



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Water Resources Commission
100 Cambridge Street, Boston, MA 02114

**Request for Determination of Insignificance
Under the Interbasin Transfer Act
MGL Chapter 21 Sections 8B - 8D**

**The Town of Swansea's Proposed Connection to the
Town of Somerset's Water Pollution Control Facility**

**WRC Decision
August 14, 2025**

Decision

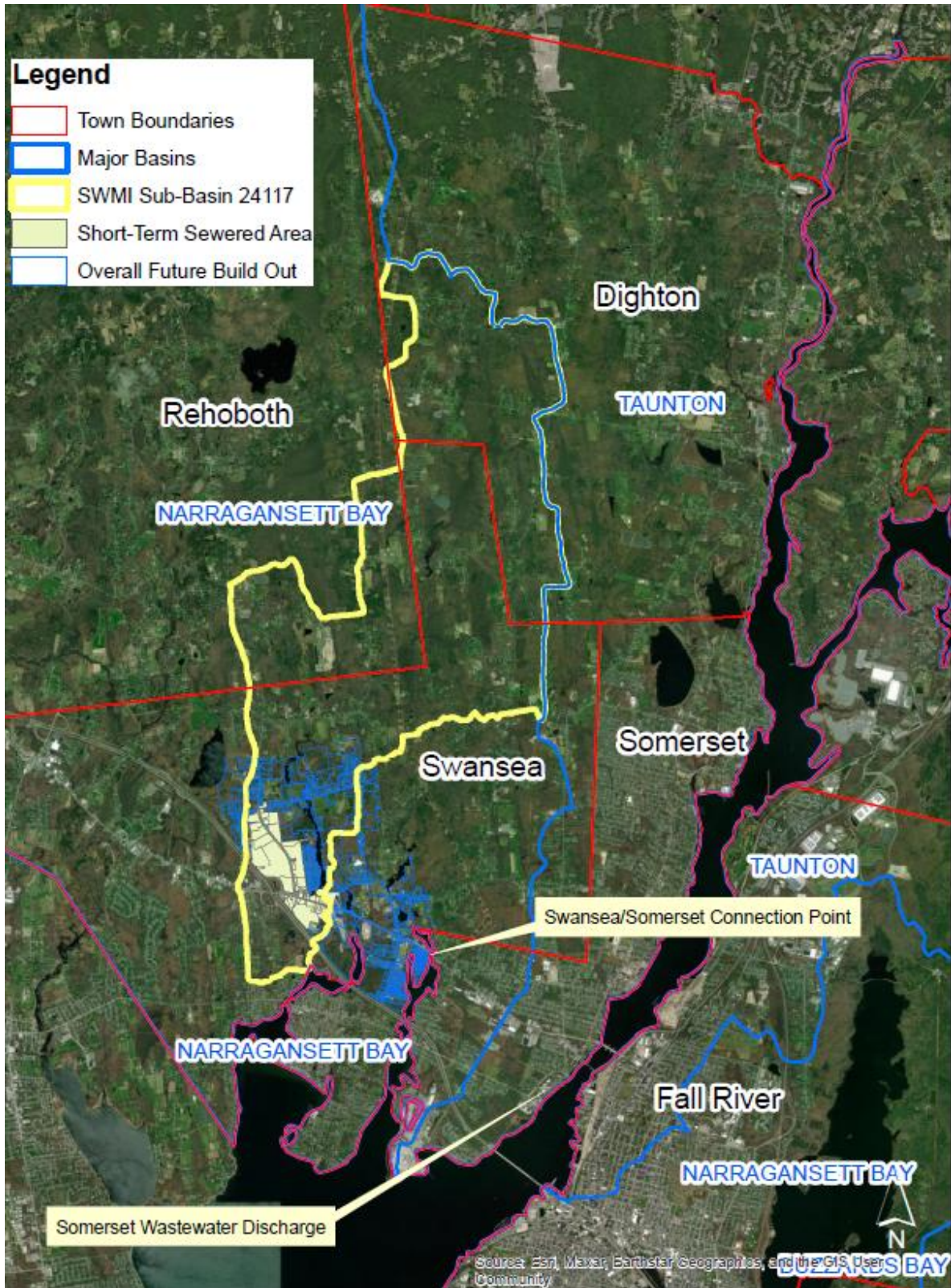
On August 14, 2025, the Massachusetts Water Resources Commission (WRC), in a vote unanimous of those present, found that the Town of Swansea's proposed connection to the Town of Somerset's Water Pollution Control Facility was insignificant under the Interbasin Transfer Act (ITA). The volume of the approved interbasin transfer is 28,850 gallons per day (gpd).

