



WSCAC Meeting

Location: MWRA Facilities
Southborough, MA
November 13, 2018—10:00 A.M.

Members in Bold in Attendance:

Michael Baram, WSCAC Chair, BU & CLF
Whitney Beals, NE Forestry
Terry Connolly, Town of Ware & Trout
Unlimited
William Copithorne, Town of Arlington
Andrea Donlon, CT River Conservancy
Gerald Eves, Trout Unlimited
Bill Fadden, OARS

Bill Kiley, BWSC, WAC
Paul Lauenstein, NepRWA
Jean McCluskey, ACEC/MA
Martha Morgan, Nashua River Watershed
Martin Pillsbury, MAPC
Janet Rothrock, League of Women Voters
Kurt Tramosch, Wayland Wells
Roger Wrubel, Mass Audubon

Non-Members in Attendance:

Lexi Dewey, WSCAC staff
Adrianna Cillo, BWSC, WAC
John Gregoire, MWRA
James Guidod, MWRA Advisory Board

Vandana Rao, Executive Office of Energy &
Environmental Affairs
Alexandra Peckham, WSCAC staff

WSCAC Business

Michael Baram called the meeting to order, and handed the meeting over to Lexi Dewey.

Lexi announced that the Quabbin is at 97% capacity, and spilling. She passed around a photo that she took the weekend before. John Gregoire mentioned that it's possible that the reservoir may spill over the upper and lower spillways.

Other updates from Lexi:

DCR is scheduling its first controlled deer hunt in the Reservoir Zone at Wachusett for the month of December (lands directly adjacent to the Reservoir).

Ashland's process for joining the MWRA water system continues to move forward.

Lexi recently attended two events: the NE Waterworks Symposium, and a Water Innovation Workshop at the New England Water Innovation Center at UMass Amherst. Please contact the office if you would like more detail on these events.

Michael mentioned that clean water has been in headlines recently, mentioning a recent news item about Bill Gates' work in water and sanitation. Lexi took a moment, while on the topic of sanitation, to highlight dog waste issues and watershed management, and there was a brief discussion of the issue occurring at various locations.

Michael requested that the October meeting summary be approved. Bill Fadden made a motion, the motion was seconded, and the minutes passed unanimously.

Lexi then introduced Vandana Rao, the Director of Water Policy at the Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs. Vandana also serves as the Director of the Water Resources. Her presentation to WSCAC is available [here](#).

Vandana began her presentation by reviewing the purpose of the Water Conservation Standards which are tied to regulatory programs including the Interbasin Transfer Act and the Water Management Act. The Standards direct policy, set the framework, establish good practices, and clarify goals. Each chapter of the Water Conservation Standards discusses Standards which represent best practices that water users should follow as well as Recommendations which indicate trends and potential future standards.

The chapters were revised after numerous workgroup meetings and extensive discussion of the standards and recommendations, with a focus on specific chapters. They are available [online](#).

Kurt Tramosch asked whether private water users were part of the discussion.

Vandana responded that the recommendations are the same for all residential users both private and public. Providing information to private water users is an issue of communication, and there is a continuing need to find ways to help private users understand their water use and improve their water efficiency.

Kurt had heard of a discussion over including restrictions to private well use during extreme droughts, and would like to see more information if available.

Bill said that the Water Conservations Standards should apply to all users, public or private, MWRA or not.

Vandana mentioned that overall, Massachusetts is doing well with residential water use with many communities meeting the 65 gallons per person per day noted in the Water Conservation Standards.

The goal of the revisions were to clarify best practices, incorporate updates, improve readability and include lessons learned from the 2016 drought.

Water Loss Control: includes an emphasis on an overall audit and leak detection, and then target water loss prevention to appropriate areas.

Metering: The goal is 100% metering, and an increase in frequency of billing to quarterly or more frequently. Quarterly billing makes it challenging for users to track their water usage properly, and if a leak develops, it can take several months before it's caught.

Roger Wrubel asked about monthly billing and costs – given that monthly billing would increase costs, are there any suggested ways to approach this change?

Vandana remarked that it depends on how we look at it – yes, there are increased costs for the actual billing process, but there are vast benefits in leak detection, water treatment costs, etc.

Kurt mentioned that his town of Wayland has been discussing automated metering for several years, with much of the discussion centering on which technology to select. He asked if this is a difficult question for most towns.

Vandana said that is always a topic of discussion, and suggested Kurt get in touch with Mass Waterworks Association (MWWA) or similar groups, to see if they can provide assistance.

Chapter 4-Pricing: The updated Standards include improved conservation rate pricing. Vandana mentioned that on November 14th in Sharon, the Department of Conservation and Recreation and the Division of Ecological Restoration, in collaboration with the Alliance for Water Efficiency, is offering a water rates workshop.

Chapter 5-Residential Water Use: The recommendation of 65 gpcd was not altered, and it applies to everyone, whether on public or private water supply. Jean McCluskey asked how private water users are informed of the recommended standard. Vandana said that the state has not yet developed adequate communication methods to inform small communities, but they're working on it and have connected with the Department of Public Health.

Chapter 8-Agricultural Water Use: There was extensive reshaping of this chapter. Lexi asked about grants for irrigation, and Vandana confirmed this. Martha Morgan asked if illegal water use from streams and rivers was addressed. Vandana said yes, this was discussed, and information was disseminated during the last drought on avoiding direct withdrawal from rivers and streams. Kurt mentioned that people do take directly from rivers, which is not allowed.

