



WSCAC Meeting

Location: Held virtually

January 12, 2021 – 10:00 am

Members in Bold in Attendance:

Jerry Eves, WSCAC Chair

Michael Baram

Whitney Beals

William Copithorne, Town of Arlington

Steven Daunais, Tata & Howard

Andrea Donlon, CT River Conservancy

Bill Fadden, OARS

Bill Kiley, BWSC

Paul Lauenstein, NepRWA

Martha Morgan, Nashua River Watershed

Martin Pillsbury, MAPC

Janet Rothrock, League of Women Voters

Bruce Spencer

Kurt Tramposch, Wayland Wells

Non-Members in Attendance

Lexi Dewey, WSCAC staff

Andreae Downs, WAC

Ace Peckham, WSCAC staff

Lexi Dewey opened the meeting and shared the meeting summary for the WSCAC December meeting, asking for any feedback. Paul Lauenstein moved to approve the minutes without edits. Jerry Eves seconded, and the meeting summary was passed via roll call.

Lexi reviewed recent news. Burlington and Ashland have joined the MWRA as partial users, voted in at the December MWRA Board of Directors meeting. Burlington, starting at 1 mgd in Phase I, will become a full user at the conclusion of Phase II, using 6.5 mgd. WSCAC and others had suggested that Ashland should take water in the summer to stabilize levels in the Hopkinton Reservoir. Ashland will remain a partial user, taking MWRA water only from October-January, with a limit up to 90 thousand gallons per day.

Lexi encouraged members to bring information from agency presentations to their individual organizations and towns, and reminded them that WSCAC staff is available to help with outreach.

Lexi then broached the WSCAC meeting topics for the coming six months. Recent topics included the tunnel redundancy project (December 2020), updates on which can be followed [here](#). WSCAC also held a joint meeting with WAC on PFAS in Littleton, and will continue sharing updates on this topic with members. Representative Kate Hogan, who spoke at a joint WAC-WSCAC meeting in FY19, had discussed forming a commission on PFAS. This commission has not yet been formed, but as Paul pointed out, the bill will need to be refiled in the new legislative session.

Andreae has asked Becky Weidman, director of MWRA's Toxic Reduction and Control (TRAC) program, to speak to WAC about PFAS in pellets. There are pending regulations on PFAS that will

restrict land application. This will impact MWRA's ability to sell pellets that may contain PFAS. As pellet use may also affect drinking water supplies, WSCAC and WAC are discussing a joint meeting on [MWRA's Toxic Reduction and Control \(TRAC\) program](#).

Paul asked what can be done with pellets if they are no longer saleable. Andreae answered that they would go either to a landfill or an incinerator, both of which would have negative consequences environmentally as well as financially. Paul asked whether incineration is problematic for PFAS, and Andreae responded that PFAS are destroyed at 3000 degrees, which is higher than typical incinerators. She added that the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) is researching toxicity.

Janet Rothrock asked why the MWRA is responsible for PFAS contamination, pointing out that private industries who have been manufacturing PFAS should share the cost and effort of cleanup. She added that members of the public aren't even aware of PFAS' existence. Paul reminded attendees that the Town of Sharon passed a 3-year moratorium on the use of artificial turf due to its PFAS content, saying that while it's a small step, it's still a step in the right direction.

Whit Beals said that companies aren't going to take steps to mitigate PFAS contamination, so the next step is to pass legislation. Janet added that the public needs to be more aware of the issue in order to put pressure on their legislators. Lexi suggested following up with the commission proposed by Kate Hogan, and Andreae reminded attendees that WSCAC and WAC's role in this scenario is primarily public outreach and education. She drew a comparison to a past issue of high mercury levels, pointing out that the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts helped resolve that problem. Martha asked if anyone was familiar with the Boston-based [Product Stewardship Institute](#), which works to make companies responsible for their products' disposal, e.g. making pharmaceutical companies responsible for disposal of prescription medicines. Lexi will discuss WSCAC's approach to this with the Executive Committee.

Andreae updated meeting attendees on the latest steps WAC is taking on a wipes ban (wipes cause clogs and other issues in the sewers). The MWRA Advisory Board has signed on, and NACWA (National Association of Clean Water Agencies, a national sewer operators group) is working to pass state legislation on both coasts to require clearer labeling on wipes to indicate that they are not flushable. Washington has already passed such a bill, and California is working on one as well. There is an additional push in Massachusetts, led by Representative Dykema, for a bill on dispersal regulations. Paul asked if there's a bill number available yet, and Andreae said that the bill has not yet been filed, but once it is, she will pass along the bill number. Paul added that WSCAC members should ask what bills they can support.

Lexi gave an update on the staffing issues at the Department of Water Supply Protection. Letters have been written by the Water Supply Protection Trust, the MWRA Advisory Board, the MWRA Board of Directors, and WSCAC in an attempt to support the hiring of DCR employees in spite of the current hiring freeze, but no progress has been made. Martin Pillsbury and Lexi had discussed this issue previously, and Martin noted at the meeting that the next logical step, in his opinion, is to go to Governor Baker. He suggested asking the MWRA Board of Director members who are Governor-appointed to bring the issue to the Governor, or write their legislators to request support. Whit asked whether there is a plausible argument that the staffing issue may jeopardize the public water supply and even risk the water filtration avoidance waiver. Martin agreed, reminding attendees that a filtration waiver like MWRA's is rare. If the waiver is lost, it will mean the construction of a filtration plant which will be very costly, both fiscally and environmentally. Whit suggested an op-ed in the Boston Globe, and Paul pointed out that the

MWRA would be paying for the filtration costs, and DCR salaries are much cheaper than building an entire plant and maintaining it.

