



**WATER SUPPLY CITIZENS  
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to the Mass. Water Resources Authority

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## **WSCAC Statement on MWRA Water Quality and the DCR Division of Water Supply Protection's (DWSP) Forest Management Program**

The Water Supply Citizens Advisory Committee (WSCAC) is contracted as the water supply advisory committee to the MWRA Board of Directors and staff. The committee develops positions on water resources management, produces written comment on environmental reviews and makes recommendations to the MWRA and other relevant state, regional and federal agencies.

Representatives from Environment Massachusetts have been circulating a letter urging MWRA Water System communities to sign a petition requesting a permanent ban on logging in the Quabbin Reservoir watershed. The letter states that forestry practices at Quabbin are a threat to the water supply. We believe this claim originated with the attention drawn to one particular operation on which there were violations of DWSP standard practices. However, water quality was not compromised by this or any other DWSP logging operation. That claim by Environment Massachusetts is unfounded and overlooks the fact that not a single one of many thousands of water quality samples analyzed over five decades has indicated a problem attributable to forestry operations on Quabbin lands.

The Department of Conservation and Recreation's (DCR) Division of Water Supply Protection (DWSP) and the MWRA conduct extensive water quality testing across the watersheds and the water supply system from tributaries, reservoirs and intakes throughout the treatment and distribution system. The strength of this program and its findings of high-quality source water have allowed the MWRA to receive and retain a waiver from the water filtration requirement under state and federal rules.

The DWSP and its predecessor agencies have been managing the forests in the watersheds of the Quabbin Reservoir, the Ware River, and the Wachusett Reservoir for over fifty years. Throughout this period, there has never been a decline in water quality. Over 1000 timber sales have been planned and implemented according to cutting practices regulations that are widely accepted by water suppliers in other states and countries as the gold standard for watershed forest management and drinking water protection. The MWRA is highly motivated to maintain the highest possible quality source water. If it were to lose its waiver from the filtration requirement, the Authority would have to construct, operate and maintain a new filtration facility at the John J. Carroll Water Treatment Plant. Forestry operations would not be part of the watershed management program if proven to be a threat to water quality.

In 2010, DCR received the Exemplary Water Source Protection Award for large water systems from the American Water Works Association. This is the highest achievement in source water protection in North America. A key factor for granting this award is the strong relationship between the DWSP, the MWRA and the Water Supply Protection Trust which serves as the funding mechanism for DCR's comprehensive watershed protection program.

The DWSP website includes an overview of the watershed forestry approach in photos and text. [www.mass.gov/dcr/watersupply/watershed/forestry.htm](http://www.mass.gov/dcr/watersupply/watershed/forestry.htm) Further details on DCR forest management are available in the comprehensive Land Management Plans for each watershed.

Actual threats to the water supply include hazardous spills, development in the watersheds, waterfowl and seabirds roosting on the reservoirs and certain forms of recreation. DCR implements extensive control programs to address these ongoing concerns.

WSCAC members have recently toured a variety of active forestry sites in North and South Quabbin. Although members have diverse views on forestry practices, we agree that spreading alarm using incorrect information is not constructive to the discussion about how to manage the watershed forests.

As part of the Forest Heritage Plan announced by former EOEEA Secretary Bowles in spring 2010, DWSP reconvened the Science & Technical Advisory Committee (STAC). The 16 scientists and foresters from universities, federal agencies, and other organizations are reviewing the principles and practices of the Office of Watershed Management's forestry program. WSCAC supports the STAC process and looks forward to reviewing and commenting on the report when it is released to the public.

The excellent water quality enjoyed by MWRA communities is made possible by the combined efforts of DCR's DWSP, the MWRA and the water delivery systems maintained by each member community.

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