Chapter 9-Outdoor Water Use: The review process includes standards, soil health, and other ways to conserve outdoor watering.

Chapters 1, 6, 7, and 10 did not get significant updates, but the rest were revised. Bill asked about the percentage for industrial use, and Vandana said there's an overall aim to reduce water use by 10%. Michael asked if there are any good examples of industrial recycling, and Vandana mentioned Gillette Stadium for commercial use, and added that there are several businesses that recycle water in a closed loop. UMass Amherst is piloting a greywater recycling program. Kurt added that the University of Connecticut is making similar efforts. He also pointed out that big companies will sometimes demand water usage rights to come to a town, such as data centers. Vandana said that hopefully the community assesses the company's water usage to determine whether efficiency can be improved.

Michael asked whether any companies drill private wells. Vandana said this happens, but they still need to meet MassDEP standards. John Gregoire asked about the new marijuana industry's water usage, and Vandana said this falls under agriculture, and they're closely monitoring these statistics. Roger Wrubel asked about rules and restrictions on greywater. Vandana confirmed that MassDEP has wastewater reuse regulations from about ten years ago, and that she will send out a link.

Massachusetts Drought Management Plan:

The 2016 drought rivaled the drought in the 1960s although it lasted a much shorter time period. The drought plan that was in place was based on information from the 1990s drought, and needed to be updated (these updates have not yet been released for public viewing). Massachusetts currently has six regions. The updated Plan proposes to expand to seven regions. The layout realigns regions with counties, which increases public understanding and communication.

Kurt asked whether the alignment is related to the specific watershed area. Vandana said that the alignment is based on precipitation and the variability across regions..

The plan updates also renames the levels of drought to clarify what steps should be taken with each designation. Lexi asked why the US Drought Monitor language was not used, and Vandana said that the levels are slightly different, and are much more fine-tuned due to Massachusetts-based data. Changes were also made to indicators, to update the analyses.

There are drought actions to be taken on both state and local levels. Local municipalities' actions include review of emergency plans and a focus on preparedness, and State actions include coordination, gathering data, performing public outreach, improving efficiency at state facilities, and providing guidance to the local communities. Local actions include having a Drought Management Plan in place, regulating and reviewing water rates, updated water use restrictions, and a Water Conservation Plan. Massachusetts is learning from and working with a representative of a Connecticut task force on local actions.

The committee discussed stormwater flow, collecting rainwater, and encouraging the public to use rain barrels and other collection systems.

Kurt asked about agricultural water use during a drought, and Vandana confirmed that as food is considered essential, agriculture has different regulations.

Whit mentioned the 2016 drought, and how restrictions didn't happen until mid-drought, and asked whether the new system is set up to bring awareness sooner. Vandana confirmed that yes, they need better methods to catch the drought sooner, and they're working to improve this aspect through the updated Drought Plan. Michael asked about legislative initiatives, and Vandana mentioned Representative Dykema, who introduced legislation to give the Secretary of EOEEA authority to implement statewide drought restrictions. The legislature moved this bill to study.

Members thanked Vandana for her presentation.

Concord On Tap: Janet Rothrock, WSCAC member and League of Women Voters shared a presentation with the committee on the single-use bottled water ban process in Concord, MA, and the effort to reduce single-use plastics.

The problems with single-use bottles such as plastic water bottles, include pollution (from manufacturing and shipping), litter, microplastics, and social justice issues (as water is often removed from smaller communities and shipped elsewhere).

The specific ban in Concord prohibits only the sale of single-use PET plastic water bottles. It does not include milk, juice, soda, or anything else sold in single-use plastic bottles. The goal of the ban is to put environmental needs over convenience. However, in areas where the tap water is unsafe to drink such as during a natural disaster, bottled water will still be made available.

Adrianna asked whether adding a 5¢ deposit on water bottles would help. Janet said that this does not remove many of the issues, such as pollution, and many people don't bother recycling the bottles at all. Kurt asked if there were any discussion over public health, and Janet said that public health did not play a role, and was not affected by the ban.

There was a heavy campaign to rescind the ban, funded by companies that bottle and sell water. They were unsuccessful. A documentary film group followed the campaign and created the movie *Divide in Concord*, which premiered in 2014 and is now used as a teaching tool for groups looking to pass similar laws.

Vandana asked about other communities and their efforts. Janet said that yes, Sudbury, Lincoln, and Great Barrington have all passed similar bans, and Melrose is currently working on one. The campaign is now working to expand the ban, because it specifically targets PET water bottles (the only bottle on the market during the time of the campaign), and there are now other types of plastic used in the manufacturing process.

The town of Concord pays for the water that is available to the public via the fountains and bottle-filling stations, and the cost has come out to approximately \$50 a year, which is insignificant against the bigger picture. The process for installing fountains in the town of Concord was based on communication with the townspeople, and fountains were added in during new construction or renovations. The main local opponent to the bill, a local retailer, got a liquor license and has not suffered financial loss, and a few years ago installed an outdoor water bottle filler on his storefront.

Questions included inquiries about plastic bag bans (good practice for a bottled water ban), the role of tourism in the development of the new fountains (Concord acts as an excellent demonstration town, showing people how easy it is), and boxed water (which poses many of the same issues as bottled water).

Janet concluded by welcoming anyone who's interested in learning more to reach out; there are plenty of resources available.

Janet was thanked for her presentation.

The meeting was adjourned.

WSCAC will meet again on December 11, 2018 at 10:00 AM at the MWRA Facilities in Southborough. Please [visit our website](#) for more information on this meeting.