

Policy Adoption Fact Sheet: Road Salt Brine Infrastructure

2020 Comprehensive Plan Review | David Chernack, Joint Environmental Committee Intern

Why is this action important? Even as winters become less harsh and seasonal snow totals shrink due to climate change, it is still critical to keep our roads free of ice during the colder months. Road salt—long accepted to be the only avenue of keeping our roads safe in winter—has some distinct ecological downsides, however. Pre-treating Rhinebeck’s road surfaces with road salt brine is one way to reduce the amount of salt that ends up in our freshwater waterways as a result of winter road maintenance.

Road salt brine does include salt. However, it uses that salt more efficiently than spreading crystalline salt by putting down a layer of wet brine on roads *before* a storm hits. As a result, far less excess salt makes it into waterways. When there is excess salt in our waterways, salt-tolerant invasive species flourish, too much salt can end up in our groundwater, and biodiversity can be impacted in freshwater lakes and ponds—home to sensitive species like frogs and salamanders. Read more about the benefits of switching to brining [here](#).

How is this action implemented? Fairly simply! With the addition of a tank and sprayer to preexisting trucks in Rhinebeck’s fleets and the installation of a brine mixer. Following this, trainings must be completed for road crews.

What does the Comprehensive Plan say about it? The Town’s 2009 Comprehensive Plan mentions road salt, and states that the Town should do its due diligence to try and decrease the amount of salt it uses to de-ice its roads in winter. This action is well in keeping with the suggestions of the Plan.

What departments will it involve? The Town and Village Highway Departments, as well as the Joint Environmental Committee, will be involved in implementing this project.

What will it cost? The cost of this project is dependent on where Rhinebeck wants to site its brine mixer and what type of brine mixer it wants to acquire. Additionally, costs may be decreased if an agreement can be struck with Rhinebeck’s neighbors—namely Clinton, Salt Point, and Red Hook—to collaborate on the project and jointly procure the road salt brine mixer. Grants may be available for shared services, and it’s important to note projected long-term savings represented by the decreased usage of salt.



Road salt brine infrastructure quick facts:

CSC points: none

Benefits to Rhinebeck: safer drinking water, less wasted salt, less salt in our soil and groundwater, and benefits to our ecosystems

Cost: low to medium

Relevant agencies: Highway departments, Joint Environmental Committee