



THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
WATER RESOURCES COMMISSION
100 CAMBRIDGE STREET, BOSTON MA 02114

Meeting Minutes for May 20, 2008

Minutes approved February 12, 2009

Members in Attendance:

Kathleen Baskin	Designee, Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
Marilyn Contreas	Designee, Department of Housing and Community Development
Anne Monnelly	Designee, Department of Conservation and Recreation
Duane LeVangie	Designee, Department of Environmental Protection
Gerard Kennedy	Designee, Department of Agricultural Resources
Mark Tisa	Designee, Department of Fish and Game
Thomas Cambareri	Public Member

Others in Attendance:

Michele Drury	DCR	Mary Griffin	DFG
Bruce Hansen	DCR	Caleb Slater	MA DFW
Sara Cohen	DCR	Jennifer Pederson	Massachusetts Water Works Assn.
Marilyn McCrory	DCR	Eileen Simonson	WSCAC
Laurene Poland	DCR	Paul Lauenstein	Neponset River Watershed Assn./
Vandana Rao	EOEEA		Sharon, MA

Agenda Item #1: Executive Director's Report

Baskin welcomed the commission to this special meeting in South Hadley, Massachusetts. Tisa thanked the South Hadley Public Library for hosting the commission meeting.

Hansen provided an update on the hydrologic conditions for April 2008. He reported a ten- to fourteen-day period in mid-April with little to no rain and low humidity, resulting in a large number of wildfires. He noted below-average flows in the Connecticut River as a result of deficient rainfall in Vermont and New Hampshire.

Baskin reported on a legislative hearing on pharmaceuticals in the drinking water supply. She reported that there is some uncertainty in the scientific community about which compounds to target, what the limits should be for compounds of concern, the interactions of different pharmaceuticals, the use of pharmaceuticals in agriculture and aquaculture, and the effects on both human health and aquatic life.

Agenda Item #2: Vote on the Minutes of November and December 2007

Baskin invited motions to approve the meeting minutes for November 2007 and December 2007.

V	A motion was made by Tisa with a second by Contreas to approve the meeting minutes for
O	November 2007.
T	
E	The vote to approve was unanimous of those present.

V	A motion was made by Contreas with a second by LeVangie to approve the meeting minutes
O	for December 2007.
T	
E	The vote to approve was unanimous of those present, with one abstention (Tisa).

Agenda Item #3: Vote on Index Streamflows

Drury noted that the Index Streamflows report had been distributed to the commission for review at the April 2008 meeting, and that several presentations had been made to the commission over the past year. She invited questions. Baskin added that she had not received any comments from commissioners who were not in attendance today. She noted that the report is a statistical compilation, and that concerns would be related to how the statistics are applied. Cambareri acknowledged that the report had been before the commission for some time and asked what public comment had been received. Monnelly responded that there had been two full rounds of public comment, and the comments had been reported to the commission previously and incorporated. Baskin added that the comments had not addressed technical issues, but were related to how the index streamflows would be applied in the future, adding that questions about their application remain to be decided. LeVangie explained that the Water Management Act permits reference the calculated August median instead of the Fish and Wildlife Aquatic Base Flow August default value of 0.5 cubic feet per second per square mile as a trigger for restricting outside water use. He added that the Water Management Advisory Committee will discuss how to use the statistics in the report.

Lauenstein requested clarification on what a vote on Index Streamflows means. Baskin responded that a vote represents an acceptance of the report as a final document and an official publication of the Water Resources Commission. Pederson said that the Massachusetts Water Works Association was most concerned with the application of Index Streamflows in Water Management Act permits. She requested that the document be used on a trial basis before numbers are put into permits. Simonson suggested that the commission's vote include time limits for the document and an acknowledgement that new models, new information, and information from new gages may necessitate changes. She concluded by saying it was important for the commission to make this water policy vote.

Baskin recognized the evolving state of science and asked commission members if they felt it necessary to incorporate a statement about this evolving nature of science into their vote on the document. Cambareri stated that he was inclined to vote favorably on the document as a technical document that better characterizes the streamflows of the commonwealth. He asked LeVangie if decisions about application of index streamflows in permits are ones that come before the commission. LeVangie responded that such decisions do not come before the commission but are discussed at the advisory committee level at MassDEP. Cambareri asked if the commission could request that MassDEP report to the commission on how the data in the index streamflows document will be used. Baskin responded affirmatively. Hansen commented

that the report is a straightforward scientific presentation of data on the statistical values of natural streamflows in the commonwealth, and that there are no implications about the regulatory use of the numbers.

