



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

Meeting Minutes for August 14, 2025

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

Minutes approved November 13, 2025

Members in Attendance:

Vandana Rao	Designee, Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA)
Chris Kluchman	Designee, Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC)
Kathleen Baskin	Designee, Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP)
Tyler Soleau	Designee, Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management (CZM)
Anne Carroll	Designee, Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)
Todd Richards	Designee, Department of Fish and Game (DFG)
Sarah Miller	Designee, Department of Agricultural Resources (DAR)
Thomas Cambareri	Public Member
Christine Hatch	Public Member
Vincent Ragucci	Public Member
Kenneth Weismantel	Public Member

Members Absent

Samantha Woods	Public Member
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Others in Attendance:

William Anderson	Town of Swansea - DPW	Kathleen Mason	CZM
Kate Bentsen	DER	Heather McElroy	Cape Cod Commission
Stephanie Berkman	DMF	Hillary Monahan	Mass Water Resources Authority
Richard Bradley	Gia	Bailey Mullins	DCR OWR
Maura Callahan	Callahan Consulting	Lydia Olson	Mass Rivers Alliance
Sara Cohen	DCR OWR	Katie Paight	DCR OWR
Vanessa Curran	DCR OWR	Tim Pasakarnis	Cape Cod Commission
Andreae Downs	WAC	Purvi Patel	EEA
Van Du	Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)	Jennifer Pederson	Mass Water Works Association
Jason Duff	DCR OWR	Martin Pillsbury	MAPC
Joy Duperault	DCR OWR	Gabby Queenan	Town of Needham
Jennifer Durso	MassDEP	Caitlin Spence	EEA
Derick Hopkins	Wright-Pierce	Toni Stewart	DCR OWR
Christian Latino	Quabbin Sunrise Cooperative	Melody Veldorale	Wright-Pierce
Duane LeVangie	MassDEP	Jeremiah Ward	Cooperative Development Institute
Tara Lewis	Cape Cod Commission	Viktoria Zoltay	DCR OWR
Nadia Madden	DCR OWR		

Rao called the meeting to order at 1:03 p.m.

Agenda Item #1: Welcome and Introductions

Rao welcomed attendees and announced that the meeting was being recorded for the purpose of meeting minutes. 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. Members and attendees introduced themselves.

Agenda Item #2: Executive Director's Report

Rao reported on the dual concern of droughts and floods. A detailed overview of conditions will be covered in the Hydrologic Conditions Report later in the agenda, but as a preview, drought conditions have worsened on Cape Cod from Level 1 – Mild Drought to Level 2 – Significant Drought. Once Level 2 drought is reached, there are some operational actions that begin such as enhanced communication with the public through products such as a one-page drought alert in addition to the press release. Drought alerts are now also being shared on social media, including the recently launched MassWaters Instagram page. The Drought Mission Group is another action that has been initiated, which is an inter-agency group that meets more frequently than the monthly full DMTF meetings when Level 2 drought is declared. Recent discussions included fisheries impacts and fire danger. Fire danger in particular is being monitored because last fall there was an unprecedented number of fires that were drought induced and sustained because of the dry conditions, and this year the antecedent conditions are worse than last fall. The group is having internal discussions with DCR Fire Chief Dave Celino and his team on sending out messages including discouraging open fires. As these messages are publicized, WRC will be informed and encouraged to share with their networks.

Agenda Item #3: Update: Hydrologic Conditions and Drought Status

Rao introduced Zoltay to present the Hydrologic Conditions for July 2025.

- *Temperature:* Monthly average temperatures were mostly above normal. According to the Northeast Regional Climate Center (NRCC), Massachusetts had its 9th warmest July on record.
- *Precipitation:* July precipitation was mixed ranging from below-normal to above-normal.
- *Evapotranspiration:* As of July 31, 2025, the 2-month and 1-month Evaporative Demand Drought Index regional percentiles were in the normal to above-normal range.
- *Keetch-Byram Drought Index:* At the end of July, all Regions were at Index Severity Level (ISL) 2 except the Islands Region, which was at ISL 1.
- *Streamflow:* July streamflow ranged from below-normal to above-normal.
- *Flooding:* The Boston/Norton and Albany NWS E-5 Monthly Reports of Hydrologic Conditions did not indicate any river flooding at forecast points. There were many local flash flood and flood warnings issued July 9-12, 14 and 25, and there were numerous reports of local flash flooding occurring.
- *Groundwater:* Groundwater levels ranged from below-normal to above-normal. The Cape Cod Region and Island Region are at ISL 2.
- *Lakes and Impoundments:* At the end of July, six of the sixteen reporting lake and impoundment sites were below their 30th percentile. The Central, Northeast, and Cape Cod Regions are at ISL1.

