take their toll. Shown here: an air stripper is being installed.
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First, on behalf of municipal New Jersey, all local elected and appointed officials who work to make their communities the best they can possibly be, and on behalf of their staff here at the League of Municipalities, we want to welcome Governor Phil Murphy, Lt. Gov. Sheila Oliver, the Cabinet, and the Governor’s staff to the myriad opportunities and challenges that we face, together, as public servants of all the people of our Garden State.

We look forward to working with and helping the new Administration, especially in tackling those knotty challenges with a local focus.

Elsewhere in these pages, our readers will find a special 2018 Legislative Guide (page 29). There, you can learn how we can work together to make sure that those in State government hear and heed the voices of those who live and serve in each of New Jersey’s cities, towns, townships, boroughs, and villages.

This issue of the magazine also has a special Focus on Water Infrastructure, dealing with one of the basic needs of all life on earth—clean water. Most of us take it for granted. You turn a tap and there it is.

It takes a major disruption from a major disaster, like Sandy, for us to appreciate how precious a gift it is, how fragile we all are without it, and how much planning, piping, filtration, resources and effort goes into delivering clean water from its source to our homes and businesses.

It’s a sobering thought to consider the fact that there is, today, and there will be forever, the same amount of water on earth—in ready-to-use liquid form, frozen as ice, or condensed in clouds—as there was when the dinosaurs roamed the planet. It is a resource we all need to preserve and protect for the sake of future generations.

Our vitally important, but aging, water infrastructure demands our attention now, before the tap runs dry, either due to disaster damage or neglect. With knowledge, care, and timely investments we can work, today, to preserve this most basic resource, critical to all our communities. 
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The members of the New Jersey Urban Mayors Association (NJUMA) are looking at 2018 as a time to address statewide water infrastructure challenges. The urgency of the water infrastructure problem in New Jersey’s older, urban cities is a reality that cannot be overstated.

It was imperative that we address these challenges through effective planning and policy. That is why we have created the New Jersey Urban Mayors Association Water Infrastructure Policy Committee. This coalition will be an important body as we seek state and federal funding for investment in our water systems.

Founding members of the New Jersey Urban Mayors Association Water Infrastructure Policy Committee include the following municipalities:

East Orange
Elizabeth
Irvington
New Brunswick
Perth Amboy
Trenton

The mayors of the communities involved have come together to share their experiences and knowledge in creating sound water policy for New Jersey. We have highlighted key recommendations from the committee that can help address New Jersey’s water infrastructure crisis and strengthen communities.
Cities leading the way
In May 2017, the United State Conference of Mayors released a report that titled ON TASK, ON TIME, ON BUDGET: How Mayors Build, Maintain, and Renew America’s Infrastructure during National Infrastructure Week.

According to Tom Cochran, CEO and Executive Director of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, “This report shows that cities across this nation are leading the way toward a newer America. A federal infrastructure partnership with resources directed to our cities will continue the successful progress in our cities.”

ELIZABETH In the report, the City of Elizabeth’s Third Avenue Flood Control Project was highlighted. This critical project cost the city $1,905,730 and included the replacement and reconstruction of the Combined Sewer System (CSS) along Third Avenue, in order to alleviate flooding in that area. According to Elizabeth Mayor J. Christian Bollwage, and NJLM Past President, “The country’s water infrastructure crisis is a troubling one that must be addressed swiftly and requires a coordinated effort from various partners. Addressing obstacles associated with aging infrastructure can be complex, especially when cost and the availability of resources enter into the equation.”

PERTH AMBOY Since taking office, Mayor Wilda Diaz has not shied away from Perth Amboy’s CSS challenges and has proactively pursued cost effective ways to begin to mitigate these issues and improve water quality in the Raritan Bay. She notes that the City would encourage the Murphy Administration to expand on partnerships from NJDEP, academic institutions, and regional environmental non-profits that have yielded great results through technical assistance. In addition, the City recognizes the need for greater state level investment into water infrastructure systems. The current needs of many financially distressed municipalities make important repairs and upgrades to these systems completely cost-prohibitive without significantly undermining the quality of services to their residents.

