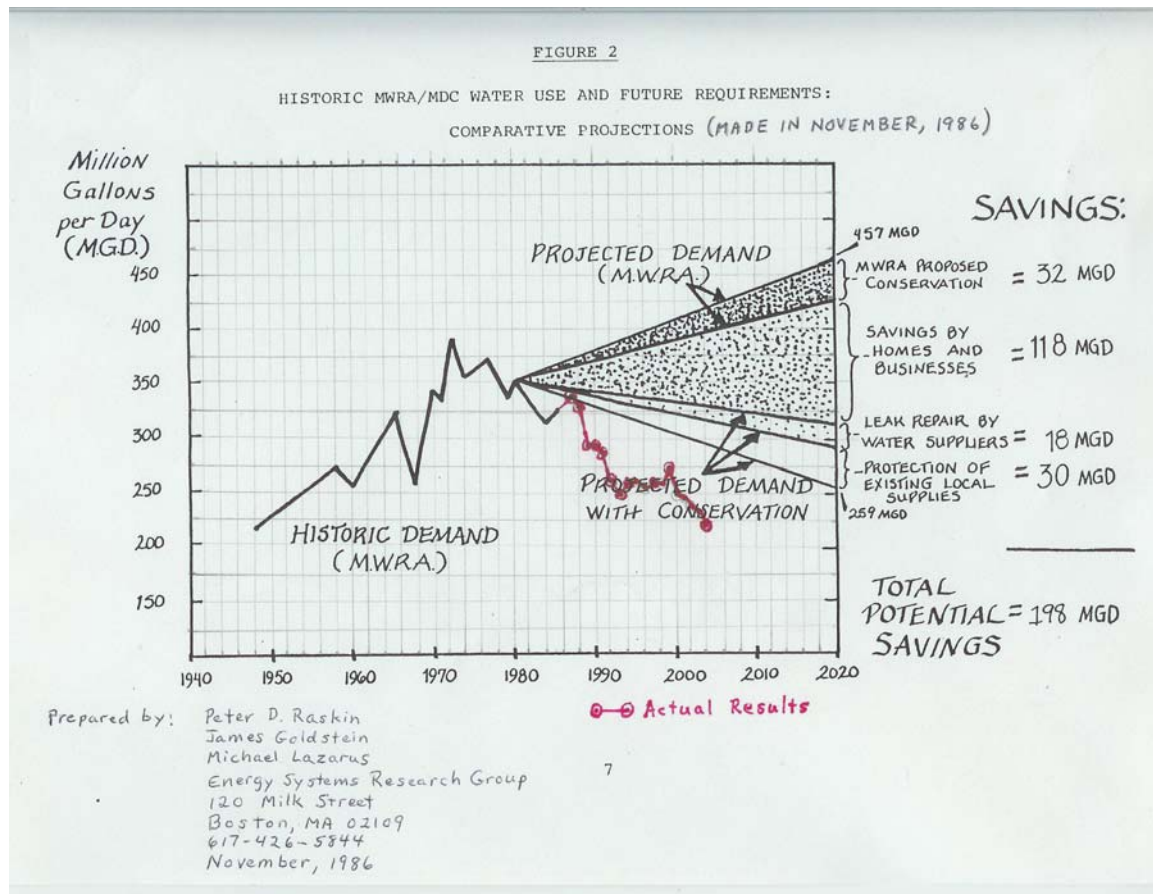




My name is Paul Lauenstein. I am a member of WSCAC, the Water Supply Citizens Advisory Committee. The following remarks reflect the views of the WSCAC Executive Committee.

Over the past three decades, five dedicated leaders of WSCAC, Marge Holland, Robie Hubley, Eileen Simonson, Bill Elliott and Alexandra Dawson, helped shape the metropolitan Boston water system and the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority. They demonstrated how a dialogue between government and citizens can illuminate a path to a better future.

It began in the late 1970s with MDC proposals to supplement the water supply for the greater Boston area, by diverting more water from the Connecticut River and/or the Merrimack River to eastern Massachusetts. Citizen opposition ultimately caused the MDC, and subsequently the MWRA, to ask a different question. Instead of, "Where can we get more water?" the question became, "How can we use our finite water supply more efficiently?" The resulting reduction in water use from over 330 million gallons daily to about 220 million gallons daily was literally "off the chart."



This projection of best case and worst case scenarios for water demand in the MWRA service area was made by professional consultants in 1986. At that time, had anyone predicted what actually happened to demand for water in the MWRA service area, they would probably have been viewed as unrealistic.

Where would MWRA be today if supplementing the reservoir system with Connecticut or Merrimack River water, projected to cost as much as \$500 million, had gone forward, and demand were still averaging 330 million gallons per day? MWRA would be deeper in debt, and energy and chemical treatment costs, which today exceed \$35 million, would be even higher. As energy costs rise, water conservation will become an ever more significant factor in containing the cost of water.

