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## **MWRA Board of Directors Approves Waiver to Join MWRA Water System**

**BOSTON, MA, September 22** – At its meeting last week, the MWRA Board of Directors voted to adopt the recommendation of the MWRA Advisory Board to temporarily waive the entrance fee new communities pay to join the MWRA water system. Citing the challenges communities face – stressed river basins requiring water restrictions, rising concerns about PFAS (the so-called “forever chemicals”), and constrained economic development – the vote of the MWRA Board of Directors removed one hurdle communities must clear to join the MWRA system.

“Ensuring the availability of clean, safe drinking water is critical to public health, safety, and protecting our environmental resources,” said Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Beth Card, who chairs the MWRA’s Board of Directors. “The MWRA’s water supply system is a tremendous resource and by waiving the entrance fee for new communities, interested municipalities will be able to better assess their own communities’ needs and the hurdles that may impact them, such as ongoing drought conditions, PFAS, and aging infrastructure.”

While the majority of the Commonwealth remains under significant or critical drought status, the Quabbin Reservoir, which supplies the MWRA’s system, remains over 90% full placing it well within normal operating conditions for this time of year. According to the MWRA, even if the drought continued for several years, there would be adequate supply to fully meet the needs of MWRA’s existing water communities and, if needed, to augment the supplies of adjacent stressed communities.

“The MWRA has excess water to sell, and many communities near our system need water,” explained Lou Taverna, Chairman of the MWRA Advisory Board. “The benefit for existing communities is a reduction in their assessments each time a new member joins. That’s why the Advisory Board began exploring the option of temporarily waiving the entrance fee.”

Selling an additional five million gallons per day would reduce MWRA water communities’ assessments by over \$205 million over twenty-five years.

Following months of discussion and debate, the Advisory Board voted in June to recommend that the MWRA Board of Directors approve a five-year waiver of the entrance fee, subject to certain conditions.



“We’ve always been interested in responsibly growing the system,” said Fred Laskey, MWRA Executive Director. “Thanks to water conservation and system improvements, MWRA is now 100 million gallons per day below its safe yield,” he added. “That’s 100 MGD that communities in need could use if they joined the system, and this vote by the Board of Directors will make it easier for them to do so.”

Though the MWRA removed one barrier for entry, many others remain. The admissions process includes a robust environmental review, pipes must be built to connect the nearby communities to the MWRA’s system, and in some cases modifications to the MWRA’s infrastructure must be made to meet the requested demand.

“We have a unique opportunity given unprecedented levels of federal and state funding that could potentially be used help pay for these infrastructure costs,” explained Joe Favaloro, MWRA Advisory Board Executive Director. “If all of the stars align, this could be a “win-win” situation. Communities with water challenges can meet their needs and safeguard their residents’ health with the best drinking water in the country, and MWRA communities receive some much-needed rate relief.”

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If you would like more information about this topic, please contact the MWRA Advisory Board at [matthew.romero@mwraadvisoryboard.com](mailto:matthew.romero@mwraadvisoryboard.com).