



WSCAC Virtual Meeting

April 11, 2023 – 10:00 am

WSCAC Members in Bold in Attendance:

Michael Baram
Whitney Beals
William Copithorne, Town of Arlington
Steven Daunais, Tata & Howard
Kelsey Wentling, CT River Conservancy
Gerald Eves, Trout Unlimited
Bill Fadden, OARS

Bill Kiley, BWSC
Paul Lauenstein
Martha Morgan, Nashua River Watershed
Martin Pillsbury, MAPC
Janet Rothrock, League of Women Voters
Bruce Spencer, retired DCR Chief Forester
James Guiod, MWRA Advisory Board

Non-Members in Attendance:

Lexi Dewey, WSCAC staff
Andreae Downs, WAC staff

WSCAC Business

Lexi opened the virtual WSCAC April 11th meeting and provided the following briefs and announcements:

- Remote meeting permission has been granted until March 2025
- Conflict of Interest training is now available at the following link:
<https://massethicstraining.skillburst.com/>
- Staff are working on an WSCAC Handbook to provide information on office procedures
- Staff are digitizing and storing historic and financial WSCAC material on Dropbox. Storage of 17 boxes of historic material will be sent to and stored at MWRA facility in Walpole in June
- Lexi asked if members supported the development of a new WSCAC website (in addition to website on MWRA website)
- Lexi asked if members were interested in a June in-person meeting at Quabbin with a presentation followed by lunch and a possible forest tour.

A quorum was reached and Lexi asked for a motion to approve the joint draft March meeting minutes. James Guiod made a motion and Bill Fadden seconded it. Minutes were unanimously approved.

MWRA Advisory Board Briefs-James Guidod

- The Advisory Board is leaving the Charlestown Navy Yard along with the MWRA and moving to new offices in Chelsea
- A rate of 2.4% for FY24 is within reach as explained in the Adv. Board's draft comments and recommendations on the FY24 MWRA CIP and CEB.
- EPA is planning on issuing a draft Deer Island NPDES permit in May, with the final to go into effect in 2024. Included in the draft is co-permittee language which changes the relationship between MWRA and its ratepaying communities from partners to MWRA as an enforcer. Updates will be provided as this process continues.

WSCAC discussion:

1. MWRA Staff Summary-Watershed Forestry Review

Lexi started the discussion by explaining that a MWRA staff summary on DCR watershed forest management was provided to the MWRA Board of Directors at their March meeting. Lexi sent the staff summary to exec. committee members who recommended a WSCAC response to address several points in the summary. After a collaborative effort with exec. comm. members, a letter was sent to the MWRA Board for their April 7th meeting, and was noted and briefly discussed by the Board of Directors.

Bruce Spencer discussed a recent lot with a lack of regeneration, browsing, and soil compaction from heavy equipment. In responding to Bill Kiley, he noted that a slower process is needed using thinnings to deter browsing, and handfelling to reduce machine damage to trees and soil.

Whit Beals noted that lots are often well in excess of an acre and there are no equipment guidelines to address lot conditions. He reminded members of the history surrounding previous green certification and both he and Bruce recalled the corrective actions (CARs) reported by FSC which led to DCR not renewing green certification.

Whit asked Bruce if DWSP had ever used exclosures to determine the effects of deer and moose browse. Bruce said that there was very little interest by DCR Natural Resources staff so this practice wasn't fully developed though some fences were constructed. Later on, an annual DCR deer hunting program was approved which takes place in different areas in the watersheds including Pelham, Petersham, New Salem, Hardwick, and the Prescott Peninsula.

2. *An Act relative to the Quabbin watershed and regional equity-S. 2089*

Lexi started the discussion by summarizing the 4 points of the bill:

- **Formation of a Quabbin Host Fund**
- **The addition of 3 watershed members to the MWRA Board of Directors & term limits**
- **System expansion feasibility study for Quabbin watershed communities**
- **No Interbasin Transfer Act hearings at the Water Resources Committee until the feasibility study is complete**

Several members weighed in with questions and opinions about the proposed legislation:

Martin Pillsbury noted the long history between the source watershed area and the user area. He asked if there has been a grassroots effort by watershed communities to support this proposed legislation. He noted that there isn't a specific target for funds generated by the sale of water and paid to a possible Quabbin Host Fund. Is there an intentional use for the funds? What are the benefits to term limits on the MWRA Board of Directors? Martin also provided an update on the North Shore Resilience Task Force. Dewbury Consultants has been hired to

provide additional research and present a report to the task force in September. Two other studies are also underway. Once looking at hydraulic benefits and one studying what individual towns are currently doing on their own to invest in their public water systems.

James Guidod stated that the Advisory Board has had very little conversation about this bill. Is there any political traction or just a local effort from one of two legislators? If there is a strong demand for a discussion, the Advisory Board could weigh in. In regard to term limits, James noted that several governor appointed members on the MWRA Board of Directors continue to serve for several administrations. Institutional knowledge on the Board is valuable he said, using John Carroll's role as an example of 37 years on the Board.

Bill Kiley asked what the bill was asking for in terms of a feasibility study. Lexi said that Senator Comerford and Rep. Saunders are asking for a feasibility study similar to the recently completed ones for the North and South Shore communities. The MWRA is currently completing a similar study for 20 towns in the Metrowest region that are interested in potentially buying MWRA water. Lexi said that watershed towns may need additional water for growth or if they discover contaminants such as PFAS in their public water drinking wells. Given that the MWRA would like to sell additional water, these communities as well as those near the Chicopee Valley Aqueduct may want some of that water.

Steve Daunais mentioned that client communities he works with are small and don't have the money to pay for MWRA water.

Bruce Spencer noted that the bill was poorly crafted. He asked if towns that were interested in joining the MWRA water system would be required to provide current residential water use data. Martin mentioned that MassDEP, MEPA review and the Water Resources Commission require this information and other criteria outlined in MWRA's OP 10 policy, Admission of new community to the MWRA system.

<https://www.mwra.com/02org/html/expansion.htm>

Bruce also discussed the PILOT payment system and the question of how is open land valued.

After the discussion, it was decided that WSCAC would wait to respond to the proposed legislation to see if other legislators, watershed community leaders and the public showed any interest in any or all points in the bill. Lexi said she would keep the committee informed on any information she received.

Andreae Downs announced the topics for the May and June WAC meetings, Combined Sewer Overflows, and a possible Nut Island tour.

James discussed the May Advisory Board meeting where previous MWRA Executive Directors Paul Levy and Doug McDonald would receive an award. Fred Laskey would also be recognized for his work.

Lexi noted the date of the virtual May 9th meeting and the forestry topics that are planned. See details below.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:45 AM.

THE NEXT VIRTUAL WSCAC MEETING WILL BE HELD ON

Tuesday, May 9, 2023 AT 10:00 A.M.

**TOPIC: 2022 DCR Forest Health Survey with Nicole Keleher-DCR Forest Health Program Director
DCR Continuous Forest Inventory with Bill VanDoren, Forester II, DCR Bureau of Forestry**

<https://www.mwra.com/02org/html/wscac.htm>