



## **WSCAC/WAC/MWRA Advisory Board Meeting**

Location: Department of Public Works  
Lexington, MA  
September 19, 2019—11:30 A.M.

### **Members in Bold in Attendance:**

**Michael Baram, WSCAC Chair, BU & CLF**  
**Whitney Beals, NE Forestry**  
**William Copithorne, Town of Arlington**  
**Steven Daunais, Tata & Howard**  
Andrea Donlon, CT River Conservancy  
Gerald Eves, Trout Unlimited  
**Bill Fadden, OARS**

**Bill Kiley, BWSC, WAC**  
**Paul Lauenstein, NepRWA**  
**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

MWRA Advisory Board Members  
WAC Members

### **WSCAC Business**

The meeting opened with Lou Taverna, MWRA Advisory Board Chair, briefly reviewing executive committee business. He then introduced the first presenter.

Fred Laskey, MWRA Executive Director, presented *Challenges for the Year Ahead* (see [this link](#) for this presentation, also available on the [WSCAC website](#)). The presentation covered the Wastewater Metering Program, regulatory changes including updates on lead and PFAS, the new Paid Family and Medical Leave Act, updates on the Combined Sewer Overflow post-construction assessment (including some discussion on increased rainfall rates and other effects of climate change), and the status of the Metropolitan Tunnel Redundancy project.

The MWRA Advisory Board staff [presented](#) next. James Guiod began by discussing an editorial related to the staffing numbers at the Department of Conservation and Recreation's (DCR) Division of Water Supply Protection (DWSP). Despite an increase in hiring, the staffing levels remain below their target goal (150 FTE; currently at 136). The Advisory Board will continue to monitor the situation, as active protection of watershed lands are required to protect water quality and maintain filtration avoidance. James mentioned reservoir levels, noting that the Quabbin spilled for four months beginning in October 2018 and continuing into 2019. Thus, selling additional water through system expansion is still an option for the MWRA. Several communities including Ashland and Burlington have been in discussion to join the MWRA system, but neither has completed the admission process yet. Finally, James touched on the Tunnel Redundancy Program, which is moving ahead.

MWRA Advisory Board staff Lenna Ostrodka discussed wastewater and stormwater issues, beginning with the MS4 permit. The end of the first year of permitting requirements was June 30, 2019, and more requirements are due in the upcoming months and years. The EPA has resources available for reference on its website. More discussion on this topic will occur at the Operations Committee on October 1<sup>st</sup> at 10am in Burlington.

Lenna discussed the beneficial use of fertilizer pellets from the sludge to fertilizer program, and current questions about PFAS in these pellets. Alternatives to this program, if necessary, such as landfilling the sludge from Deer Island are very expensive. MassDEP has not yet determined a Maximum Contaminant Load (MCL) for PFAS.

Lenna reminded anyone interested in these topics to sign up for the upcoming Operations Committee meeting on October 1 in Burlington, and the OMSAP meeting in Scituate on October 3.

James announced that the Advisory Board's November meeting will welcome guest speaker Martha Davis, author of the report, *A Drop in the Bucket: Water Affordability Policies in Twelve Massachusetts Communities*. November will also see the release of the Advisory Board's Annual Rate Survey. Some updates to the website are being implemented to facilitate the survey's completion. Additional commonwealth data is being requested and recorded.

Travis Ahern reviewed past, present, and future rates management strategies, as well as MWRA's pension and OPEB programs. He discussed the challenges inherent in the pension system, and noted that it caused a spike in the funding schedule for FY21 with a new actuarial.

Lexi Dewey, Executive Director of WSCAC, drew attention to WSCAC's FY19 Annual Report, and offered a brief outline of WSCAC's focus in the upcoming year. Topics include water system redundancy, MWRA's reporting and reduction of carbon emissions, and the continuation of hazardous materials transported by rail over the Wachusett reservoir. MWRA staff members often speak at WSCAC meetings to update members on topics such as dam projects, water treatment, water infrastructure projects and aquatic invasives programs. DCR-DWSP staff also present to WSCAC members on watershed projects including forestry, the deer hunt, public access, water quality monitoring and land acquisition.

Water conservation remains a high priority for WSCAC, including residential irrigation practices. The recently updated MA Water Conservation Standards provide reasonable ways for all towns in the state to conserve water. WSCAC is an active participant in state water policy discussions at the Water Resources Commission monthly meetings, the Drought Management Task Force, and the MA Rivers Alliance.

Like the MWRA Advisory Board, WSCAC is also concerned with the job vacancies at DCR-DWSP. Despite a budget increase, DCR continues to underspend on personnel. Programs such as land acquisition, public access, forestry, and water quality monitoring must be funded and staffed, and yet there are positions still waiting to be filled. Lexi referenced two examples, one being a senior staff member in land acquisition who retired in August and support staff for the Quabbin forestry program. This position has been vacant for nearly a year and duties for the job have been delegated to other forestry staff.

The forestry program is essential to the health of the watershed and to the filtration waiver requirements. Disease and insect damage have been significantly affecting forest health, and demonstrating that changes to the forest are already happening, and will continue. WSCAC supports third-party oversight of this program to promote transparency and encourage collaboration with other professional forestry groups.

WSCAC schedules a forestry tour at Quabbin every June for anyone interested in learning more about the watershed forest.

Michael Baram, WSCAC Chair, spoke briefly to emphasize the need for MWRA and state agencies to address the major risks posed by Pan Am's frequent rail transport of toxic and hazardous materials over an unsafe causeway that extends into the Wachusett reservoir. A potential accident and spill of such materials could contaminate the MWRA system and has been of great concern to WSCAC and MWRA for many years. Michael asked Mr. Laskey for an update on steps taken to prevent this risk. Mr. Laskey said that there has been no progress at this time, and that the MWRA continues to be prepared in case something happens.

Andreae Downs, Executive Director of WAC, gave a brief outline of the committee's history, and welcomed their members, including Karen Lachmayr, Committee Chair, Wayne Chouinard, Committee Vice Chair, and two new members, Belinda Stanbury and Kannan Vembu.

One of WAC's recent focus issues has been blockages in the sewer systems. There are some odd outlying causes, such as plaster in the pipes, but the leading cause is wipes. Public education is needed. WAC is also watching the news on emerging contaminants, such as PFAS. Andreae noted available copies of WAC's FY19 Annual Report.

Lou Taverna, Advisory Board Chair, provided an update on the new HEEC cable which provides electricity to Deer Island. MWRA payments regarding the cable will increase costs in FY21.

The meeting was adjourned.

**WSCAC will next meet jointly with WAC on October 15, 2019 at 10:30 AM at the Waterworks Museum in Chestnut Hill. Please [visit our website](#) for more information on this meeting.**