Investing in quality
To that end, municipalities have the responsibility of providing safe, adequate, and proper water service to their residents and must ensure that water quality is at its highest levels. They are making substantial investments into their systems and welcome assistance in assessing and developing techniques to strengthen their water systems.

NEW BRUNSWICK According to New Brunswick Mayor Jim Cahill, “The City of New Brunswick’s Water Utility has been serving its residents and consumers for more 150 years. Through an era spanning three different centuries, our dedication to the production of
Water Infrastructure Challenges

high-quality drinking water has never wavered.”

He adds, “In just the past decade alone, the City of New Brunswick has committed tens of millions of dollars to ensure that we are always improving our system and the service we provide. From basic nuts and bolts to the latest in infrastructure, treatment procedures, state-of-the-art technology, and cultivating and training a highly qualified staff, our commitment to these long-term strategies will continue to be the hallmark of our success, not only for today, but also for generations to come. Strong partnerships with state and federal leaders, not only in the regulation of what we do but also in the delivery of our services, is critical to our continued success.”

EAST ORANGE By entering into a public private partnership with Veolia North America, one of the leading water management companies in the world, the City of East Orange has made significant note-worthy advances to address their water infrastructure challenges. Through comprehensive planning and a temporary emergency rate increase, the city overhauled its water quality dilemma and further closed the nearly $4 million dollar shortfall on a $23 million dollar budget in six months.

Today, East Orange has a budget surplus, revenue of nearly $27 million, and a completely modernized water infrastructure. “The short-term public-private partnership we established with Veolia North America was a sound business collaboration that worked incredibly well within our model for transformational change,” said former Mayor Lester E. Taylor, III.

Holistic approach

When it comes to water infrastructure in New Jersey, much of the focus is on water and sewer systems in our municipalities and understandably so, but we also need to deal with water in a holistic way and this includes the health of our aquifer systems. For example, the Kirkwood-Cohansey aquifer in the Pine Barrens has roughly 17 trillion gallons of fresh water supplying the southern half of the state.

If we fail to address things like fertilizer and pesticide runoff, overuse or careless use from a lack of conservation, or even accidental pollution from pipelines; then we are doing a disservice to our citizens. We need to protect the source of our water along with infrastructure that delivers it. In addition, lead is a growing concern in New Jersey, particularly in urban communities where there are older homes and pipes.

According to Dr. Monique Griffith, Director of Health for the Township of Irvington, “In addition to determining strategies for upgrading our water infrastructure, residents could also benefit from funding assistance to upgrade plumbing within their homes as well as policy that protects, educates, and enhances their quality of life.”

Aims & Goals

Recommendations from the NJUMA Water Infrastructure Policy Committee that can help address New Jersey’s water infrastructure crisis and strengthen communities:

The NJUMA promotes policy that will maintain and increase funding for municipalities to properly manage their water systems by providing additional resources and technical assistance for municipalities to manage their systems properly.

The NJUMA proposes Governor Murphy identify potential state services where congruent policies may be developed and to consider ways to foster collaborative policy development among agencies. The NJUMA welcomes the opportunity to work with the Governor in examining approaches that will enhance the way in which the state and local government can work more efficiently and effectively together.

The NJUMA recommends that the Governor promotes and increases municipalities’ ability to incentivize and keep ownership of their water utilities. Municipalities should be able to use a myriad of approaches to find what works best for them by exploring all options, including public private partnerships that can protect the public while providing adequate and efficient services.

The NJUMA supports policy that protects their residents from the effects of water contamination. We will support awareness around the issue of lead and other contaminants that can have significant consequences to the health and well-being of residents. We also will look to the Governor’s Office to provide funding and financial assistance to support upgrades to plumbing and pipes in residents’ homes as part of a larger policy agenda that will protect and support healthy communities.
Taking care of your water infrastructure is a bit like taking care of your teeth: if you let the short-term maintenance slip, there may be painful consequences in the future.

Many municipalities large and small, urban, rural, or suburban are suffering today due to differed water infrastructure maintenance for decades and decades. It’s not only a Garden State problem, it’s systemic throughout the country…and probably even the world.