Background

On June 16, 2025, the WRC received a request for Determination of Insignificance (RDI) under the ITA from the Town of Swansea, Massachusetts (the Town) for a wastewater interbasin transfer. The WRC discussed this project at its July 10, 2025 and August 14, 2025 meetings.

The Town has land area in the Taunton River Basin and the Narragansett Bay and Mount Hope Bay Shore Basin (hereinafter referred to as the Narragansett Bay Basin). Swansea's water supply is sourced from groundwater wells in the Narragansett Bay Basin and a desalination plant which withdraws from the Massachusetts Coastal Basin. The desalination plant did not require ITA approval when it was constructed as it only serves Swansea and therefore the water supply does not cross any municipal boundaries. Swansea does not have a sewer system and relies on private septic systems, which have been failing and causing concerns about water quality. While the Town does not have its own wastewater collection system or treatment facility, the adjoining Town of Somerset has available capacity at its Water Pollution Control Facility which discharges to the Massachusetts Coastal Basin. The Town executed an intermunicipal agreement with Somerset in 2021 to secure wastewater services for a maximum of 250,000 gallons per day (GPD). The transfer of wastewater is not yet

Figure 1: Swansea Route 6 Sewer Extension Map



occurring, and the Town is seeking funding from the State Revolving Fund (SRF) Program to construct the interconnection.

Proposed Transfer

The Town is proposing to sewer the shaded area depicted in Figure 1 for a maximum day wastewater transfer of 28,850 GPD. Potential future extensions of services (blue outline in Figure 1) resulting in flows greater than those requested in this RDI will require a future application for approval of an action to increase the present rate of interbasin transfer, separate from this RDI.

As previously described, the area of Swansea proposed to be sewered to Somerset receives water supply sourced from groundwater wells in the Narragansett Bay Basin and from a desalination plant with an intake in the Massachusetts Coastal Basin. Only the portion of water sourced from the Narragansett Bay Basin is jurisdictional under the ITA. The portion of water supply sourced from the desalination plant is not jurisdictional as it will be discharged to its basin of origin. For the purposes of the ITA request, the proportion of water supply derived from each of the two basins was calculated based on the approved maximum daily rate of the wells and the maximum production of the desalination plant. Using these values, the ratio was determined to be 79.35% supplied from the wells and 20.65% supplied from the desalination plant.

To determine the rate of interbasin transfer, the developed parcels capable of connecting to the proposed sewer were identified via tax assessors' maps. The water records of the identified parcels were obtained from the Swansea Water District by the proponent. The total average day wastewater flow from the proposed parcels was calculated to be 12,537 GPD. Discounting the 20.65% of water supply derived from the desalination plant as described above, the jurisdictional volume under the ITA was calculated to be 9,948 GPD. A peaking factor was applied to determine the maximum day interbasin transfer amount of 28,850 GPD, which is the volume being considered for approval and used in the analysis of this proposal.