- *MA Drought status*: On August 8th, 2025, Massachusetts Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) Secretary Rebecca L. Tepper declared that Cape Cod Region has been changed to a Level 2 – Significant Drought and Nantucket County remains at Level 1 – Mild Drought. All other areas of Massachusetts are at Level 0 – Normal Conditions.
- *U.S. Drought Monitor (USDM)*: At the end of July, the USDM showed areas of D1 (Moderate Drought) and D0 (Abnormally Dry) in the Northeast, Southeast, Cape Cod, and Islands Regions.
- *NOAA Climate Prediction Center Outlooks*: The monthly outlook shows chances likely for above-normal temperatures and equal chances for above-normal, normal, or below-normal precipitation. The seasonal outlook shows chances are likely for above-normal temperatures and equal chances for above-normal, normal, or below-normal precipitation. Both the monthly and seasonal drought outlooks show that drought will likely persist for Cape Cod and Nantucket.
- Additional precipitation data shows departures at the 12-mos lookback in the Western, Central, Northeast, Cape Cod, and Islands Regions.

Agenda Item #4: VOTE: Meeting Minutes, May 2025

Rao invited motions to approve the meeting minutes for May 2025.

V	A motion was made by Weismantel with a second by Richards to approve the meeting
O	minutes for May 2025.
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E	A roll call vote to approve was unanimous of those present.

Agenda Item #5: VOTE: Draft Staff Recommendation for the Town of Swansea's Request for Determination of Insignificance Under the Interbasin Transfer Act

Rao introduced the item and reminded everyone that the draft staff recommendation had been sent to them earlier for review following a request for a determination of insignificance. She explained that they had been asked to expedite the process to accommodate a deadline the town had for its SRF application. She mentioned that this was not something that could be done each time, that an exception was being made, and emphasized the importance of being mindful of the processes that the Commission and regulations had in place. Because it was a request for insignificance and staff had determined there would be no impact, Rao reflected that they had been happy to expedite the process in this case. Rao then introduced Curran to present the details of the case.

Curran began by introducing the representatives from the town who were present, including Anderson from the DPW, and Hopkins and Veldorale from Wright-Pierce Consulting. Curran then presented the existing conditions of Swansea, explaining that the town was located mainly in the Narragansett Bay and Mount Hope Bay Shore Basin, with a small portion in the Taunton River Basin. Groundwater wells in the Narragansett Basin supported 80% of the water supply to Swansea, with the remainder coming from a desalination plant withdrawing from the Mass Coastal Basin. Curran explained that the desalination plant withdrew from the Palmer River, below mean high tide, so it was defined in the regulations as part of the Mass Coastal Basin. She pointed out that water from the desalination plant then returned to its basin of origin, so it was not jurisdictional. She explained that the desalination plant had not required ITA approval because it fell under the intra-town exemption.

Curran went on to note that all existing development in the town utilized onsite septic systems for wastewater disposal. Swansea's proposal had been to construct a sewer collection system along the Route 6 corridor entirely within the Narragansett Basin, and to send the resulting wastewater to Somerset's Water Pollution Control Facility, which discharged to the Mass Coastal Basin. Curran reminded everyone that because the discharge point was below mean high tide, the regulations defined it as part of the Mass Coastal Basin. The total jurisdictional maximum day flow had been estimated at 28,850 gallons per day. Curran reviewed the map of the work area within the subbasin and highlighted areas designated for future work that would require an additional ITA filing. She reiterated that no sewerage could occur in any of the blue parcels identified on the map (potential future extension of services) until or unless additional approval was received from the WRC. Curran then showed the area where Swansea and Somerset were connecting their systems, noting that Somerset's wastewater discharged into the Taunton River below mean high tide.