With infrastructure noted by Federal officials as a priority for 2018, that might be a help to NJ communities trying to put their systems to rights. In the meantime, municipalities innovate and adapt to meet the ongoing needs within their financial and other constraints. This month we look at communities considering the benefits of outsourcing their systems and the benefits of maintaining control over their own systems. What’s best is a town-by-town determination, but this month’s Focus stories may provide some food for thought before too much more water passes under the bridge.

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Time Capsule: February 1942, Protect the Water Supply

Securing the community water supply has always been a critical topic. In 1942, NJ Municipalities looked at the matter as a focus of national security with recommendations from J. Lynn Mahaffey, M.D., Director of the State Department of Health in his article, War Program For Municipal Health Boards:

“The role of the local health official in this program consists of two distinct functions: the first is close cooperation with the local defense council in devising and executing health measures necessitated by enemy action or catastrophe due to sabotage; the second is aggressive action in promoting public health through intensified activities in this field. These include milk supply, water supply, food, sanitation, sewage disposal, garbage and refuse collection and disposal and plumbing.”

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Governor Brendan Thomas Byrne, Sr., died January 4. Born April 1, 1924, in Orange, he grew up in West Orange in a Roman Catholic family with deep Irish roots and an abiding interest in local politics. His father, Francis A. Byrne, was a member of the West Orange governing body and a state tax Commissioner.

Byrne graduated from West Orange High School in 1942 and enrolled at Seton Hall University, but was soon drafted. He enlisted in the Army Air Corps, where he served as navigator on a B-17 with the 97th Bomb Group, 414 Squad. By the end of World War II, Byrne, the youngest squadron navigator in his bomb group, earning the Distinguished Flying Medal and four Air Medals. He enrolled at Princeton University on the GI Bill after his discharge in 1945, and earned a law degree from Harvard in 1951.

Byrne entered public service in 1955 as an assistant counsel to Gov. Robert B. Meyner, who later appointed him as Essex County prosecutor. In 1973, he won the Democratic gubernatorial primary and went on to defeat Charles W. Sandman, Jr. His biggest fight was the effort to push through a state income tax “in the foreseeable future.” Once in office, however, he faced a landmark New Jersey Supreme Court ruling requiring an increase in funding for public schools.

In his second term, he focused his efforts to save New Jersey’s endangered Pinelands, leading to the Pinelands Protection Act, which restricted development of nearly a million acres in Atlantic, Burlington, Camden, and Ocean counties. He called it his most important legacy to the state.

The governor favored the establishment of casino gambling in Atlantic City, which he considered crucial to the survival of the crumbling resort. Byrne was also proud of his role in getting the Meadowlands Sports Complex in East Rutherford up and running. “If I had not been elected, I don’t think it would have been built,” he said.

After leaving office in 1982, Byrne joined the Roseland law firm of Charles Carella, who had served in his administration. Byrne served on numerous boards, remaining a highly sought-after speaker at fundraisers and other events, where he perfected old jokes and tried out new ones.

Governor Byrne is survived by his wife, Ruthi, four sons, four daughters, and 16 grandchildren. He was predeceased by one daughter.
Recent U.S. Census data crunched the numbers for commuting for residents of NJ Municipalities with populations of more than 5,000 working residents ages 16 and older. Here are the top 7 towns who beat the average 31.2 minute Garden Stater’s drive.

For the full details on mean travel time to work (minutes) for workers age 16 years+, 2012 to 2016, visit census.gov/quickfacts/NJ.

Information at the site also includes other data on subjects including:

- Population Information
- Age and Sex
- Race and Hispanic Origin
- Population Characteristics
- Housing
- Families and Living
- Arrangements
- Education
- Health
- Economy
- Income and Poverty

Marlboro Township Average Travel Time to Work: 45.1 minutes
West Windsor Average Travel Time to Work: 44.7 minutes
Tenafly Boro Average Travel Time to Work: 42.6 minutes
Manalapan Township Average Travel Time to Work: 42.6 minutes
Vernon Township Average Travel Time to Work: 41.9 minutes
Millstone Township Average Travel Time to Work: 41.7 minutes
Millburn Average Travel Time to Work: 41.4 minutes
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