



Minutes

June 7, 2024

Virtual

Attendees:

WAC Members: Kannan Vembu (Chair), Dan Winograd (Vice Chair), Adriana Cillo (BWSC), Craig Allen, Wayne Chouinard, George Atallah, Karen Lachmayr, Martin Pillsbury, Stephen Greene, Taber Keally (NepRWA), Alfredo Vargas, Jim Ferrara, Christine Bennett (Members in attendance in **bold**)

Guests: Wendy Leo, Michael O'Keefe (MWRA), Moussa Siri (WSCAC), Hampton Watkins (Plymouth Wastewater/Groundwater Disposal CAC), Judy Pederson, Julie Simpson (OMSAP). Ben Rukavina (ADS Environmental Services), Eugene Benson, Gwen Speeth (Save the Alewife), Purvi Patel (EEA).

Staff: Andreea Downs

VOTES: May 3 minutes

MWRA Update—Still waiting for the final NPDES permit for Deer Island. Think EPA may issue in the fall, but they have a lot of comments to work through. May be a few years!

In the spring, MassDEP updated its fact sheets on co-permittees, which allowed communities to comment, and some did—mostly re-emphasizing previous comments.

MWRA is expecting an August re-issuing the current variances for the Charles, Mystic, and Alewife—which run out in mid-August. Will hold a meeting for the watershed organizations on that in June, and another for the general public in the fall.

CSO variance water monitoring report will be out soon.

MWRA.com is being completely overhauled.

Deer Island clarifier rehab, mostly concrete and coatings, has begun. This is a very expensive project. Will take 6 years, \$289m.

Braintree-Weymouth upgrades are underway, screens and pumps that can better handle wipes.

EPA is requiring clean water utilities to sample for PFAS: MWRA has submitted comments to the effect that EPA's methods may not answer the questions that they need to answer, including where PFAS in residential sewer is coming from.

What data has been collected? MWRA is required under the Clinton permit to sample for PFAS. But how much is collected into the Deer Island and Industrial permits—[because Wendy Leo wasn't sure, Andreae checked with Matt Dam, TRAC director. With the new Deer Island NPDES permit, MWRA will have to test effluent and influent. It has tested residuals as well. Nothing eye-opening in the current data—one of the reasons is that EPA has changed methods and parameters (how many PFAS to test for) several times. There's PFAS in the drinking water plant discharge from municipal utilities like Wellesley and Woburn that are filtering for PFAS now. Landfill and plating plant discharges also often have PFAS. Becky Weidman has hired someone to gather all the PFAS data that MWRA collects.]

WSCAC Update—Meeting in person at the Quabbin on forestry June 11. Director is recruiting new members and forming subcommittees to activate membership. He welcomed any WAC members to join.

The WSCAC is awaiting the state's report on Forests as a Climate Solution for how it impacts the watershed forests; how PFAS limits might affect western water suppliers and how they are going to clean up that water or replace that supply; and of course water conservation.

Advisory Board Update: Just finished the budget process.

Now planning an August 22 tour of Nut Island Headworks and the Pelletizing Plant. WAC members are welcome. Details forthcoming soon—look at the advisory board [website](#) to sign up.

Advisory Board is tracking bills that deal with biosolids. Also a court case—SF is suing EPA over their NPDES permit—too vague and hard to meet the water quality requirements. NACWA agrees. This is before the Supreme Court.

Chair's update: This has been an unusual year—very busy with the permit. Thanked everyone on WAC for their work, and Andreea for leading them through it. Expressed hope that a new permit would be available to work with

DIRECTOR'S REPORT: Mostly covered in writing to the WAC.

The directors of WAC, WSCAC and the Advisory Board are looking at whether we can save money by consolidating our Zoom accounts (for WAC this now costs \$150/year and could be reduced to \$130/year plus extra features if consolidated with the Advisory Board) and payroll (now at \$115/month, and that's discounted for a year). We are looking at the legality of it as well as at other implications, such as retaining the independence of the two committees.

One of the issues with the current payroll provider is that they haven't been processing WAC's payroll properly.

Andreea was on Beacon Hill lobbying for the wipes labeling bill with the Associated Engineers and Land Surveyors. Hopeful that it will get moved out of Senate Ways & Means—encouraged members to call their senators to get this bill moving.

DISCUSSION—Annual Report & Year Ahead Planning:

Note that since Andreea became director, WAC has been learning about aspects of the permit that this year became particularly relevant when EPA released the draft NPDES permit for Deer Island in late May.

This year, WAC met in July, August, Sept., Oct. and twice in November to discuss and draft permit comments. WAC then took a break so our total number of meetings does not exceed nine.

WAC also was responsible for the initial 30-day comment period being extended to 60-days (and eventually, with MWRA support, to mid-November)

This year, WAC again filed & lobbied for a wipes labeling bill at the state and a similar federal bill (Sen. Markey is now a co-sponsor), and followed litigation that may result in better dispersibility standards for all wipes.

WAC also submitted comments to EPA on listing wastewater utilities in the Superfund Act regarding PFAS, and on banning land application of biosolids in MA as part of a bill to reduce and regulate PFAS in the state.

WAC's cubicle moved with MWRA from Charlestown to Chelsea.

Christine Bennet of Advisory Board staff became a WAC member. New members are welcome!

WAC members may join the June WSCAC tour and August Advisory Board tour. WAC will meet jointly with AB/WSCAC in September, and has meetings in October & November, February, March, April, May (usually a tour) and June (this meeting).

Andreae opened the discussion up to members. Topics? What did WAC do well this year? What could WAC do better?

Topics: PFAS, exempting wastewater facilities from PFAS regulation,

How will AI impact MWRA operations?

The situation at the Alewife and CSOs—MWRA has spent a lot of money on CSO, but not so much here. What is their position and why

Judy Pederson –there may be many other compounds that may be equally or more dangerous than PFAS, and WAC should be looking at contaminants more wholistically. This year, WAC did some great work on the NPDES permit, thank you.

Maybe plastics and microplastics, volumes in wastewater and new technologies to remove them?

Climate-microbursts and upstream capacity-how MWRA is handling.

More tours of MWRA facilities—Wendy Leo mentioned CSO tours that MWRA has been doing with watershed groups of outfalls.

The Advisory Board Operations committee is going to tour the Needham valve site and view the rock cores—this is a limited attendance tour, and will probably happen in September.

The EPA may start to regulate non-point source discharges (i.e. stormwater) on parcels over 1,000 sf in the Charles watershed. This may be interesting for WAC as it will affect the water quality of all three river watersheds. And it will help municipalities dealing with MS4 permits. The change may increase pressure on MWRA to handle stormwater as part of a more comprehensive approach to stormwater pollution.

Kannan noted the water quality issues in Lake Cochituate because of contamination from the military base nearby.

Next tour: August 22 Quincy with AB

Next meeting: Thursday, September 19th 10-11:30

Andreae will send out a rough draft of the WAC schedule for the next Fiscal Year.