



WSCAC Meeting
December 10, 2013
Location: Southborough
10:00 A.M.

WSCAC Members **in Bold** in Attendance:

**Whitney Beals, WSCAC Chair, NE Forestry
Watershed**

Andrea Donlon, CRWC

Gerald Eves, Trout Unlimited

Michael Baram, BU & CFL

Martha Morgan, Nashua River Watershed

Mason Phelps, Millers River Watershed

Bill Fadden, OARS and SuAsCo Wild & Scenic Rivers

Alice Clemente, Blackstone River

Elie Saroufim, Boston Water & Sewer

Paul Lauenstein, NepRWA

Nancy Bryant, SuAsCo

Dona Motts, MA League of Women Voters

Martin Pillsbury, MAPC

Non –Members in Attendance:

Lexi Dewey, WSCAC staff

Pam Heidell, MWRA

*Please note: We had some difficulty with the recording of the meeting and not all comments were audible. Call or email the office if your comments are not in the summary.

Whit Beals requested all in attendance state their names for the record. The September, October and November meeting summaries were voted and were unanimously approved as written.

Whit opened the discussion. He and Lexi outlined several of the historical positions WSCAC has taken since its inception in 1978.

Michael Baram noted that he suggested the topic due to the shift away from the use and protection of local sources and changes by DEP in implementing the Water Management Act.

Lexi spoke about the progression from the MDC to the programs and policies adopted by the MWRA. When the MWRA was created, demand was well over the registered 312mgd. Today, the three year average is approximately 200 mgd. From the 1980s to the present, MWRA has accomplished much in the area of leak detection and repair, demand management, and conservation. The loan program available to MWRA communities continues to be very successful in reducing water loss, and assisting with funds for system maintenance and repair.

Lexi noted that WSCAC staff had done a quick analysis of current partial water users and noted that summer usage is still substantially higher than winter usage in these communities.

Pam Heidell spoke briefly about MWRA's drought management plan. Given that demand is below 200 mgd, the established seasonal drought triggers have not been activated in a long time.

Pam and Martin Pillsbury mentioned that the loss of local sources due to contamination has not been an issue for many years due to regulations put in place by EPA and MassDEP beginning in the 1980s. Weston was one of the last towns to lose their local sources due to road salt from the Mass. Pike. The question concerning the transporting of potentially damaging cargo by rail over the Wachusett Reservoir continues to concern MWRA and DCR.

A steady decrease of MWRA community demand and local source protection has made a difference. When the MWRA was created, Quabbin was the stressed resource. MWRA paid for 25 or 30 local source studies to determine if these sources could be cleaned up and used. Priorities have since shifted and policies are changing now that rivers and streams in the eastern part of the state are experiencing low summer flows due to local well pumping. Water quality often decreases during summer months and several communities are in the process of upgrading or building new treatment plants to address iron and manganese levels.

In addition to the effects of over pumping, the problem of impervious cover on stream flow, aquifer recharge, water quality and stormwater is well-documented in the SWMI framework.

Martin acknowledged that while overall demand for water is decreasing, the level of demand is affected by growth trends in particular areas. While many communities have decreased their water use, others are attracting new residential and commercial development. Pressure on local sources could be reduced by purchasing all or a portion of the water needed from the MWRA.

In the mid-1980s, MWRA rates were cheaper and it was easier to join instead of constructing new treatment plants. The trend has shifted 180 degrees. The MWRA now has water for sale and the documentation of stressed sources in eastern Mass has helped to create the SWMI framework and the option of transferring more water from Quabbin to the towns in the Rt.128 corridor. At the same time, communities like Framingham are studying the cost-benefit of reactivating their local sources in response to MWRA water rates.

For decades, some of the most stressed sources were in the Ipswich River basin. Policies to maximize local sourcing of water were intended to reduce demand on Quabbin. Martin suggests that we need to rethink whether the use of local sources is without harm to the watersheds, in light of the increasing availability of water from Quabbin.

Q: Do you know of any towns other than Framingham that are considering reactivating local sources?

A: No

The following discussion included these points:

- Framingham and the history of its use and abandonment of local sources.
- Railroad transportation of hazardous chemicals over the Wachusett Reservoir.
- Water quality standards tightening and some towns having to spend significant amounts of money to bring their local well water up to these higher standards.

- Greenhouse gas reductions and the impact on water policy - Martin passed around a dashboard on how we are doing with global warming.

Lexi brought the discussion back to the span of historic WSCAC positions regarding demand management, water conservation and full cost pricing and how these positions have translated to the MWRA improvements to the distribution system, the funding of DCR's Division of Water Supply Protection, the role of the Water Supply Protection Trust, and the dramatic improvement in water use efficiency over the past two decades.

Leak detection and pipe repair programs continue to play a major role. Maintaining funding of these programs is necessary to assist fiscally strapped communities that need to focus on local system maintenance. Martin noted that DEP also has a grant program for leak detection for communities outside the MWRA service area.

Paul spoke of sustainability from an infrastructure perspective and his hope that SWMI would require towns to meet the full cost water pricing standard. He questioned whether the state can require or influence towns on this issue. Martin noted there will be incentives associated with new grants for infrastructure. Paul asked what the eligibility requirements should be for these incentives. Some discussion on this ensued concerning the amount of private wells and lack of data on the amount of water they are using.

