



## **WSCAC Meeting**

Location: Waterworks Museum  
Chestnut Hill, MA  
February 11, 2020—10:30 A.M.

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

#### **Michael Baram, WSCAC Chair**

Whitney Beals

#### **William Copithorne, Town of Arlington**

#### **Steven Daunais, Tata & Howard**

Andrea Donlon, CT River Conservancy

Gerald Eves, Trout Unlimited

Bill Fadden, OARS

#### **Bill Kiley, BWSC**

#### **Paul Lauenstein, NepRWA**

Martha Morgan, Nashua River Watershed

Martin Pillsbury, MAPC

#### **Janet Rothrock, League of Women Voters**

Bruce Spencer

Kurt Tramosch, Wayland Wells

Roger Wrubel, Mass Audubon

### **WAC members in Attendance:**

Mary Adelstein

Philip Ashcroft, NEWEA

Wayne Chouinard, Vice Chair, Arlington DPW

Adriana Cillo, BWSC

Stephen Greene

James Guiod, MWRA AB

Taber Keally, NepRWA

Karen Lachmayr, WAC Chair

Belinda Stansbury (on phone)

Kannan Vembu

Dan Winograd

### **Non-Members in Attendance:**

Sally Carroll, MWRA

Lexi Dewey, WSCAC

Andreae Downs, WAC

Teresa Keene (Burlington DPW)

Wendy Leo, MWRA

Andres Ripley, NepRWA

Meg Tabacsko, MWRA

Danielle DiRuzza, MWRA

### **Joint Business**

Andreae Downs opened the meeting. Attendees introduced themselves.

### **WAC Business**

Andreae requested any edits to the WAC December minutes. No edits were offered, and a motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes. The minutes passed unanimously.

### **Presentation**

Andreae introduced Adriana Cillo, the Educational Coordinator of Boston Water and Sewer Commission (BWSC), and Meg Tabacsko, MWRA Project Manager for School Education, and Danielle DiRuzza, School Program Administrative Coordinator, both from the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority.

Adriana is a member of WAC, and is the Educational Programs Coordinator with BWSC. At the start of her presentation, she explained that she spent her first 5-6 months of the job learning about BWSC, and then developed a program that would introduce BWSC to people who were unfamiliar with it. She provides education and outreach to approximately 2,500 kids and 600-700 adults annually.

Adriana shared a presentation that she uses for Boston schoolchildren. She shows images and information about the Quabbin and Wachusett Reservoirs and explains what an aqueduct is, so they learn how the water travels from the Quabbin Reservoir to their homes. She reviews ways we use water every day (e.g. drinking, cleaning), and then shows how the wastewater moves from towns to Deer Island for treatment..

Adriana noted that she spends extra time on a slide that features FOG – fat, oil, and grease – and how to dispose of these materials properly by cooling them, canning them, and throwing them in the trash. This keeps them out of the sewer system where they clog the pipes. She asked to be notified if there were backups in the storm drains or sewers near her house, so she could take photos of what workers were pulling out. She shares these photos with kids and adults. Parents often comment to her on her school programs, so she knows children are remembering the information they see and hear.

The next section of her presentation addressed “flushable” wipes and other items that people flush that impact the sewer system. Adriana emphasizes that wipes are bad for the pipes by showing images of wipes which had to be removed because they clog pipes. This gets a strong reaction from the kids. Adriana includes slides of Deer Island, and a map of what happens to wastewater when it leaves the house and is transferred by pipes to Deer Island.

She uses projects like building waterways and games to explain the movement of water and wastewater. The games are good for children in kindergarten to fourth grade (e.g. a poster “where does it go?” where kids learn where to put different categories of trash), and for older kids (e.g. a game from Rhode Island on where stormwater goes). She also teaches kids about local shellfish, and how stormwater discharges affect the environment.

Adriana also ensures that informational flyers are available in multiple languages, and gives out free merchandise to promote her messaging, e.g. doggie bags and pencil cases.

In addition to children, Adriana speaks to seniors and the public at different places in Boston including senior centers, the Boston Aquarium and Boston Parks.

Lexi asked how the messaging appeals to seniors. Adriana said that seniors are often very surprised at the FOG and the wipes issues, and are open to learning and altering their behavior. She discusses bottled water, and talks about where their drinking water comes from, including the history of Boston’s water supply.

Paul asked how well this message gets back to parents, and Adriana said that she gets feedback from parents and teachers saying that the kids internalize the messaging and bring it home. BWSC is very supportive of the public education and outreach that Adriana does.

