

Water Supply Citizens Advisory Committee

To the MWRA and its Board of Directors



Quinepoxet Dam, W. Boylston, MA

Annual Report Fiscal Year 2021

WSCAC's Purpose

The Water Supply Citizens Advisory Committee (WSCAC) advises the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) and its Board of Directors in their development and implementation of water policies and programs. WSCAC keeps informed of relevant programs at the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, the Division of Watershed Protection (DCR-DWSP), the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP), other state agencies, and citizen's groups in order to develop informed recommendations on water supply and related matters. WSCAC also addresses emerging public water policies, advances in water technology, and participates in environmental reviews of new projects in the MWRA service area.

Overview

WSCAC reviewed numerous MWRA and DCR-DWSP projects in FY21. Monthly meetings included discussions of:

- Ongoing redundancy projects to the MWRA water transmission system including updates on the Northern High and Southern Extra High pipeline projects, and the progress of the Metropolitan Tunnel project.
- Reservoir operations and management including daily withdrawals, infrastructure/dam updates, progress of the aquatic invasives program, water quality monitoring, and treatment.
- Changes to the Lead & Copper Rule and how MWRA communities are affected.
- MassDEP Annual Filtration Avoidance documents and required DCR-DWSP reports.
- Toxic Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) in community water supplies outside the MWRA service area.
- Road salt use in watershed communities and the effects on tributaries and groundwater.
- Quabbin Park Cemetery updates on infrastructure repairs.
- DCR forest management, public access and wildlife program updates.

Summary of Continuing and Emerging Issues

WSCAC evaluates materials presented by MWRA staff regarding policies and projects and submits comments when appropriate. Our views are briefly summarized below.

- **Redundancy for the MWRA's Metropolitan Water Transmission System**

WSCAC supports MWRA's ongoing redundancy projects to the water supply system. They improve system resilience to potentially harmful internal and external events. These projects involve infrastructure rehabilitation and maintenance to ensure reliable water service to rate-paying communities. The Metropolitan Water Tunnel Program will provide vital redundancy and the ability to rehabilitate the older tunnel system.

- **Climate Change, Energy Efficiency & the MWRA's Carbon Footprint**

WSCAC supports MWRA's research and preparation for flooding due to the frequency and severity of storms and potential impacts due to sea level rise. While much of the MWRA's water system infrastructure is located inland and is less likely to be affected by flooding, coastal communities may request emergency MWRA water if their drinking water infrastructure is compromised.

WSCAC supports MWRA's ongoing energy-efficiency efforts at all MWRA campuses and the annual updating of its Greenhouse Gas Inventory. WSCAC looks forward to the presentation on the Deer Island Combined Heat & Power report which will provide alternatives on the potential increases in renewable percentages at the wastewater treatment plant. This work is critical as we move toward the goals of the Global Warming Solutions Act: between 10 percent and 25 percent below statewide 1990 GHG emission levels by 2020 and 80 percent below statewide 1990 GHG emission levels by 2050.

- **Expansion of the MWRA Water System**

WSCAC supports the admission of new communities that meet the requirements to join the MWRA water system. Although the amount of water requested per community can be small relative to the overall system demand, the aggregate water demand of all new communities can be substantial when added to potential emergency water requests due to drought, contamination or infrastructure repair.

The probability of emergency water requests in communities with little storage may increase as was the case in the drought of 2016. The flash drought in 2020 provided additional evidence of changing precipitation patterns. The emergence of PFAS contamination in many towns outside the MWRA service area may increase requests for admission to the water system as a partial or full user. This growing problem and the cost to towns to remediate it will continue to be a focal point in the state. WSCAC is attending PFAS Commission hearings and we look forward to the Commission's report in December.

- **Movement of Hazardous Materials by Rail**

WSCAC supports the continuation of MWRA and DCR's collaborative efforts to work with Pan Am/CSX, state agencies, and local first-responders to protect the Wachusett Reservoir and watershed from the threat of an accident involving hazardous materials moving by rail. WSCAC continues to call for state solutions that would involve frequent inspections, the repair of track-related defects and other feasible means of increasing rail safety near the Wachusett Reservoir.

- **Water Conservation**

The MWRA, through its enabling act, is authorized to promote water conservation and environmental quality in managing the water system. MWRA recommends, but does not require, restrictions on nonessential outdoor water use from its fully supplied communities, unless severe drought conditions persist. Quabbin water is transferred, treated, and used for lawn irrigation in MWRA communities throughout the summer months. This policy is divisive among communities and endorses wasteful outdoor watering practices. Demand in summer months shows consistently high outdoor water use. The importance of smart lawn irrigation and advocating for using the best available technology to reduce waste adds weight to the conservation message and the necessity of environmental stewardship.