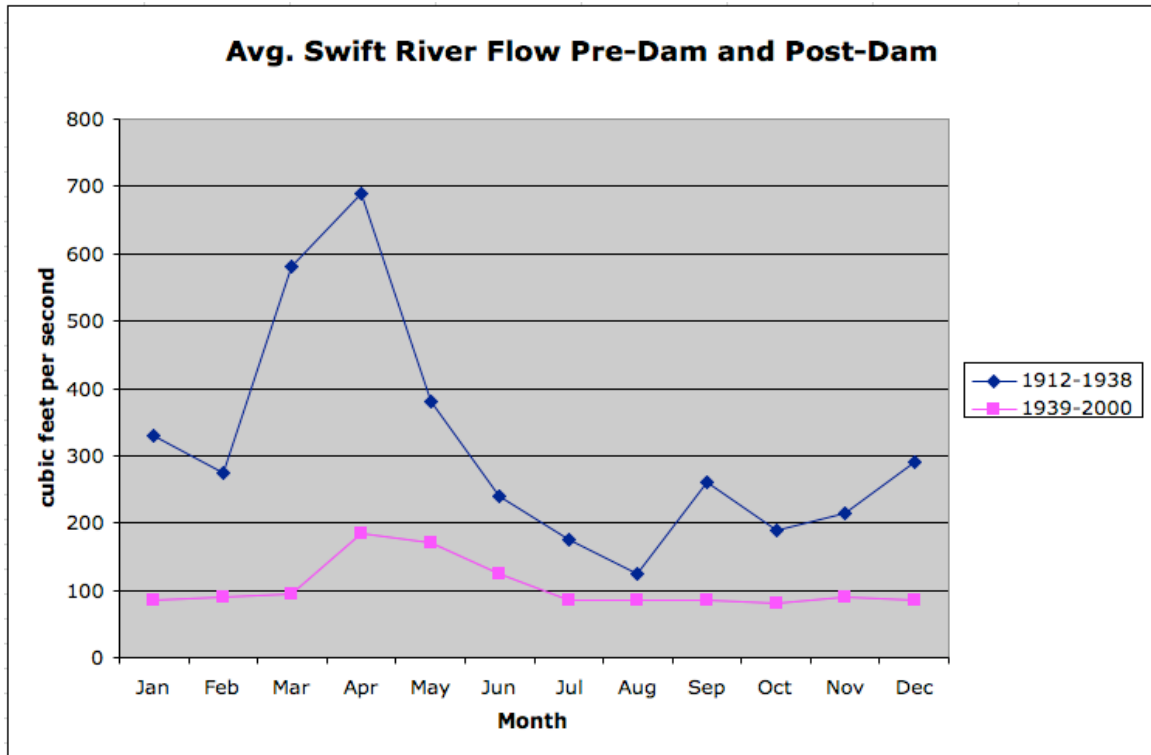
Avoidance of a costly water filtration system is another major accomplishment in which WSCAC played a key role. WSCAC proposed and helped to pass the Watershed Protection Act. Aggressive acquisition and protection of land in the watersheds feeding the reservoirs has enabled MWRA to harness natural water purification processes, without which the federal government would require MWRA to construct filtration facilities costing hundreds of millions of dollars.

In 1978, WSCAC helped revive the plan to construct the MetroWest Water Supply Tunnel to ensure redundancy of water supply for the MWRA service area, and provide operational flexibility for maintenance of the vital water conduits. WSCAC has also supported state debt service assistance, and helped increase the entry fee for communities that want supplemental water primarily for summer use.

Water supply, wastewater disposal and financial management are interconnected. For example, treating wastewater and managing combined sewer overflows might be more costly if MWRA customers still demanded 330 million gallons daily instead of just 220. WSCAC, WAC and the Advisory Board should work together to promote better understanding of these relationships.

It has been said that the MWRA system is entering a maintenance phase, with all major projects completed. However, WSCAC believes that the proposals in MWRA's new Master Plan, which are projected to cost \$3.3 billion dollars over 40 years, are ambitious, and will benefit from citizen input. MWRA user contracts should continue to be strengthened, and as a state agency MWRA should review its admission criteria for consistency with state water use policy.

The environmental impacts of MWRA's activities should also be minimized or offset. For example, MWRA should continue to explore opportunities to harness alternative energy sources such as solar and wind power. Hydro-power could also be expanded, provided that this is done in a way that does not compromise downstream ecosystems. Now that more water is available thanks to reduced demand, downstream releases should be choreographed to restore more natural flow rhythms in rivers such as the Swift and the Nashua, which have been substantially altered by MWRA's withdrawals.



The public has long viewed tap water as cheap and virtually unlimited, but not as pure or good tasting as bottled water. WSCAC believes that MWRA should continue to educate the public that MWRA delivers safe and convenient tap water that is naturally purified by the pristine watersheds surrounding its reservoirs. Furthermore, MWRA should continue to create public awareness that water is a precious, finite resource that is critical to our physical, economic and environmental health, and therefore should not be wasted. These values are admirably projected in MWRA's 2007 Annual Drinking Water Report entitled "Tap Water Delivers." MWRA should also publicize its efforts to improve the environment by using alternative energy sources and restoring stream flows. Effective public relations can help gain public acceptance of the cost of necessary infrastructure maintenance and improvements.

The MWRA Enabling Act calls for water conservation and protection of natural resources in the public interest. Section 8(e)(iv) specifically directs MWRA to implement demand management in preference to increasing withdrawals, which is at odds with promoting system expansion. Although premature allocation of MWRA water for non-essential purposes could provide a modest financial benefit to MWRA in the short run, it might turn out to be a costly mistake for the Commonwealth's interests in the long run. The water resources under MWRA's control are already essential to the state's economic vitality, and may become even more critical in the future, especially if climate change brings prolonged droughts. This calls for prudent, cautious stewardship.

MWRA has set an internationally recognized example of what can be done to conserve resources in a major metropolitan area, achieving a sustainable equilibrium, with reserves to spare for an uncertain future. Dialog with active, informed citizen advisory panels such as WSCAC and WAC has contributed significantly to MWRA's success, and will continue to help MWRA anticipate and cope with challenges in a changing world.