



WSCAC Meeting

Location: Held virtually

May 18, 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

James Guiod, MWRA Advisory Board

Bill Kiley, BWSC

Paul Lauenstein, NepRWA

Martha Morgan, Nashua River Watershed

Martin Pillsbury, MAPC

Janet Rothrock, League of Women Voters

Bruce Spencer

Kurt Tramosch, Wayland Wells

Non-Members in Attendance

Lexi Dewey, WSCAC staff

Andreae Downs, WAC

Steve Estes-Smargiassi, MWRA

Katie Ronan, MWRA

Lou Taverna, MWRA Advisory Board

Vandana Rao, EOEEA

Erin Graham, DCR

Vanessa Curran, DCR

Lexi Dewey opened the meeting and welcomed members and friends to the virtual May 18 WSCAC meeting.

Lexi introduced Steve Estes-Smargiassi, Director of Planning, and Katie Ronan, Environmental Analyst from MWRA. Their presentation, **2020 Annual Update on New Connections to the MWRA System** is available here: <https://www.mwra.com/monthly/wscac/presentations.htm>

The recording of the Zoom meeting was not available for the minutes so only a summary of the presentation is provided below.

The report on new connections is prepared annually and presented to the MWRA Board of Directors pursuant to requirements of MWRA's expansion policies. It includes any new connections since 2002, and provides information on ratepayer community's compliance with MWRA agreement requirements. Are communities withdrawing their contracted amounts and meeting payment obligations? Yes.

Katie discussed the MWRA operating policies that affect water system expansion:

- OP.05 - Emergency Water Supply Withdrawals
- OP.09 - Water Connections Serving Property Partially Located in a Non-MWRA Community (Water Straddle Policy)
- OP.10 - Admission of New Community to the MWRA Water System

Katie noted that two communities were approved for admission to the MWRA water system in 2021 under OP.10:

- Burlington
 - Approved for up to 6.5 mgd
 - Presently intend to withdraw 0.0886 via Lexington
 - In the process of constructing direct connection to MWRA
- Ashland
 - Approved to withdraw up to 1.67 mgd via Southboro
 - Intend to withdraw 90,000 gallons per day
 - Supplemental supply between October & January

MWRA receives a variety of inquiries from communities every year regarding admission to the system either as a potential partial or full user for some of the following reasons:

- Drought impacts on local sources
- Infrastructure issues such as pipe breaks, asset maintenance or replacement issues
- Contamination of local sources (such as PFAS)

All public water systems are required to test for PFAS. While MWRA has not detected more than trace amounts of PFAS, these contaminants have been found in a large number of communities outside the MWRA service area. They are soluble in water and can leech into groundwater and surface water. MassDEP set a standard in October 2020 regulating six specific PFAS (PFAS6) to 20 nanograms per liter or parts per trillion.

Several communities with detections of PFAS over the MassDEP limit have talked with MWRA about connecting to the water system while they also look at addressing the contamination of their public drinking water wells on their own.

Katie noted the benefits to joining the MWRA:

- High quality drinking water - protected watersheds & treatment
- Water quality monitoring & reporting
- Management of compliance with new DEP and EPA requirements

- Eligibility for loan programs
 - Local Water System Assistance Program
 - Lead Service Line Replacement Loan Program
 - Emergency and Technical Assistance & Training Opportunities
- Water Conservation and Demand Management Program

She also mentioned some of the hurdles to joining MWRA:

- Geographically limited service area
- Infrastructure costs
- Community is responsible to make connection – Direct or Indirect
- Environmental and Regulatory Review processes
- MEPA & Interbasin Transfer Act
- Entrance Fee/Water Rates
- FY21 Entrance Fee for 1 mgd customer is approx. \$4.4 million
- FY21 water rate is \$4,320.63 per million gallons

Steve then discussed community water use during 2020 which was an unusual year due to the pandemic. There was a shift in use as people began working from home, schools closed, and offices and businesses closed. Boston used less water and the suburban communities used more water. Drought conditions through the summer increased outdoor water use in partially supplied communities.

- MWRA's total 2020 water withdrawal was 199.43 mgd
- 1.43% increase from 2019
- Current 5-year average withdrawal is 200.12 mgd

Steve talked about how climate change could affect the MWRA water system:

- Climate models anticipate increase in temperatures and precipitation as well as potentially more extreme conditions.
- MWRA's large reservoirs are well suited to withstand more frequent droughts
- MWRA worked with the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR) to develop a probabilistic estimate of the impact of climate change on safe yield.
- The estimate predicts a modest 8% increase over current safe yield, for a total of 324 mgd.
- Partially-supplied and emergency communities may be more vulnerable and turn to MWRA for additional supply.

MWRA's conservative demand projections for the water system acknowledge:

- Continuing increases in water efficiency
- Increases in population and employment within the service area

- Potential for partially supplied communities to take more water
- Potential for new communities to join MWRA

Steve and Katie were thanked for their presentation.

Lexi announced that the June 14th WSCAC meeting would be held at Quabbin. Details will follow.

The meeting was adjourned.