Lexi came back to additional changes since 1978 including the recent formation of the Water Infrastructure Finance Commission, their report which documented the costs of repairing water and wastewater infrastructure, and the resulting creation the Water Infrastructure Alliance and Senate Bill 1880/1947.

The current wording in the draft bill potentially makes it easier for the Authority to sell water by highlighting the MWRA's ability to serve additional communities and a matching 1:1 grant administered by DEP to help fund the admission price for towns in stressed basins. Paul commented that WSCAC has always stood for using water efficiently, and suggested that WSCAC should consider what kinds of conditions might be attached to subsidies for joining MWRA. Martin mentioned the need for Smart Growth requirements for new development that might ensue from the availability of abundant water resources as a result of joining MWRA.

Whit noted there is excess pressure on local water withdrawals. The MWRA Enabling Act states that the MWRA cannot sell water to a community unless certain criteria are met (OP 10-Admission of New Communities to the MWRA system).

Michael asked what the purpose of WSCAC is. Whit asked whether we are an organization that is safeguarding overall environment quality and the health of our ecosystems or if we are an organization that is safeguarding public water supply interests? Although they are related, they are not the same. Has our scope expanded?

Bill Fadden brought up the town of Shrewsbury that is looking to increase the amount water from the Blackstone which flows into Narragansett Bay in RI. Does this request fit into the scope of WSCAC? Martin did not feel WSCAC should comment on this since he views it as a local issue. Paul disagreed and noted that water policies that affect Shrewsbury can potentially affect every community in Massachusetts. He highlighted the interconnectedness of water resources everywhere. Michael asked if when we say local, is this really defined as regional. Martin reiterated that this is out of WSCAC purview as the committee was created to evaluate MWRA water programs, policies and projects. As

part of the discussion, members agreed that the SWMI framework is more appropriate for comment by WSCAC, as it pertains to all communities in the state. Whit noted that WSCAC has historically commented on issues outside the MWRA service area. In what way does WSCAC want to respond to the SWMI framework as it relates to the MWRA, its member communities, and communities that might be candidates for joining the MWRA system?

Martin asked the group to keep in mind WSCAC's mandate and mission. He noted that WSCAC has gone beyond its purview in the past. He clarified that the committee needs to be cautious about commenting on local issues (such as Shrewsbury's WMA permit) that are not within the WSCAC mission or scope of services to the MWRA. Michael does not want WSCAC to limit itself to the MWRA business model and favors a broader approach noting that state water is interconnected. Paul agreed. The group agreed on the importance of commenting on SWMI related projects given that SWMI, when regulations are final, will be a state-wide water policy.

The tasks assigned to WSCAC within the MWRA contract are as follows:

6.1 Water Supply Programs Review.

Advise the Authority staff and Board in the performance of their duties relating to water supply planning and policies. Participate in the design, review and evaluation of research, reports and new ideas for programs. Provide comments, information, advice, recommendations and guidance as to the direction, intent and execution of water planning and policy development.

6.2 Outreach and Education.

Assure informed public input by providing assistance in outreach to various groups regarding the Authority's water supply programs and policies, and state water resources legislation and policies. Review programs with and explain plans and policies to organizations and citizens, including the scheduling of workshops, meetings and conferences. Provide comments and assistance on legislation of importance to the Authority.

The mission of WSCAC according to the committee's by-laws includes:

Purposes and Powers

1. To play a full and formal advisory role in the preparation and review of water policy and programs for the MWRA, including continuing cooperative consultation with EOEAs agencies and consultants on

relevant matters. To assure informed citizen recommendations on the MWRA water-supply programs; to provide a mechanism for informed public input into the environmental review procedures on said projects; to seek and receive reactions from all segments of the public affected by these programs; and to transmit these to MWRA and other relevant agencies.

There was some discussion on Weymouth between Paul, Martin, and Whit. Lexi noted that the cost to join the MWRA may be the largest factor discouraging communities from buying MWRA water. If Senate Bill 1880 passes, it is possible more communities may join given the potential MassDEP matching grant to help fund the MWRA's admission price. Once a community is part of the MWRA system, the need to conserve does not necessarily improve despite the high cost of water. Several towns have used the additional water purchased from MWRA to increase commercial, industrial and/or residential development. The Authority is currently stressing the economic development benefits of joining the MWRA system.

Paul highlighted needing versus wanting water. He would like guidelines for communities that include block rate requirements. He feels the state should require full cost pricing and would like to see WSCAC focus on this. Martin suggested Senate Bill 1880 would be the best place to insert full cost pricing criteria. Paul asked about smart growth and the group said WSCAC should not be commenting on this.

Michael brought back the question of what the committee's focus should be. Martin noted that the MWRA is not asking what the effects of bringing more water into communities will mean. Originally only communities within 10 miles of the statehouse were allowed to join the MWRA. Michael asked how we best address these issues. Martin mentioned the issue of impervious surfaces. He didn't fault the MWRA for this but said the state needs to step up and mandate conservation if state funds are being used. Paul agreed with Martin that attaching strings to subsidies is the way to go.

With more discussion still needed for further clarification and action, the January 14th meeting will be devoted to this topic.

Meeting adjourned.