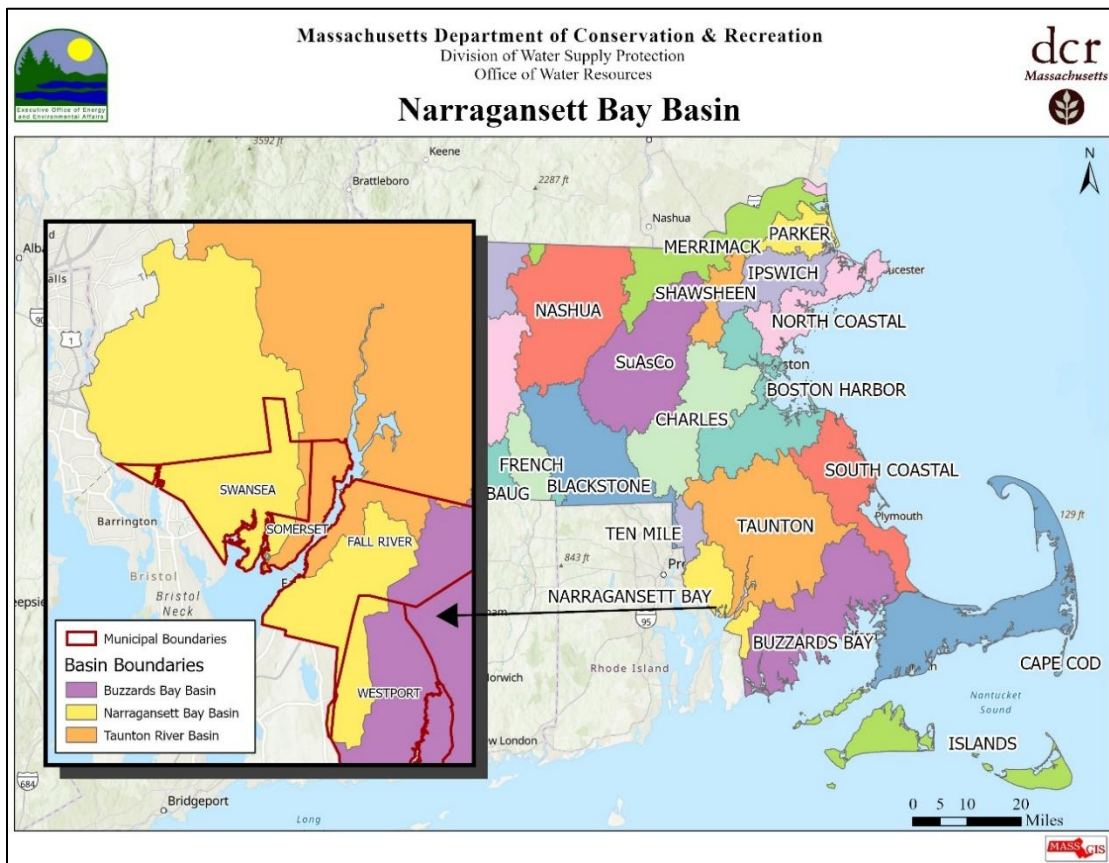
This application was evaluated against the applicable criteria of 313 CMR 4.08(3), Criteria for Determining Insignificance of the ITA regulations. Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act review was not required. This RDI is being reviewed as a wastewater transfer.

Analysis

To assist the WRC in making its decision, staff worked closely with the proponent on the requirements of the ITA for this proposal and consulted with other agency staff. The Town's RDI was reviewed by staff from the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP), Office of Coastal Zone Management, and the Department of Fish and Game's Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (DFW), Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF), and Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP). For an explanation of the criteria and a description of how they have been met, please refer to Attachment 1.

