

WASTEWATER
ADVISORY COMMITTEE
TO THE MASSACHUSETTS WATER
RESOURCES AUTHORITY



Annual Report 2023-2024

An Introduction to the Wastewater Advisory Committee:

The MWRA Board of Directors created WAC in 1990 to offer independent recommendations on wastewater policies and programs. WAC's mission is to be an independent public forum for holistic discussion of wastewater issues. Membership is designed to reflect the knowledge and interest of major affected constituencies: engineering and construction, environmental advocacy, planning, academic research, and business.

Membership

Craig Allen, Craig A. Allen, FCAS
George Atallah, GA Engineering & Consulting
Wayne Chouinard, Town of Arlington DPW
Adriana Cillo, Boston Water & Sewer
James Ferrara, National Grid
Stephen Greene, Howland-Greene Consulting, LLC
Christine Bennett, MWRA Advisory Board
Taber Keally, Neponset River Watershed Association
Karen Lachmayr, Harvard University
Martin Pillsbury, Metropolitan Area Planning Council
Alfredo Vargas, City of Newton, DPW
Kannan Vembu, (Chair) AquaEnviroBio Solutions LLC----->
Dan Winograd, (Vice-Chair) Woodard & Curran.



Executive Director:

Andreae Downs: Andreae.wac@gmail.com
617-378-8972

WAC's Contractual Duties:

1. Provide independent advice to the MWRA Board and staff on wastewater programs and policies directly related to the MWRA
2. Review & comment to the Authority on wastewater reports and proposed documents; offer independent advice on current and proposed wastewater program and policy directions to further MWRA objectives
3. Reflect the knowledge and interest of major affected constituencies, including
 - a. Engineering
 - b. Construction
 - c. Business/industry
 - d. Planning
 - e. Academic research
 - f. Environmental advocacy
4. Advise MWRA on wastewater planning
5. Increase citizen participation and education by providing MWRA with assistance in outreach. Review programs and explain plans & policies to citizens

6. Attend Authority working groups related to wastewater programs and policy, including the AB and WSCAC
7. Propose to the Authority ways to continue effective and efficient long-term public involvement in wastewater programs

FY 2023 Highlights

WAC's workload was front-loaded this Fiscal Year. The EPA's issuance of a draft NPDES permit in late May for Deer Island, meant meetings devoted to discussing, drafting, and revising WAC's comments on the draft permit in July, August, and November. Our 14-page comment letter was read by other organizations as they drafted their own comments.

In addition, WAC successfully asked EPA in June for an extension of time for comments, which benefitted many organizations commenting after more than two decades of no new permit for Deer Island.



WAC's director resubmitted language for a wipes bill that closely mirrored California's new law, hammered out with the industry and including social media and other education. It was incorporated into the Climate Bill, which did not pass before the end of the General Court's regular session. The federal WIPPEs Act is still alive on Capitol Hill, and WAC is watching that closely. Meanwhile, a court settlement may set a United States standard for dispersability for all wipes meant for flushing.

WAC also submitted comments on the listing of PFAS under CERCLA (the Superfund Act) and on the PFAS Act on Beacon Hill (H 4486), which would reduce PFAS in the environment, but has a clause outlawing land application of biosolids. This latter bill also did not pass the state legislature this session.

The WAC cubicle in Chelsea is almost all set up, and the Director is attending some MWRA Board meetings in person. WAC is working with the Advisory Board, MWRA Law Department and WSCAC on the possibility of pooling some services in order to cut costs.

WAC membership has changed—Christine Bennet is now the voting member from the Advisory Board.



Meetings: In addition to the above topics, WAC discussed: MWRA’s energy and sustainability program, MWRA budgets, and toured the Nut Island headworks. In cooperation with WSCAC and the Advisory Board, WAC held three of its meetings jointly with the other committees.

Leadership

WAC was led this Fiscal Year by Kannan Vembu of AquaEnviroBio Solutions, a WAC member since 2013. Dan Winograd of Woodard Curran served as Vice Chair.

The committee rotates leadership every other year.

Focus for 2024-25

If there is a second draft Deer Island permit, WAC will focus on comments for that. The committee will continue to focus on the future of biosolids recycling and how to do so most beneficially, how climate change may impact the system, combined sewer overflows vs. stormwater pollution impacts on rivers, and continued maintenance of the system.

WAC remains interested in cost management and the environment—in particular efficiency, reliability, and renewable energy production in MWRA facilities.

Other areas of interest

- Putting wastewater's most important environmental impacts in perspective.
- TRAC
- Residual Designation (EPA focus on stormwater pollution) and its impacts on MWRA
- Artificial Intelligence & its impact on MWRA

