



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

485 Ware Road
Belchertown MA 01007
(413) 213-0454
fax: (413) 213-0537
email: info@wscac.org

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Vandana Rao
Assistant Director of Water Policy
Executive Office of Environmental Affairs
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900
Boston, MA 02114

Dear Ms. Rao,

On behalf of the Water Supply Citizens Advisory Committee (WSCAC), and as a member of the Drought Management Task Force, we appreciate the opportunity to provide comments on potential revisions to the Massachusetts Drought Management Plan.

WSCAC signed the Mass Rivers Alliance letter which covers our major concerns. We are offering additional comments on the Communications section of the drought plan which we feel needs improvement.

One of the purposes of the drought management plan is to identify the lines of communication to allow the consistent flow of information to decision makers. We believe more must be done to ensure that this occurs. Reliable and timely statewide messaging is critical during a drought in order to protect local water resources for drinking, sanitation, fire suppression, and aquatic habitat. Deficiencies in our communities' ability to react effectively became apparent during the current drought. WSCAC believes that clear and dependable communication to all communities must be at the core of the revisions to the Commonwealth's Drought Management Plan.

WSCAC recommends the following:

- All towns receive the monthly hydrologic report generated by DCR's Office of Water Resources.
 - Each public water supplier should receive a copy of the monthly hydrologic report.
 - Each town should designate an official to distribute the information to the top town administrator as well as the fire chief and the public health officer with general points made available to the local media.

- All towns be required to develop a comprehensive drought management plan
 - A locally-specific plan is vital to providing the structure a town needs to implement an efficient and effective response during a drought.
 - In the event of a drought, all residential, commercial and industrial water users must be informed with targeted consistent messaging that explains the community's approach

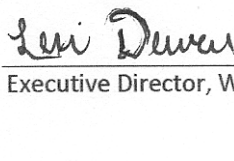
and rationale. Without a plan in place and access to the monthly hydrologic report, it is highly unlikely that towns will be able to effectuate an adequate response when faced with a drought. Communication is most effective when timely and universally available.

- Statewide planning agencies be provided with targeted funding to assist towns in developing the comprehensive drought management plans
 - Appendix D in the MA Drought Plan can serve as a template to begin the process of drafting individualized drought management plans.
 - Each town has distinctive characteristics that can be integrated into its response strategies. State agencies, along with Regional Planning agencies should host regional drought education workshops to both guide community drought response efforts and learn from effective local strategies.
- Address the information gap and requirements for private wells
 - To facilitate an appropriate drought response, town officials must have access to precise information regarding the location and water usage of private wells used for lawn irrigation.
- Nonessential water use be uniformly restricted in towns throughout the same region
 - Towns within the same watershed or sub-basin should be required to adopt a more unified approach to outdoor water use restrictions, as evidenced by last summer's patchwork of voluntary and mandatory restrictions implemented at different times by various communities.
 - A cohesive approach beginning with each town's drought management plan and public outreach goals can be the starting point for using shared water resources equitably.

We appreciate the work of DCR staff and the information provided by Drought Task Force members and other stakeholders.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,



Executive Director, WSCAC