See also WSCAC's views on system expansion. The likelihood of MWRA accepting new customers in the near future should be an incentive to review and update outdoor watering policies during drought conditions in the receiving communities.

- **DCR Watershed Forestry Program**

The link between water quality and watershed protection is well-documented. The DWSP forestry program plays a vital role by working toward maintaining a vigorous, species-diverse, multi-aged forest that can provide resiliency in the event of natural disasters.

New England forests are experiencing a variety of pests and pathogens that affect species such as oaks, hemlocks, beech, ash, and white pine. All of these species are found in the watershed forests, and the ability to maintain healthy species diversity is challenging.

Climate change continues to affect the forest in numerous ways. Foresters will have to remain vigilant in monitoring disease and the effects of deer and moose browsing, as well as the spread of invasive plants. All of these factors can affect species regeneration after logging. Evaluating new strategies and management options to keep the watershed forest as healthy as possible must be ongoing. Third party oversight can assist in these areas.

WSCAC supports green recertification for watershed lands. The value of recertification is increased transparency and accountability, and a wider range of forestry professionals providing oversight and helping to plan best management practices for logging operations now and in the future.

Activities

Comment Letters

May 25, 2021-Submitted comments to Senate President Spilka and Senator Rodrigues on DCR staffing levels.

April 27, 2021-Submitted comments to MEPA on the MWRA Metro. Tunnel Program ENF.

April 9, 2021-Submitted comments to the MWRA Board of Directors responding to the March MWRA Staff Summary on green certification of DCR watershed lands.

March 23, 2021-Submitted comments to the Surface Transportation Board on the significance of the sale of Pan Am Railways to CSX.

February 15, 2021-Submitted comments to the MWRA Board of Directors on the benefits of recertifying DCR watershed lands.

August 25, 2020 – Submitted comments to the WRC on the Town of Burlington’s proposed connection to the MWRA water system.

July 10, 2020-Submitted comments to the WRC on the Town of Burlington’s Interbasin Transfer request.

February 14, 2020-Submitted comments to Sec. Heffernan on DCR hiring cap.

January 10, 2020-Submitted comments to MEPA on the Town of Burlington’s DEIR.

Presentations

December 2, 2020-Water Supply Protection Trust-WSCAC presentation-The Case for Green Certification

June 23, 2021-MWRA Board of Directors-WSCAC presentation-The Case for Green Certification

Sign-On Letters

February 1, 2021-Signed on to Water Infrastructure Alliance letter of support

November 17, 2020- Signed on to Mass Rivers Alliance CSO Notification Bill

October 14, 2020, Alliance for Water Efficiency-Comments on Docket ID No. EERE–2020–BT–TP–0002 Energy Conservation Program: Test Procedure for Showerheads

October 13, 2020, Alliance for Water Efficiency-Comments on Docket ID No. EERE-2020-BT-STD-0001 Energy Conservation Standards for clothes washers and dryers

Virtual Events Attended by Staff

**June 2021-Commission hearings (Rep. Hogan & Senator Cyr) on PFAS
EPA webinar-Road Salts and Freshwater Salinization Syndrome**

May 2021- Listening Session for Special Commission (Donahue Institute) on DCR

April 2021- NECASC-The Future of Aquatic Flows—Connecting Hydrologic Extremes to Aquatic Needs

**March 2021- MA Water Forum-Valuing Water: A “Shark Tank” Approach, NEWWA
Virtual Speaker Series-The 2020 Drought: A Regional Retrospective, EPC PFAS webinar,
MA Water Forum-Valuing Water: A “Shark Tank” Approach, Financing Sustainable Water-
Alliance for Water Efficiency**

February 2021-EBC PFAS Webinar, MassDEP WMA Stakeholder meeting

**January 2021-Webinar-"MA 2050 Decarbonization Roadmap, RISCC symposium, MassDEP
WMA Stakeholder meeting**

**November 2020-Quabbin Forestry Tour, PFAS Roundtable with ECT2 & Waste & Water
Digest, MIT Water Summit, EPA-Building Resilience to Extreme Events**

**October 2020-NEWWA Water Resources & Sustainability Symposium, Sustainable Forestry
Initiative eSummit “Growing Solutions”, Water & Wastes Digest webinar “PFAS Roundtable”,
495/MetroWest Partnership webinar “New PFAS Drinking Water Standard”**

**September 2020- AG Webinar-The Critical Role of Forests in Protecting Climate & Public Health
EPA Webinar-Wildfire Impacts on Water Quality**