Curran reminded everyone that the criterion for insignificance was meeting a streamflow requirement stating that the proposed transfer, including any previously approved transfers, must be less than 5% of the unimpacted 95th percentile exceedance flow, as estimated at an appropriate point in the donor basin. The SWMI Subbasin, identified on a map during the meeting, had a volume available under insignificance of 28,922 gallons per day. Curran reminded the group that the proposed transfer volume was less than that, so it met the criterion. She discussed the other criteria for insignificance and reported that staff had determined that the application met all applicable standards. Curran and staff therefore recommended that the Commission find the project insignificant under the Interbasin Transfer Act. She recalled that the Commission had been asked to make a decision by the end of the month and requested a vote on the proposal that day.

Weismantel complimented Curran on a well-written recommendation and thanked her for the clarifications she had provided several weeks earlier. He recalled that at the last meeting, there had been concern about being rushed into a decision due to the expiring SRF grant. He stated that if the Commission reached a decision faster than the statutory timeframe, that was a good thing—so long as the recommendation was based on sound facts and thorough analysis. He recommended that the SRF grant process take into account the WRC decision timeline and not assume that a quick affirmative vote would occur.

Rao responded that for each interbasin transfer agency staff are given sufficient time to thoroughly review all aspects of the plan, but that the review times can vary. She explained that the timeline was designed to allow for appropriate feedback. Rao noted that the SRF program was doing an incredible job with a small number of staff while distributing millions of dollars to projects in need. She explained that they had met with SRF program staff to brainstorm how to better inform funding recipients that they might need ITA approval and to clarify the process. Rao mentioned that she did not think all applicants understood the ITA process or its timeline. She said they had discussed how SRF staff could notify the Commission about which communities or entities were receiving funding so that information could be shared proactively. Rao added that they were looking for ways to help, while also avoiding situations where decisions would need to be fast-tracked outside of normal schedules and regulatory processes.

Baskin commented that the SRF program had given an extension to this project, and that they did not want the town to lose its principal forgiveness if the deadline was missed. She explained that they wanted to see the towns succeed and appreciated the Commission's consideration of the ITA request. Kluchman offered to help remind planning agencies about deadlines during their monthly meetings. She added that they could host a joint meeting to remind regional planning agencies about these programs, their deadlines, and how they were interconnected. Rao thanked Baskin and Kluchman for their helpful suggestions and proposed creating a fact sheet for sharing.

Callahan asked if the Commission could review the criteria that allowed an interbasin transfer decision to be made for Phase 1 of a project, followed by a second review for Phase 2—the expansion to the blue parcels. Curran replied that the shaded yellow parcels were the only portion under consideration and vote at that meeting. She explained that the blue parcels represented future work and that there was nothing in the regulations addressing phasing or segmentation; they were only reviewing what had been proposed at that time. Rao added that Phase 1, the portion under current review, was below the insignificant volume for that area, and that if the town later needed to expand, it would need to submit a completely new application for a full interbasin transfer.

V O T E	<p>A motion was made by Weismantel with a second by Baskin to approve the draft staff recommendation for the Town of Swansea's request for determination of insignificance under the Interbasin Transfer Act.</p> <p>A roll call vote to approve was unanimous of those present.</p>
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Agenda Item #6: Presentation: Drought Resiliency and Water Efficiency FY25 Grant Project Overviews:

Rao introduced the next presentations which would be the first of a series of presentations on recently completed projects funded by the inaugural EEA Drought Resiliency and Water Efficiency grant program. This grant program awarded \$500,000 last fiscal year to 13 projects. Over \$2 million across 54 proposals were requested. Over the next several meetings, grant project managers will be coming to the Commission to present their projects. Patel and Duff managed the grant program. Duff mentioned the enthusiasm around the launch of this program and explained the tight turnaround for project completion this first year, but despite the time constraints there was still a lot of interest. He expressed thanks to all the awardees for making the timeline work.

Du from MAPC was the first to present on their efforts regarding regional drought management planning, as well as strategies for water conservation/efficiency program development and implementation. MAPC convened a group of nine watershed associations and water advocacy organizations in the region to form an Advisory Group that informed the project's research and recommended next steps. Along with the Advisory Group meetings and input, MAPC inventoried existing programs and available resources related to drought management and water conservation in the MAPC region. Du provided details on the database contents and information categories. In addition, regional priorities, challenges, and needs in planning for drought resilience and sustainable water use were assessed in order to update the MAPC Climate

Resilient Land Use Strategies webpage with heat and drought related information. Vu reviewed the top four priorities: 1) Strengthen Regional Coordination and Collaboration, 2) Improve Data Collection and Regulation of Private Wells, 3) Strengthen Regulatory and Management Mechanisms to Ensure Equitable Distribution and Usage of Water Resources, and 4) Develop a Regional Communication Strategy- Aligning Resource Development and Outreach Efforts Across State, Regional, and Local Frameworks. Finally, she identified some potential resources to support implementing priorities and next steps to keep momentum.

