

# **Water Supply Citizens Advisory Committee**

*To the MWRA and its Board of Directors*



*Quabbin Reservoir Autumn* by John Burke, 2011

**Annual Report Fiscal Year 2018**

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## **WSCAC's Purpose**

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WSCAC's purpose is to provide a full and formal advisory role in the preparation and review of water policy and programs for the MWRA staff and Board of Directors; to assure informed citizen recommendations on the MWRA water-supply programs; to provide a mechanism for informed public input into the environmental review procedures on said projects; to seek and receive reactions from all segments of the public affected by these programs; and to transmit these to MWRA and other relevant agencies.

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## **Overview**

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The WSCAC reviewed numerous developments in FY17 to determine their implications for MWRA.

WSCAC meetings included discussion of:

- Lead in public drinking water and current MWRA response
- Ongoing redundancy program to the MWRA water system
- Pan Am railroad risks and MWRA/DCR response in the Wachusett Reservoir
- Water use trends, conservation, irrigation and water reuse
- Climate change policies and MWRA's carbon footprint
- Public access in DCR-DWSP watersheds
- Watershed timber harvesting, certification and public education
- Forest monitoring with satellite remote sensing and drones
- MassDEP Draft Guidance on Sampling and Analysis for Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFASs) in drinking water

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## Summary of Current Issues

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WSCAC's purpose is to play an advisory role in the preparation and review of MWRA water policy and programs. The committee evaluates materials presented by MWRA staff regarding policies and projects and submits comments when appropriate. Our views on several key issues are briefly summarized below.

- **Redundancy for the MWRA's Metropolitan Water Transmission Tunnel System**  
WSCAC supports the MWRA Board of Directors and the MWRA Advisory Board's plan to construct northern and southern deep rock tunnels to provide redundancy for the City Tunnel, the City Tunnel Extension and the Dorchester Tunnel. Constructing these new water supply tunnels will allow for rehabilitation and maintenance of existing pipes and valves, and thereby ensure reliable water service to all areas of the MWRA water system.
- **Movement of hazardous materials by rail**  
WSCAC supports the continuation of MWRA and DCR's collaborative efforts to work with Pan Am, state agencies, and local first-responders to protect the Wachusett Reservoir and watershed from the threat of hazardous materials moving by rail. Poor track conditions including freeze/thaw conditions in winter/spring are often the cause of train derailments. WSCAC supports frequent inspections, the repair of track-related defects and other feasible means of increasing rail safety in the watershed.
- **Drought**  
Due to below normal precipitation, the Quabbin Reservoir fell to 79% (designated as Below Normal in MWRA's Drought Plan) in November 2016. Several public water suppliers received emergency declarations from MassDEP and purchased water from MWRA. Current conditions have improved in all six drought regions as of May 2017.

The drought of 2016 highlighted the need for improved planning at the state and local level to address drought conditions throughout the state. EOEEA is revising its drought management plan to address lessons learned from 2016 concerning drought indices, action levels and messaging. This update is necessary if the plan is to be thorough and responsive in the future.

WSCAC suggests that the MWRA revisit its 1989 Drought Mgmt. Plan to speak to the forecasted changes in weather patterns brought about by climate change. The storage

capacity of the Quabbin reservoir allows MWRA to assist towns with an emergency declaration due to drought. This scenario is likely to reoccur.

- **Expansion of the MWRA water system**

MWRA is actively looking for new communities to join the MWRA water system. North Reading is currently in the admission process and Ashland has recently voted to join the MWRA. The Union Point development located in Weymouth, Abington and Rockland has the support of MWRA and the MWRA Advisory Board to become a member. Burlington is also discussing purchasing MWRA water. Proposed changes to the Interbasin Transfer Act could permit regional water suppliers like the MWRA to request an amount of water according to donor basin conditions and hold the amount for sale to qualified communities over a 20 year period.

WSCAC would like a clearer understanding of MWRA's assessment process when considering new admissions to the water system including:

- Current summer water use for partial and fully supplied communities;
- The amount of additional water sold to communities during the summer of 2016;
- A projection of water use during future drought conditions; and
- The amount of water MWRA may request for sale over a 20 year period.