Meg Tabacsko, MWRA Project Manager for School Education, spoke next. Her presentation is available here. She started out noting that the education team is comprised of herself and Danielle DiRuzza. They see over 10,000 students through the more than 300 classroom presentations they do each school year.

Meg shared how they typically start out the presentations to get the children engaged in the topic. Instead of powerpoints, they use printed images, games and jars of water from various stages of the water cycle (straight from the Quabbin, to entering Deer Island for treatment, to exiting Deer Island after treatment). These examples make a huge impression on the children. She regularly receives feedback from teachers and parents on kids bringing the information home and talking about it.

Meg and Danielle make sure that the presentations are fun as well as educational to help the kids remember what they're learning about. They offer a field trip to Romney Marsh where kids can see water monitoring being done. The City of Revere started surveying and selecting three different storm drains, and the kids are able to come out to the site and see storm drain cleanings in action. Children remember the presentations and information years later, and ask Meg and Danielle to come to camps or other schools. Meg and Danielle bring stickers, magnets, books and a coloring book called Dwayne the Storm Drain to school programs. They have an annual writing and poster contest, open to all schools in the MWRA service area, grades k-12. An award ceremony is held annually at Deer Island in May.

Paul asked whether the lessons tie in at all with the current curriculum. Meg said yes, they tie it in with specific subjects such as math, science, history, and in fifth grade, there's a water subject requirement.

Janet asked if there was any attempt to work with the state education framework, integrating the program into state requirements. Meg answered that many teachers are working the program into their curriculum themselves, relating the program to the frameworks. They work with 36-38 communities each year.

Since they are unable to go to more schools, Meg and Danielle share their programs with other interested groups, such as watershed groups that have school programs.

Mary Adelstein asked whether there's any opportunity to create Public Service Announcements or other ways to reach adults and teach them what should not be flushed down the toilet, or proper use of a garbage disposal. Meg said that New England Water Environment Association and New England Water Works Association are working to educate the public on just these issues. Adriana noted that BWSC does send out notices and has information on their website. MWRA uses their website, brochures, their annual Consumer Confidence Report as well as attending community events to promote education as well. Both agreed that more outreach is always important.

There was a discussion of wipes, and how they used to be labeled as flushable, but do not break down. Now, more wipes are being marked as not flushable, and some flushable wipes are breaking down slightly more easily than before.

Adriana is also hoping to implement a program where people can adopt a storm drain. San Francisco did a similar program, and she said they seem to have had a positive impact. Bill pointed out that the efforts to raise awareness, while there are some shortfalls, have already had a positive impact.

Paul asked about the cost of the program vs the benefits. If the program were expanded to meet the demand, would the benefits pay for the extra costs? Meg responded that it's very challenging to put a cost benefit on public education. There are many anecdotes that demonstrate the positive effect, but the value of education is hard to determine in numbers.

A question was asked about what happens to the kids' posters after the competition. Meg explained that the winning submissions are put on display at the Waterworks Museum. She also reviewed the judging process, which involves winnowing down the applicants, reducing them further in the second round of judging, and then one final judging round for each category (determined by grade level).

Another question was posed as to whether the school presentations include information on combined sewer overflows. Adriana discusses it with the adults, and Meg has a section on the topic for high school students.

Janet Rothrock joined the meeting, thus making a quorum. Lexi requested a motion to approve the January meeting minutes. The motion was made, seconded, and the minutes were passed unanimously.

Andreae reminded WAC members of the next WAC meeting, and provided a draft letter discussing the question of wipes – flushability and labeling requirements. She noted that there will be some pushback from the manufacturing companies, but eventually she hopes to get legislation passed to require more stringent labeling guidelines. Mary offered several edits to the language. Kannan noted that the biodegradability of flushable wipes is increasing, but the bottom line is still that toilet paper is the only thing that should be flushed. Paul suggested that an effective addition to a legislative briefing might be Meg's or Adriana's presentations. There was additional discussion about the labeling standards.

Lexi offered copies of the updated Massachusetts Drought Management Plan, and encouraged people to share these with their communities and organizations. Andreae recognized Meg's recent receipt of the Secretary's Award for Excellence in Energy and Environmental Education.

The meeting was adjourned.

**WSCAC will next meet on March 10, 2020, at 10:00 am at the MWRA Facilities in Southborough. Please [visit our website](#) for more information on this meeting.**