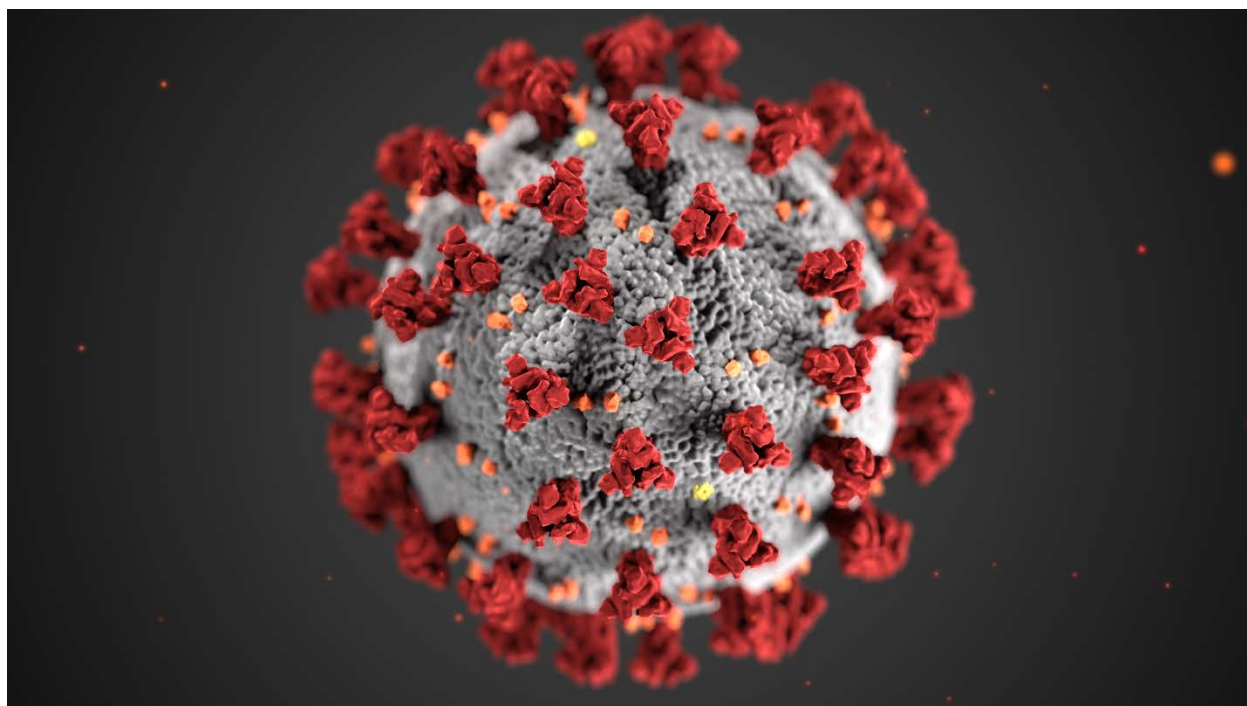


WASTEWATER  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
TO THE MASSACHUSETTS WATER  
RESOURCES AUTHORITY



Annual Report 2019-2020

# 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

**Mary Adelstein**, citizen advocate

**Craig Allen**, Craig A. Allen, FCAS

**Philip Ashcroft**, citizen member

**George Atallah**, GA Engineering & Consulting

**Wayne Chouinard** (Vice Chair), Town of Arlington DPW

**Adriana Cillo**, Boston Water & Sewer

**Zhanna Davidovitz**, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Environment, Health & Safety Office

**Stephen Greene**, Howland-Greene Consulting, LLC

**James Guiod**, MWRA Advisory Board

**Taber Keally**, Neponset River Watershed Association

**Karen Lachmayr** (Chair), Harvard University

**Martin Pillsbury**, Metropolitan Area Planning Council

**Belinda Stansbury**, citizen advocate

**Kannan Vembu**, AquaEnviroBio Solutions LLC

**Dan Winograd**, Woodard & Curran.

## Staff:

**Andreae Downs**: [Andreae.wac@gmail.com](mailto: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 2020 Highlights

The Wastewater Advisory Committee was on track for another productive year, with a tour of Deer Island scheduled for May 2020 and a discussion of energy conservation and renewable production.

WAC was also hard at work organizing information and allies for a possible legislative push for wipes legislation in Massachusetts—following NACWA guidance, focused on standards for dispersability and labeling. Our Executive Director testified on Beacon Hill to suggest adding these standards to a bill pending

before the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture.

Our executive director and membership also focused on the possible threat PFAS posed to the environment, human health, and the marketability and feasibility of MWRA pellets.

With the March shut down in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, WAC, like so many others, pivoted. The committee immediately started to look at the development of assays to detect the virus in sewage. Our Chair, Karen Lachmayr, presented the findings and assumptions of the MIT/Biobot study quantifying SARS-CoV-2 RNA in MWRA sewage. The committee looks forward to continuing to follow this rapidly unfolding research topic; while early studies have significant limitations, this approach holds great promise for early detection of future surges.

WAC's executive director moved to research and adopt a virtual meeting software so that meetings could continue uninterrupted. She held several trainings, formal and informal, in the use of Webex, so that both WAC and WSCAC members were able to participate. She is continuing training meetings with members of the public who are still having difficulty with our meeting software.

One side benefit of moving to remote meetings is that attendance has been double our normal public engagement of about 10 observers.

The toilet paper shortage (due to pandemic-related shutdowns) has been increasing awareness of the clogs caused by “flushable” wipes, which may make future work on legislation more successful.

**Meetings:** Topics included: PFAS and MWRA pellets—also legislation proposed on PFAS in soils; User-friendly ways to communicate MWRA data, updates on MWRA’s CSO program, energy program, educational program. And new technology in wastewater solids destruction.

**Outreach:** NEWEA, Water Resources Commission, Boston Harbor Ecosystem Network, Boston Harbor Now, municipal staff responsible for local sewers, Environmental Business Council, Mass Rivers Alliance, Environmental League of Massachusetts, Outfall Monitoring Science Advisory Panel, Water Infrastructure Alliance, watershed organizations...

## Leadership

WAC was ably led this Fiscal Year by Karen Lachmayr, a member since 2008. She holds an MS degree in Environmental Health Sciences and a PhD in Microbiology both from Harvard University.

Wayne Chinouard, P.E., from the Town of Arlington, was WAC’s Vice Chair in FY20.



## Focus for 2020-21

The committee will continue to follow studies of how sewage testing may be used to inform public health decisions. Another concern will be protection of the health of MWRA sewer workers in a pandemic.

WAC continues to focus on maintenance. In particular this year will be the future of biosolids recycling and how to do so most beneficially, how climate change may impact the system, and regular replacement of other 20+ year-old systems.

WAC remains interested in cost containment and the environment—in particular further energy efficiency and renewable energy production in MWRA facilities.

Other areas of interest:

- MWRA’s ongoing CSO modeling and testing
- Emerging contaminants, most recently PFAS, and how regulators are reacting
- Other regulatory changes that may affect MWRA
- Stormwater management as it relates to sewers