WSCAC would like a clear understanding of the amount of water that would be set aside for vulnerable communities affected by a future drought, and how this coincides with the amount of water MWRA plans to sell to new communities.

- **Water Conservation**

The MWRA, through its enabling act, is authorized to promote water conservation and environmental quality in managing the water system. Unlike many communities with Water Management Act permits that must restrict outdoor water use during a drought, MWRA does not require restrictions on nonessential outdoor water use from its fully supplied communities, unless severe drought conditions persist. As a result, Quabbin water is transferred, treated and used for lawn irrigation in MWRA communities throughout the summer months.

In its *Summary Report of MWRA Demand Management Program 2000*, the MWRA approached water conservation by implementing programs that create permanent long term water savings. WSCAC suggests that the MWRA reinvigorate its water conservation mission. To reinforce the importance of water conservation and environmental stewardship, MWRA could promote the best available irrigation system technology to reduce inefficient outdoor irrigation practices.

- **Lead in Water**

WSCAC commends MWRA's timely and ongoing response in the wake of the Flint water crisis. The MWRA Local Water System Assistance Program, which provides zero interest loans for certain water system upgrades, was expanded to include lead service line replacements. This is a significant financial tool for MWRA communities to assist homeowners to complete this necessary work.

- **Energy Efficiency**

WSCAC supports MWRA's efforts to reduce its carbon footprint through the development of clean energy sources and energy-efficiency at all MWRA campuses.

- **Public Access in the DCR Division of Water Supply Protection Watersheds**

WSCAC supports passive recreational activities that do not jeopardize the MWRA/DCR Filtration Waiver (a waiver from federal requirements that saves MWRA millions of dollars each year in infrastructure and energy costs) and water quality for 2.5 million people. DCR watershed lands are not public parks and are not staffed as such. This is reflected in the Division's budget which is allocated by the Water Supply Protection Trust. WSCAC recommends that DCR's policies on public access remain intact.

- **DWSP Watershed Forestry Program**

WSCAC suggests independent certification by a third party such as FSC for the watershed forestry program which is in place to protect water quality and promote forest diversity and therefore resilience. The effects of climate change are already visible in our forests as temperatures warm and the growing season is extended. The amount and timing of precipitation is changing. Various tree species including eastern hemlock, white ash and white pine are increasingly affected by insect damage and disease. WSCAC suggests that forest policies in the DWSP Land Management Plan should reflect the evolving science on how best to manage and adapt to the effects of climate change on forest watershed lands.

WSCAC suggests that DCR-DWSP complete the first recommendation of the 2012 STAC Report that calls for the development of a four page overview document for the public. A summary of the DWSP system and management plan in collaboration with DCR, EOEEA, and MWRA Public Affairs Office is also requested in the STAC report. To educate the public on watershed forestry operations, WSCAC also suggests that interested members of the public, upon request, be given guided access to marked forestry lots before and after harvesting.

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## **Activities**

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### **Comment Letters**

December 23, 2016 – Comments on the proposed revisions to the Interbasin Transfer Act to Vandana Rao, Assistant Director of Water Policy at EOEEA

April 21, 2017 – Comments on the Union Point Notice of Project Change to MEPA staff

### **Sign-On Letters**

July 14, 2016 – Water Infrastructure Alliance’s letter that sought an override to Governor Baker’s veto that reduces the appropriation to line-item 1599-0093 in the FY17 budget

August 2, 2016 – Massachusetts Rivers Alliance’s letter to Secretary Beaton regarding MA drought

February 27, 2017 – Northwest Environmental Advocates’ letter on ballast water

April 25, 2017 – Water Efficiency Alliance’s letter to EPA Administrator Pruitt on WaterSense funding

### **Events Attended by Staff**

October 24, 2016 – Hatchery Construction Tour with Jami Walsh

October 24, 2016 – Red Pine Forestry Operation Tour with Steve Wood

October 29, 2016 – MACC Fall Conference – Managing Massachusetts Forests

November 4, 2016 – Quabbin Forestry Public Tour

November 23, 2016 – Quabbin Forestry Lot Tour with Steve Wood

December 22, 2016 – McLaughlin Fish Hatchery Pipeline Opening

March 21, 2017 – Fifth Annual Massachusetts Water Forum

March 30, 2017 – MWWA Landscape Irrigation and Water Management Seminar

April 4, 2017 – USDA Forest Climate Workshop

April 5, 2017 – NEWWA Spring Conference

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## **Presentations to WSCAC**