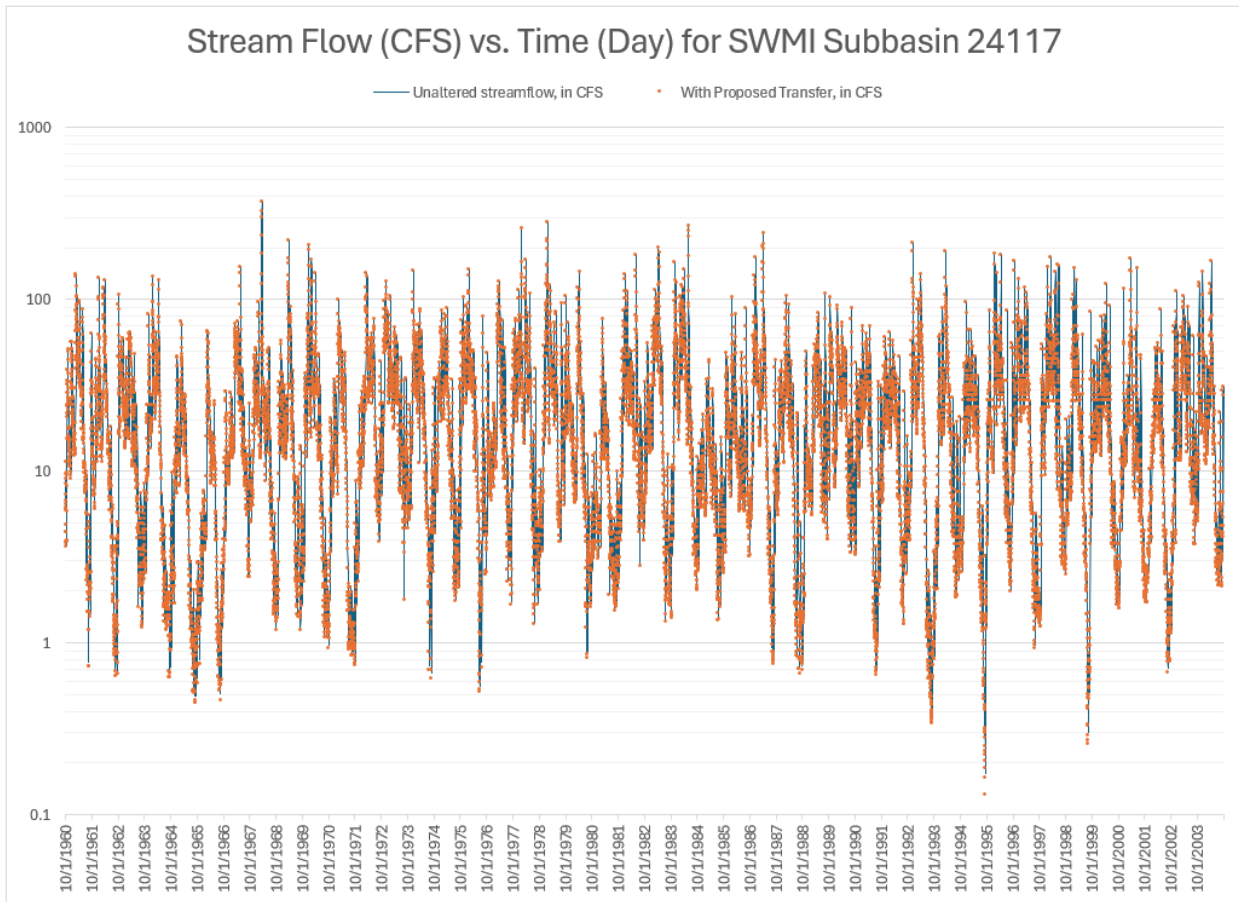
As displayed in Figure 1, the area proposed for sewerage is located within subbasin 24117 as delineated by MassDEP's Sustainable Water Management Initiative (SWMI) [Interactive GIS Map](#). One of the criteria for determining Insignificance in the ITA regulations states that, for transfers primarily derived from streamflow, the cumulative transfer must be less than 5% of the unimpacted 95% exceedance flow. Using the U.S. Geological Survey's StreamStats tool, the unimpacted 95% exceedance flow was determined to be 578,452 GPD. The only other interbasin transfer occurring from the Narragansett Bay Basin is from Fall River to Westport. These towns are separated from Swansea and Somerset by the Taunton River/Mount Hope Bay (Figure 2). Unlike in other major basins in the Commonwealth, these two areas of the Narragansett Bay Basin do not affect each other or their respective downstream areas because they drain separately to Mount Hope Bay.