Rao asked about the accessibility of the database. Du clarified that the intention is for a working database that is continually updated. Currently it is a SharePoint spreadsheet but should be made available publicly either through MAPC or transferred to the state to make it available. Rao asked if better collaboration among the organizations that were convened is envisioned for drought related projects and outreach, as well as plans for adding municipal officials and others to the collaboration. Du answered that although they want to open it up to municipalities, keeping it manageable and sustainable is key. Also, there are existing working groups that they do not want to recreate. Pederson asked whether results of the project are readily available now. Du answered that the memorandum and database have both been submitted to Duff and can be made available. Pederson was unclear on MAPC's role in water conservation because public water suppliers are the ones responsible for such efforts, but they were not included in this project. Du responded that for now general priorities and resources were identified but no specific outreach or other efforts decided. In the future they will be looking for involvement and feedback from suppliers.

Next, Pasakarnis from the Cape Cod Commission presented on water rates and use analysis on Cape Cod. Motivation for this project came from the previously mentioned increasing frequency of droughts and the patchwork of water conservation statuses across the Cape at any given time. The interest was to look at the range of rate structures and the effectiveness of rates on promoting conservation. An important distinction for the Cape with respect to water use is summer use due to a seasonal population. The state average summer use ratio is around 1.5 while on the Cape it is closer to 3. The project included 15 towns with 19 water suppliers, which speaks to the ambitious nature of the project because there were so many different rates, billing units, rate structures, and billing frequencies. Pasakarnis reviewed the data sources for both water use and water rates that they collected. Given the large number of suppliers and variety, summarizing that data was challenging for the report and especially for this presentation and as such only two cases were highlighted. The two most expensive rates are in Provincetown and Cotuit. Provincetown has had extensive messaging about the limits of supplies and has not allowed outdoor watering with public supplies for over a decade. Their graph shows their increasing rates correspond with some water use reductions. For Cotuit, the water use per connection is almost double that of Provincetown, but in 2021 there was a significant increase in rates with some sustained reductions in use. However, Cotuit's situation is complicated by the fact that they also prohibited new irrigation connections at the same time as the rate increases. In addition, a few high water users switched to their own private wells. Trends are similar across all the data in that there was a weak correlation between rate and usage, but interestingly this is seen even with lower, non-discretionary use.

LeVangie asked whether Provincetown's change in water restrictions was considered in the analysis. Pasakarnis clarified that drought declarations and reported restrictions were

considered. Pederson asked if they considered renters who may be unaware of costs and restrictions. Pasakarnis answered that it is one factor of many that was not accounted for and complicated the picture. Pasakarnis continued with his presentation discussing the concerns that public water suppliers had with highly nuanced rates and attempting to get specific types of users to conserve, especially those that may have inelastic use. Pederson asked if PFAS treatment costs were considered. Pasakarnis stated that it was another of many factors they did not have time or data to consider. He finished by reiterating the diverse nature of approaches to reducing nonessential use. In the end it was clear that conservation comes down to individual behaviors which may not be highly influenced with only quarterly billing. He also noted that even the higher water rates are still cheap relative to other utilities. Therefore, restrictions may be more effective in the end.

Rao expressed appreciation for taking on this complicated case. Cambareri wondered whether the high rate passed by Cotuit had other suppliers thinking. Cotuit also had concerns about pumping impacts on the Little River near the wellfield. The downward water use curve is interesting because during COVID people went to the Cape but despite that water use declined. Pasakarnis added that they had considered using pumping as an indicator for population but saw that this would have been very complicated, similar to other aspects of the project. Their final report is available upon request. Pederson noted that 2020 was also the year that PFAS standards took effect and some communities may have turned to alternative supplies at that time.

