



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

Meeting Minutes for March 10, 2022

Meeting conducted remotely via Zoom meeting platform, 1:00 p.m.

Minutes approved June 9, 2022

Members in Attendance:

Vandana Rao	Designee, Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA)
Linda Balzotti	Designee, Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)
Duane LeVangie	Designee, Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP)
Vanessa Curran	Designee, Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)
Hotze Wijnja	Designee, Department of Agricultural Resources (DAR)
Vincent Ragucci	Public Member
Kenneth Weismantel	Public Member

Members Absent

Todd Richards	Designee, Department of Fish and Game (DFG)
Todd Callaghan	Designee, Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management (CZM)
Thomas Cambareri	Public Member
Samantha Woods	Public Member

Others in Attendance:

Viki Zoltay	DCR/OWR
Marilyn McCrory	DCR/OWR
Kara Sliwoski	DCR/OWR
Sara Cohen	DCR/OWR
Erin Graham	DCR/OWR
Lexi Dewey	WSCAC
Katharine Lange	Mass Rivers Alliance
Gardner Bent	U.S. Geological Survey
Jennifer Pederson	Massachusetts Water Works Association
Read Porter	EEA
Elise Tarnauskas	Springfield Water and Sewer Commission
Becca George	DHCD
Katie Ronan	MWRA
Joy Duperault	DCR Flood Hazard Management Program

Rao called the meeting to order at 1:06 p.m.

Agenda Item #1: Welcome and Introductions

Rao announced that the meeting was being recorded and all votes would be taken by roll call. She invited those who wish to speak during the meeting to indicate this in the chat window. Attendance of members was taken by roll call.

Agenda Item #2: Executive Director's Report

Rao pointed out that in the meeting packet there is an agenda, meeting minutes from the two December meetings and the January meeting, and a comment letter from the WRC to MEPA on the Groton Notice of Project Change for installation of a new water supply well. WRC staff is seeking additional information from Groton to determine if the Interbasin Transfer Act (ITA) may apply. Often WRC staff hear about potential interbasin transfers from MassDEP, in the *Environmental Monitor* that MEPA publishes, or direct communication from the project proponent. Rao also mentioned Fix a Leak Week and World Water Day which will be discussed in greater detail as a separate agenda item. Rao asked if any Commissioners had any updates. LeVangie added that Groton recently filed a permit amendment application with MassDEP's Water Management Act Program. The application will be available for public comment within the next day or two through April 18th. Pederson asked why the WMA was referenced in the comment letter, is that the trigger to figure out if the ITA applies? Rao responded that the trigger is the transfer, if it ends up causing movement of water across a basin and municipal boundary. LeVangie added there was some initial confusion with Groton's request – was it an amendment or new application? They have clarified they are seeking an amendment to add the new well. The IBT issue is the wastewater disposal to Pepperell.

Agenda Item #3: Hydrologic Conditions

Rao invited Graham to provide an update on hydrologic conditions for February 2022. Monthly average temperatures were above normal for much of the state. According to the Northeast Regional Climate Center (NRCC), it was the 18th warmest February for Worcester and the 14th warmest February for the state overall. Precipitation was above normal throughout much of the state and normal in the Islands Region. The Islands Region is at Index Severity Level 1 for the 3-month look-back period, which includes December which was very dry. Streamflow was mostly above normal across much of the state. Groundwater levels were in the normal to above-normal range across the state with some exceptions. All regions are at Index Severity Level 0 except the Islands, which is at Level 1, due to low groundwater levels on Nantucket, although some recovery was shown over the past month. Lakes & Impoundments were mostly above normal and/or at 100% full. Keetch Byram Drought Index and Crop Moisture Index are not reported during the winter months. Snowfall is below normal for the season except in southeastern MA and the Greater Boston area. According to NRCC, Boston had its 19th snowiest winter (December through February). There was snow cover remaining across the state at the end of the month. The US Drought Monitor and MA's Drought Management Plan are both not showing any drought conditions. NOAA's March outlook shows a 33-40% chance for above-normal temperatures. For precipitation, the outlook shows no strong signal for the Southeast, Cape & Islands, and a 33-40% chance of above-normal precipitation for the rest of the state. NOAA's 3-month outlook shows a 40-50% chance for above-normal temperatures and no strong signal for precipitation. Drought outlooks do not indicate any drought development.

Agenda Item #4: Vote: Meeting Minutes, December 9, 2021; December 21, 2021; and January 13, 2022

Rao invited motions to approve the meeting minutes for two meetings in December 2021 and the January 2022 meeting.

V O T E	A motion was made by LeVangie with a second by Weismantel to approve the meeting minutes for December 9, 2021.
	The roll-call vote to approve was unanimous of those present.