In response to Simonson's comment about the changing nature of science, Tisa commented that, in his view, any document approved by the commission is subject to change, and that any commissioner can request a review or update as deemed appropriate. LeVangie added that if a better report is developed, the commission will adopt it. Drury commented that the commission, as the state's policy and planning body, recognizes that science is evolving.

Baskin requested a vote on the document, acknowledging that the document represents the present state of knowledge and that more work is needed.

V	A motion was made by Tisa with a second by Cambareri to accept the 2008 Index
O	Streamflows Report.
T	
E	The vote to approve was unanimous of those present.

Baskin acknowledged Hutchins's accomplishment in completing the work on Index Streamflows.

Agenda Item #4: Presentation on the DCR Well Driller Program

Poland provided an overview of the well driller registration program, administered by the Department of Conservation and Recreation's Office of Water Resources. She noted that there are two components to the program: a regulatory component and a data collection and management component.

She reviewed the purpose of the law, which is to protect groundwater resources by requiring qualified individuals to be licensed and registered with the program. She provided an overview of the regulations governing the licensing of well drillers, their reporting requirements, and the criteria for suspending or revoking licenses. Poland provided more detail on licensing and certifying the credentials of well drillers, in response to several questions from Tisa.

She reviewed in detail some specific projects of the program, including a new on-line system for submitting well completion reports and a test program for on-line data recovery. She reviewed the on-line data entry pages to illustrate the types of data collected. She noted that, because of built-in logic in the on-line system, the reports submitted electronically are more accurate than those submitted in paper format. She noted that the database contains 65,000 records and there are 359 registered well drillers.

Poland reviewed the pilot on-line data recovery program, which, at this time, is available only to well drillers and not to the general public. There was some discussion about the barriers to entering data on-line, including access to high-speed internet services in rural areas. A future project is to develop a tool to graphically display data for analysis and overlay maps with other types of geotechnical information. Poland also described a coding system to standardize soil and rock classifications. This coding system was developed by a committee of experts consisting of the state geologist, a professional geologist, and representatives of MassDEP, DCR, and the

drilling industry. She also described training programs for well drillers and mapping projects with the state geologist's office. The state geologist's office uses the data entered and checked for accuracy by the DCR well drillers program to update bedrock geology maps, among other uses. She reviewed the data required for a well completion report, including GPS coordinates, name of the registered well driller, well type, size, depth, casing, well yield, geologic description, and water-bearing zones. She added that the program is developing a new form for closed-loop geothermal wells.

Poland concluded by acknowledging contributions from the state geologist, MassGIS, DCR, MassDEP, and American Contract Services.

Tisa asked if the program could identify how much water is being withdrawn in a particular subbasin. Poland said it could, but noted that some wells were drilled prior to the effective date of the law governing well drillers. She added that the program's goal is to have minimum well construction standards with a reporting requirement that would apply statewide. She confirmed that all wells, including monitoring wells, are required to be registered. Other questions addressed program staffing levels, well yield data, water quality data, compliance with registration requirements and enforcement measures, data on open-loop geothermal wells, and coordination with MassDEP and local Boards of Health. Poland added that the program strongly encourages local Boards of Health to require permits for every well.

Baskin commended Poland for this impressive program and the useful on-line data tools being developed. She invited Poland to return to update the commission at a future meeting.

Agenda Item #5: Field Trip to the Holyoke Dam Salmon and Shad Lift

Slater provided an overview of the anadromous fish restoration program in the Connecticut River. He described the life cycles of anadromous and catadromous fish in Massachusetts, the status of populations, and restoration efforts. In particular, he described efforts to restore Atlantic salmon, which were extirpated by 1800 from Massachusetts by the building of dams, which cut off access to spawning and rearing habitat in New England. He invited anyone interested in volunteering for the salmon fry restocking effort in April to check the Department of Fish and Game web site. He also described efforts to sample fish stocks to monitor growth and survival. He reported that survival rates in Massachusetts are relatively good, but ocean survival rates are low. Tisa noted that Atlantic salmon are declining throughout their range in North America and Europe. He added the state is studying the effects of global climate change and warmer ocean temperatures on salmon. Tisa emphasized the importance of maintaining habitat, such as cold-water streams and high-quality water, for endangered and threatened species. Both Slater and Tisa commented on a \$30 million package of improvements for fish passage, habitat, and monitoring that was negotiated during the relicensing of the Holyoke Dam in 1999. Slater concluded by outlining future projects and research efforts.

Formal meeting adjourned. Members proceeded to a tour of the fish-passage lift system at the Holyoke Dam.

Attachments distributed:

- Current Water Conditions in Massachusetts, May 20, 2008.