Figure 2: Map of Narragansett Bay Basin



Therefore, the cumulative volume of the proposed interbasin transfer is 28,850 GPD, which is less than 5% of the unimpacted 95% exceedance flow (28,922 GPD). Figure 3 displays streamflow in subbasin 24117 without and including the proposed transfer with only small differences in flows.

Figure 3: Streamflows Without and Including the Proposed Transfer



Special resource values in the vicinity of the Swansea Route 6 sewer extension were mapped by the applicant, including considerations of surface water features, Article 97 lands, NHESP Estimated Habitats of Rare Wildlife, NHESP Priority Habitats of Rare Species, NHESP Certified Vernal Pools, DFW and DMF Fisheries Resources, and Areas of Critical Environmental Concern. DMF staff commented that there is an error in the GIS layer available on Mass Mapper for the Diadromous Fish River Herring Spawning and Nursery Habitat. Mount Hope Pond/Cole River North Pond is depicted as inaccessible to diadromous fish on [Mass Mapper](#) but is in fact accessible as per [DMF's Diadromous Fish Viewer](#). Nevertheless, the small volume of the proposed transfer is not anticipated to have a significant impact on the diadromous fish habitat. In general, transitioning from septic disposal to a sewer collection system tends to benefit aquatic habitats through the reduction of excess nutrients and pollution. If in the future Swansea seeks to expand the sewer service area which will require additional ITA review and approval, the ITA application will be reviewed at that time by DMF to determine any impacts to this habitat.

As noted, the proposed interbasin transfer is less than the amount deemed insignificant in accordance with the ITA regulations, and is therefore not expected to cause any

negative impacts on instream flow or special resources in the vicinity of or downstream of the sewer extension project.

WRC Decision

After reviewing the proposal and the comments received, **the WRC finds that the Town of Swansea's Proposed Connection to the Town of Somerset's Water Pollution Control Facility, resulting in a cumulative transfer of 28,850 gpd, is Insignificant under the ITA.**

Attachment 1
Request for Determination of Insignificance
The Town of Swansea's Proposed Connection to the Town of Somerset's Water Pollution Control Facility

Criterion	Proposal Meets?	Explanation
(a) Is less than 1 MGD	Meets	Proposed maximum interbasin transfer is 28,850 gpd
(b) Is temporary, of short duration and for a purpose other than water supply or wastewater service	Not Applicable	Proposal is long-term for wastewater services
(c) Cumulative, approved transfers, including the proposed amount, are less than 5% of the unimpacted 95% Exceedance Flow	Meets	The cumulative transfer volume is less than the 5% threshold
(d) Cumulative, approved annual amount of the transfers, including the proposed amount, are less than 1% of the average annual precipitation on the drainage area of the water body, and less than 5% of the drought year inflow ¹ to the water body	Not Applicable	The transfer is primarily derived from streamflow
(e) The 7Q10 flow, when relied upon in a program of pollution abatement, will not be significantly diminished or prolonged	Not Applicable	No wastewater treatment facilities located downstream of the transfer
(f) Special resource values will not be adversely affected	Meets	Special resource values in the area are not anticipated to be affected by this transfer

¹ Drought year inflow is the drought basin yield: the annualized Q90 streamflows in a water source based on averaging estimated near natural monthly Q90 streamflows. It is an estimation of the water that would be available in a river basin that is unimpacted by water withdrawals during the probable driest period that is likely to occur.

Criterion	Proposal Meets?	Explanation
(g) Measures to protect instream flows have been taken where appropriate and achievable, and any such measures are proposed as part of the application	Meets	Changes to downstream flow are expected to be negligible from the current conditions as a result of the transfer
(h) The Commission shall consider the cumulative impacts of all past, authorized or proposed transfers on streamflows in the donor basin	Meets	<p>The only other interbasin transfer occurring from the Narragansett Bay Basin is from Fall River to Westport. These towns are separated from Swansea and Somerset by the Taunton River/Mount Hope Bay. Unlike in other major basins in the Commonwealth, these two areas of the Narragansett Bay Basin do not affect each other or their respective downstream areas because they drain separately to Mount Hope Bay.</p>