Rao asked that if anyone attended the December 9th meeting and is not listed as an attendee on the minutes, please notify WRC staff, as there was an issue with saving the Zoom chat from that meeting. Rao also noted that Commissioners had asked if they could vote on the meeting minutes if they were not present at that particular meeting. Porter reported that there is no requirement that a Commissioner be present at a meeting in order to vote on those minutes at a subsequent meeting. However, a Commissioner could abstain if not comfortable voting.

V O T E	A motion was made by Weismantel with a second by Ragucci to approve the meeting minutes for December 21, 2021.
	The roll-call vote to approve was unanimous of those present.

V O T E	A motion was made by Weismantel with a second by Ragucci to approve the meeting minutes for January 13, 2022.
	The roll-call vote to approve was unanimous of those present.

Agenda Item #5: Discussion: Fix a Leak Week and World Water Day

Rao announced that World Water Day is on March 22 and Fix a Leak Week is the week of March 14th. Beginning last year, WRC staff participated more actively in these national campaigns through social media posts. This work complemented public outreach and education on water conservation through the new [ConserveMAwater](#) website. Rao introduced McCrory, who as WRC staff, has done a lot of work on water conservation and has pulled together the efforts for this year. McCrory's presentation is available at <https://www.mass.gov/doc/fix-a-leak-week-2022/download>.

McCrory provided some background information on Fix-a-Leak Week, which is an annual national campaign in its 14th year. It is organized by EPA's WaterSense program. The purpose of Fix-a-Leak Week is to draw attention to fixing leaks as a water conservation opportunity and to help educate people on ways they can find and fix leaks in their homes. The WRC is a WaterSense promotional partner and supports and promotes their campaigns. In 2021, the WRC actively participated in this campaign for the first time through EEA's outreach office. EEA tweeted once a day for the week. Last year's theme was "Take the 10-minute challenge," so each day a message was sent out about a different 10-minute challenge to find and fix leaks in the home.

For 2022, each day EEA will put out a message based on this year's theme. This year's campaign will begin with a link directly to the [ConserveMAwater](#) water conservation toolkit. It features an interactive tool that lets you walk through your house and find leaks in various rooms. Day 2 addresses leaks in the bathroom. Graphics are provided by WaterSense. The ConserveMAwater logo is part of EEA's outreach campaign on water conservation and is part of our branding for any water conservation-related messaging. Use #conservemawater in any tweets/retweets. Day 3 picks up on this year's campaign theme (Flip your Flapper), which is about finding leaks in the

toilet. The message will explain how to test for leaks in the toilet, which is an important source of leaks. Day 4 continues the theme with information on how to replace a flapper. Day 5 concludes the week with outlining the steps to replace a flapper and to check flappers every 5 years. WRC staff encourage everyone to look for these tweets and retweet or ask your organization to retweet to promote the message of finding and fixing leaks in the home.

Moving to World Water Day on March 22, EEA will put out a message to highlight the importance of water and water conservation and again link to the [ConserveMAwater](#) toolkit. WRC intern Ashley Desrosiers worked to put together a marketing calendar to highlight these events.

Rao asked Ronan if MWRA is participating in either campaign or if she is aware of any outreach. Ronan can check in on plans and share with the Commission.

Agenda Item #6: Presentation: Update on DCR's Flood Hazard Management Program Activities

Rao gave some background on the Flood Hazard Management Program (FHMP). The WRC was established in the 1950's as a response to flooding. For the first few decades the WRC work's was focused on flood mitigation, ensuring that land was acquired to provide flood storage and protect human development. This was a very active program between the state and federal government. Today the state through staff at DCR still maintain these lands. An Executive Order passed in 1978 that authorized the WRC to implement the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) through staff at DCR's Office of Water Resources. Duperault is the Director of the FHMP and is here today to give an update on what she and staff have been working on over the past year.

Duperault began her presentation, which is available at <https://www.mass.gov/doc/dcr-flood-hazard-management-program-0/download>. She is the Director of FHMP and also the state coordinator for the NFIP. Duperault and her staff Eric Carlson work as liaisons between the MA communities and FEMA Region 1. Today's presentation will give an update on the program as it's under the WRC. Please reach out to Duperault or Carlson for any materials or information. The FHMP gets a FEMA grant every year to implement the NFIP at the state level. Mapping coordination has become an important responsibility for staff over the past few years. When FEMA updates the map, any changes must be incorporated in local floodplain bylaws/ordinances. Communities must adopt the new maps at town meeting in order to be in compliance with the NFIP. FEMA closely monitors this. If a community goes past the effective date of the maps by one minute without adopting the new maps they are immediately out of compliance which means they would not be able to sell or renew any federal flood insurance policies and would not receive most federal disaster assistance.