Duff introduced Latino, the president of Quabbin Sunrise Cooperative (Co-op), to present on a project involving the purchasing and installation of smart meters at their resident-owned mobile home community. The Co-op has 115 residents but must meet the same standards as any public supplier. Funds are usually tight so this grant was a welcome help. Latino turned it over to Ward from the Community Development Institute who is the Co-op's technical advisor. Ward started by describing the water system which has a 50-year distribution system with regular leaks and breaks. However, their well and the storage building are relatively new and without issues. Currently, pumping often exceeds the permitted daily rate and the required storage of two-day's supply is not being met. To solve these problems, smart meters were installed to detect leaks. The smart meters can detect leaks in both homes and upstream from service connections. This means that data from multiple homes can be used to pinpoint other leaks such as in the distribution lines. After the smart meters were installed, water use was reduced by 5,000 gpd due to distribution system leak repairs, repairs to leaking toilets, and information to customers on their use. The Co-op saved money with targeted fixing of the distribution system rather than having to replace the whole system. Now other resident-owned mobile home communities are interested, of which there are 30 in the state.

Carroll asked about the difficulty of the installation. Latino described the process as requiring some equipment and technical knowledge, but that it was not bad overall. Pederson asked how much of the lower use was due to fixing leaks versus behavioral changes. Latino said the savings was mostly from leaks and noted that some residents did not realize how much small leaks can add up over time. Carroll asked about the ease of use for the dashboard. Latino said that he could have used a bit more training on the software but overall it was manageable. Ward added that the setup took a little time to enter the latitude and longitude for each home because individual mobile homes are not on Google Maps and would otherwise have been automated.

Duff added that the Alliance for Water Efficiency (AWE) has a program now looking at efficiency in mobile home parks given that historically these homes are not individually metered. He mentioned the project to AWE who may reach out to Latino to understand their experience for an article they are writing.

Queenan, the sustainability manager for the Town of Needham, presented on installing irrigation system efficiency upgrades at athletic fields. Needham's Memorial Field, a 2.5-acre public playing field, was updated with irrigation equipment to replace or fix rotors that were leaking or below grade. In addition, new rotors included low-flow nozzles. These efficiency upgrades on more than 90 irrigation heads allowed more efficient watering, reducing irrigation from 8.7, 6.9, and 4.3 hundred cubic feet per day in June in previous years to 3.9 in June of 2025. This is remarkable given that less rain fell in June of 2025 than in previous years. It was helpful to have clear expectations about the required timeline for the grant with the contractor and to start procurement early. They were able to complete upgrades in the spring before peak water use to maximize savings for the season. Once they have a full season of savings, they will present it to upper management to show proof of concept for this cost-saving effort. And as such they will hopefully upgrade additional fields and weather-smart controls will be considered. Finally, regular upgrades are needed for maintaining equipment rather than just fixing things as they break. Rao asked about the number of additional ballparks where this may be done. Queenan estimated that there are about eight, with Memorial Field having the most water use.

Rao commended the projects and their potential for showcasing how to be successful with water efficiency projects. The Notice of Intent will be posted for the next round of grants soon, followed by a Request for Proposals. In the comments, Patel requested an annual report from Queenan so that they may know how the project fared. Pederson thanked EEA for the funds to support these grants. She would like to see water system infrastructure projects prioritized next year that are tied to permit or registration conditions and therefore support regulatory compliance. Kluchman suggested featuring these projects on a website. Patel noted that there will be nine more presentations in the coming months. Cohen suggested adding them to the water conservation toolkit.

Agenda Item #7: Discussion: Policy discussion on flooding topics (continued from June/July meetings)

Due to time constraints, there was unanimous agreement to postpone this agenda item until the September meeting.

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

Meeting adjourned, 3:25pm

Documents or Exhibits Used at Meeting:

1. WRC Meeting Minutes: May 8, 2025
2. Draft for WRC Discussion and Vote, dated August 14, 2025: WRC Staff Recommendation for the Town of Swansea's Request for Determination of Insignificance Under the Interbasin Transfer Act

3. Correspondence from the WRC to MEPA, including letters with the following dates and content:
 - a. July 15, 2025, regarding the Environmental Notification Form (ENF) for the Parker Pond Dredging Project in the City of Pittsfield
 - b. July 29, 2025, regarding the Environmental Notification Form (ENF) for the Healthpeak PUD Master Plan Project in Cambridge
4. Interbasin Transfer Act project status report, July 30, 2025

Compiled by: (WRC Staff)

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 10 Park Plaza, Suite 6620, Boston, MA 02116.