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### **Tour of New Hydroelectric Facility at Brutsch Treatment Plant**

Jami Walsh, P.E., MWRA Construction Coordinator

June 13, 2017

### **Reservoir Status**

Matt Walsh, Project Engineer, MWRA Reservoir Operations

May 16, 2017

### **MWRA Dam Update**

John Gregoire, Program Manager, MWRA Reservoir Operations

May 16, 2017

### **FY18 Proposed Capital Improvement and Current Expense Budget\***

Thomas Durkin, Director of Finance and Kathy Soni, Budget Director, MWRA

April 18, 2017

### **The Cost of Water Infrastructure: Implications for State Policy and Municipal Budgets\***

Thomas P. Champion, Policy Research Analyst,

Office of the State Auditor, Division of Local Mandates

April 18, 2017

### **New Source Development for Municipal Wells**

Matthew Barry, Project Engineer, Tata & Howard

February 21, 2017

### **Boston Harbor Now\***

Julie Wormser

November 4, 2016

### **MWRA's Pragmatic Approach to Climate Change\***

Lise Marx, MWRA, Senior Program Manager, Master Planning

November 4, 2016

### **Climate Change in Massachusetts and Its Impact on River Flood Behavior\***

David R. Vallee, NOAA/NWS

November 4, 2016

### **Metropolitan Tunnel Redundancy**

David Coppes, Director of MWRA Waterworks

October 13, 2016

\*Meeting held jointly with the Wastewater Advisory Committee (WAC)

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## Meetings

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MWRA Board of Directors - Monthly

MWRA Advisory Board - Monthly

Reservoir Operations Group - Quarterly

Water Supply Protection Trust – Quarterly

Water Resources Commission – Monthly

Drought Management Task Force – As Needed

Quabbin Watershed Advisory Committee -  
Quarterly

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## Members

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Whitney Beals, WSCAC Chair, New  
England Forestry Foundation

Michael Baram, Town of Belmont and  
Boston University

Terry Connolly, Trout Unlimited

William Copithorne, P.E. Town of Arlington

Andrea Donlon, Connecticut River  
Conservancy

Gerald Eves, Trout Unlimited

Bill Fadden, OARs and SuAsCo Wild &  
Scenic Rivers

Paul Lauenstein, Neponset River Watershed  
Association

Jean L. McCluskey, P.E., Mission-Focused  
Alliance, LLC

Martha Morgan, Nashua River Watershed  
Association

Martin Pillsbury, Metropolitan Area  
Planning Council

Janet Rothrock, League of Women Voters

Kurt Tramposch, Wayland Wells

Gina DeNapoli, Boston Water & Sewer



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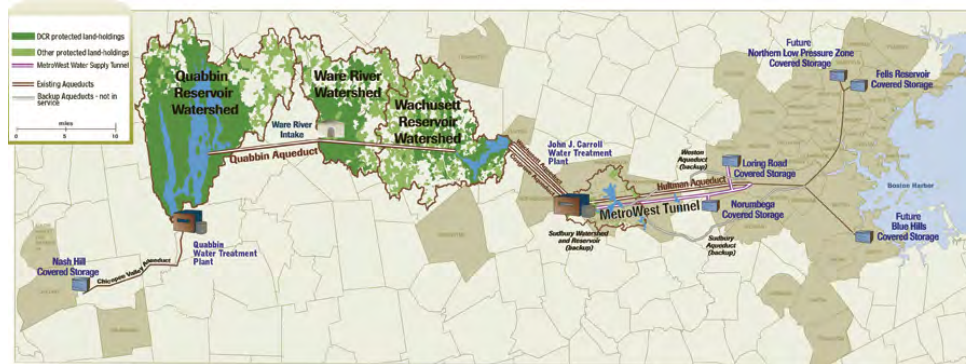
## Staff

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MWRA Water System and DCR Watersheds

WSCAC looks forward to supporting the MWRA and its Board of Directors in these challenging water supply and water protection issues in FY 18 and beyond.