Until June 2021, MA had a 100% adoption rate for flood map changes. Rockland missed the deadline in 2021 and was immediately suspended from the NFIP. The town called a special town meeting to adopt the changes and MA is back at 100% compliance now. Rao noted that Duperault mentioned 341 communities in MA are part of the NFIP, what about other 10? Duperault responded that 10 have never adopted the NFIP which is voluntary. These towns are mainly in the Berkshires although Chilmark is not part of the program. Typically these are small communities without much staff. There is a 1-page application to join the NFIP. The FHMP staff coordinate with other state agencies such as Coastal Zone Management, Board of Building Regulations and Standards, DCR Office of Dam Safety, EEA (related to hazard mitigation

planning), MEMA, EEA's MVP Program, MassDEP Wetlands as the Wetlands Protection Act (which has some higher standards than NFIP), the MA Silver Jackets team (which is a USACE initiative "flood fight" group that has a role in flood disaster response), regional planning councils, and the MA chapter of the National Association of State Flood Plain Managers.

Last fiscal year the FHMP engaged with 72% of participating communities and conducted 22 monitoring visits for FEMA. Staff also offered 15 workshops and training events, coordinated over 150 times with other agencies, and conducted 689 official technical assistance experiences (ranging from answering questions to reviewing project proposals). Staff also submitted a federal grant to develop a guidebook for higher standards in floodplain management in MA. The grant was awarded so the project will move forward in the coming months with the Dept. of Housing and Economic Development and the Board of Building Regulations and Standards along with MEMA and EEA.

FHMP staff review any projects submitted to MEPA that have to do with the flood plain with an eye toward quantity and movement of water (not water quality), and have submitted 50 comments to date this year. Over the past year staff have been heavily involved in the next iteration of the state building code, working on the 10th edition to be promulgated in 2023. The draft of the 10th edition includes the higher standard to use V zone regulations in coastal A zones which is the international code. Staff are heavily involved with the MA State Hazard Mitigation and Climate Adaptation Plan (SHMCAP), a 5-year plan that was signed by the Governor in 2018 and was first in the nation. The plan needs to be signed again in 2023 for FEMA approval. Funding was sought and obtained for a comprehensive climate change assessment for Commonwealth. Staff participate in the Land Subject to Coastal Storm Flowage Task Force under DEP, performance standards for which are to be published in April or May. Staff are also involved in the DCR climate adaptation working group, reviewing flood plain grant applications such as those for CZM or for MEPA, and working with Cape Cod regional coordinator.

Rao explained that FEMA is doing a state assessment across the country. FEMA considers states to be like communities and wants to monitor the states. FEMA performed an analysis on state development in flood plains and sent a letter to Governor Baker in 2019. State responded to their letter and FEMA ultimately responded that MA was found lacking in a few items. Staff have requested an extension to pull together a comprehensive response to FEMA which is due in June. Rao added that FEMA is interested in knowing how does MA know that all regulatory actions and flood plain monitoring actions are actually being implemented and tracked? The response to FEMA on behalf of the WRC will require coordinating with the other agencies to determine how they are documenting their floodplain-related activities.

Duperault and Carlson do have a lot of responsibilities and the work is increasing. The FHMP gets about \$176,000 per year under the FEMA grant and the state provides some matching funds. It is possible that MA could get another \$100,000 from the federal grant which could be used to hire another staff person to help with the workload. Rao added that this program has historically had 4 or 5 staff, and now there are only two people. Climate change is affecting more properties across the state with sea level rise and changes to precipitation. Duperault noted that sometimes she has to turn down work or projects in which she would otherwise want to participate. Rao thanked Duperault for her hard work and handling so much work with minimal staffing.

V O T E	A motion was made by Ragucci with a second by LeVangie to adjourn the meeting. The roll-call vote to approve was unanimous of those present.
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Meeting adjourned, 2:04 p.m.

Documents or Exhibits Used at Meeting:

1. WRC Meeting Minutes:
 - a. December 9, 2021
 - b. December 21, 2021
 - c. January 13, 2022
2. Correspondence dated February 15, 2022 from the Water Resources Commission to the MEPA Office regarding the Notice of Project Change (NPC) for the Groton Water Department's proposed construction of Whitney Well No. 3.
3. Interbasin Transfer Act project status report, March 1, 2022
4. Hydrologic Conditions in Massachusetts, February 2022 (available at <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/monthly-hydrologic-conditions>)

Compiled by: (vc)

Agendas, minutes, and other documents are available on the web site of the Water Resources Commission at <https://www.mass.gov/water-resources-commission-meetings>. All other meeting documents are available by request to WRC staff at 251 Causeway Street, 8th floor, Boston, MA 02114.