Lexi announced that she and Whit recently presented on green certification for DCR-DWSP lands at the December Water Supply Protection Trust Board meeting. The purpose was to gain support for DCR to recertify watershed lands. DCR does not feel that the effort involved in recertifying is worth the effort. Whit and Lexi will be providing a report to the MWRA Board of Directors in February. Whit commented that there are two groups, the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) and the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC).

The Sustainable Forestry Initiative has certified more than 360 million acres of forest between Canada and the southern United States. SFI is adding Objective 3-Protection and Maintenance of Water Resources and Water Quantity into their revisions.

The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) has certified 154 million acres of forest across the United States and Canada. FSC first certified Quabbin watershed lands in 1997. In 2004, all DCR and Department of Fish and Game lands were certified. Certification was not renewed in 2009.

Both companies are in the process of revising standards with drafts currently available for review, and are excellent options for DCR's recertification.

Bill Fadden asked if the Quabbin Watershed Advisory Committee (QWAC) has a position on the topic, and Lexi said that they were not interested in supporting this effort last year. The group hasn't met since March of 2020 due to the pandemic.

Lexi then announced that the upcoming March WSCAC meeting will be the annual Reservoir Operations update which includes information on water transfers, treatment, dam projects, aquatic invasives reports, emergency preparedness and water quality monitoring. WSCAC and WAC had hoped to have a joint meeting, but due to timing, the meetings cannot be held at the same time, so members will be invited to each individual meeting. WSCAC's April meeting will be the annual joint MWRA budget meeting, and she is hopeful that June will be a DCR meeting at the Quabbin. CSX is buying Pan Am Railroad, and MWRA is considering the purchase of a strategically placed security camera that would allow MWRA to monitor train speeds, the ability to read placards, trains idling on the bridge over the Wachusett Reservoir and other helpful information.

Paul said that he's been thinking about the big picture for WSCAC, as it was founded as part of an effort towards water conservation, and would like to see more water and energy efficiency in the future. He noted that Steve Estes-Smargiassi has done excellent work on shrinking MWRA's carbon footprint, and that the next step could be increasing public outreach on MWRA's behalf demonstrating the difference they have made in addition to inspiring others to take similar steps. Martin noted that the cost of MWRA tap water vs bottled water is 1 to 2000. Andreae commented that MWRA is reluctant to self-promote, but WSCAC and WAC can do it for them.

Michael Baram was having difficulties with his audio, so Lexi shared their recent discussion: Michael would like to see the difference that the pandemic has made in water demand. Steve Estes-Smargiassi may be able to discuss these changes at a future meeting.

Bill Fadden commented that he's interested in the Sudbury River and Foss Reservoir. The recent drought did not affect the Sudbury's flow after a certain point, because of a leak in a gate at Foss Reservoir, but he would like to hear more about the management of these going forward. He also pointed out that current

public access policy excludes access to Hultman Aqueduct, and this no longer makes sense. Can the case for public access be revisited?

Bruce Spencer was unable to attend the meeting, but is contributing to Whit and Lexi's report on the benefits of green certification for DCR-DWSP lands.

Martha Morgan, in her work as Water Programs Director with the Nashua River Watershed Association, is doing a series of talks on cold water fishery streams, and will be discussing the planned Quinapoxet Dam removal at an upcoming March meeting. NRWA has also been working with Flats Mentor Farm in Lancaster, located near public land that has been experiencing flooding potentially due to planned MWRA water releases in recent years. It is not yet known if the releases to the S. Nashua have caused the increase in flooding frequency at the Farm or it is increased precipitation due to climate change. Martha and Lexi will be discussing this topic further and will ask MWRA to revisit planned releases into the Nashua River.

Andrea Donlon noted that the Massachusetts Rivers Alliance's support of H.4921, An Act promoting awareness of sewage pollution in public waters, has recently been signed by Gov. Baker. The Alliance is now working on a drought policy bill, [An Act Relative to Drought Management-SD.1828/HD.2398](#). Andrea suggested that Katherine Lange, the new Mass Rivers Policy Specialist, should be invited to a WSCAC meeting. Lexi noted that the MWRA has a drought plan that is separate from the state. Towns with MassDEP Water Management Act permits are subject to drought restrictions while MWRA's fully supplied communities are not. Martin cautioned about lobbying directly on such a bill since WSCAC is not a lobbying group. It may be best to work with MWRA directly. Paul responded that while WSCAC is not a lobbying group, it should continue to make efforts towards public outreach. Andrea commented that public outreach and education are WSCAC and WAC's mandates, and that efforts should be focused on bringing information to individuals and other organizations, letter writing, and sharing knowledge. Martin asked about social media, and members discussed ways to share information with the public.

Lexi announced the planned departure of Ace Peckham, WSCAC's administrative assistant. Ace thanked the members for all their dedication and hard work and wished everyone the best.

The meeting was adjourned.

WSCAC will next meet on March 5 and again on March 9, 2021 via Zoom.

Please visit [our website](#) for more information on these meetings.