Presentations to WSCAC

FY2021 Challenges*

MWRA Advisory Board

September 20, 2020

What's New for FY2021*

Frederick Laskey, MWRA

September 20, 2020

AWIA Risk and Resilience Update

MWRA staff

October 13, 2020

Joint WAC & WSCAC PFAS Update

Corey Godfrey, Littleton Water Superintendent

Julie Bliss Mullen-Aclarity

November 6, 2020

Metropolitan Tunnel Redundancy Update

MWRA staff

December 8, 2020

WSCAC meeting

Member discussion on select topics

January 12, 2020

Meeting cancelled

February 9, 2021

MWRA PFAS discussion

MWRA staff

March 5, 2021

MWRA Reservoir Operations

MWRA staff

March 9, 2021

MWRA Fiscal Year 2020 Proposed Budget*

MWRA staff

April 20, 2021

MWRA 2020 Annual New Connections & Demand Planning

MWRA staff

May 18, 2021

Forestry discussion

Bruce Spencer, WSCAC & retired DCR Chief Forester

June 16, 2021

*Meeting held jointly with the Wastewater Advisory Committee (WAC)

Meetings

MWRA Board of Directors - Monthly

Water Resources Commission – Monthly

MWRA Advisory Board - Monthly

Drought Management Task Force – As Needed

Reservoir Operations Group - Quarterly

Quabbin Watershed Advisory Committee -
Quarterly

Water Supply Protection Trust – Quarterly

Metropolitan Water Tunnel Working Group

Members

Michael Baram, Chair, Town of Belmont

Paul Lauenstein, Neponset River Watershed
Association

Whitney Beals, New England Forestry
Foundation (retired)

Martha Morgan, Nashua River Watershed
Association

William Copithorne, P.E. Town of Arlington

Martin Pillsbury, Metropolitan Area
Planning Council

Steve Daunais, Tata & Howard

Janet Rothrock, League of Women Voters

Andrea Donlon, Connecticut River
Conservancy

Bruce Spencer, retired DCR Chief Forester

Gerald Eves, Trout Unlimited

Kurt Tramposch, Wayland Wells

Bill Fadden, OARs and SuAsCo Wild &
Scenic Rivers

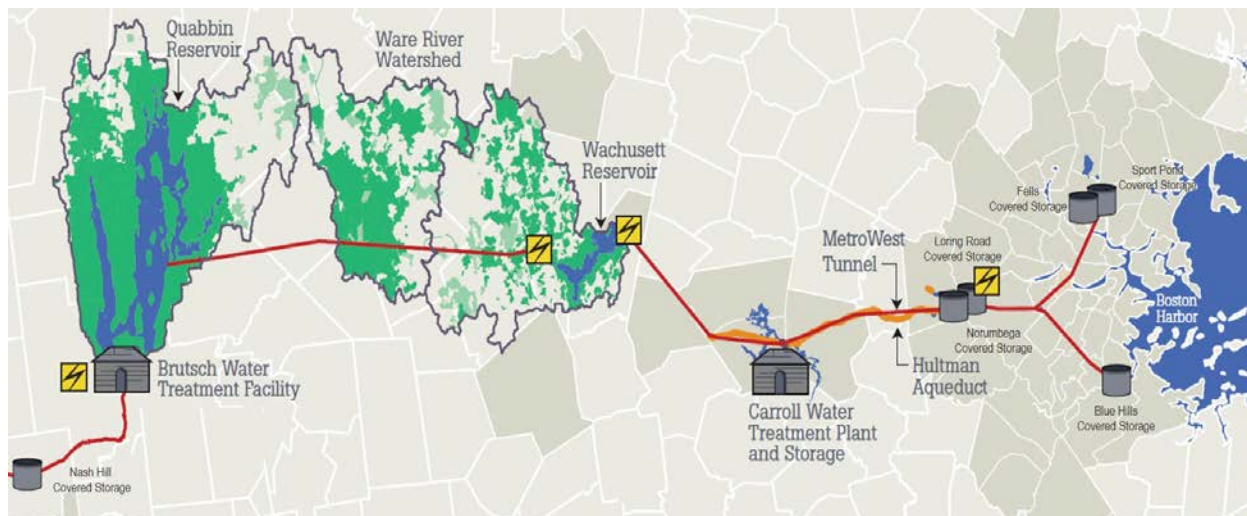
William Kiley, Boston Water and Sewer

Staff

Alexandra Dewey
Executive Director

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MWRA Water System and DCR Watersheds

WSCAC looks forward to supporting the MWRA and its Board of Directors with water supply and water protection issues in FY22 and beyond.