

## Massachusetts Drought Management Task Force – Meeting Summary

August 6, 2025, 10:00 am – 12:00 pm conducted remotely via Zoom

### Attendees, Drought Management Task Force Members:

Vandana Rao, Co-Chair, Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA)  
Benjamin Hiltunen, Co-Chair, Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA)  
Brian Loving, United States Geological Survey (USGS)  
Duane LeVangie, Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP), Water Management Act  
Tom Maguire, MassDEP, Wetlands  
Brad Chase, Department of Fish and Game (DFG)  
Jennifer Pederson, Massachusetts Water Works Association (MWWA)  
Viki Zoltay, Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), Office of Water Resources (OWR)  
Dave Celino, DCR, Fire  
Dalene LaPointe, Department of Public Health (DPH)  
Bruce Broisman, DPH  
Moussa Siri, Water Supply Citizens Advisory Committee (WSCAC)  
Marcos Pareto, Department of Public Utilities (DPU)  
John Gregoire, Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA)  
Adam Kautza, DFG, Division of Fish and Wildlife  
Vanessa Curran – DCR, OWR  
Rob Megnia, National Weather Service Boston  
John Scannell, DCR, Division of Water Supply Protection (DWSP)  
Anna Renkert, Massachusetts Rivers Alliance

### Other Attendees:

|                      |                                  |                         |   |
|----------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|---|
| Aaron Miller         | Wellesley Water and Sewer        | Jack Collins            | Oak Bluffs Water District                 |
| Aisha Revolus        | EEA                              | Jimmy Powell            | Jones River Watershed Association         |
| Alan Taubert         | Salem/Beverly Water Supply Board | Joe Holbeche            | DMF                                       |
| Allyssa Lane         | Dedham-Westwood Water District   | Julie Greenwood-Torelli | Cambridge Water Department                |
| Bailey Mullins       | DCR OWR                          | Karen Patneade          | ESC                                       |
| Brittany Segill      | MassDEP                          | Karyn Lothrop           | DCR Fire                                  |
| Caitlin LeDuc        | Town of Natick                   | Laurie Ruzala           | Yarmouth Water Department                 |
| Caitlin Spence       | EEA                              | Mason Moy               | Wellesley Water and Sewer                 |
| Carys Lustig         | Town of Needham                  | Michael Pirozzi         | EEA                                       |
| Casey Ciapciak       | Natick Water/Sewer Division      | Patrick Cunningham      | Worcester DPW                             |
| Chris Bruet          | USGS                             | Pine duBois             | Jones River Watershed Association         |
| Christine Clifford   | Town of Avon Water Dept          | Purvi Patel             | EEA                                       |
| Daniel Van Schalkwyk | Town of Ayer                     | Richard Bradley         | GIA                                       |
| Dave Michaluk        | Seekonk Water                    | Rob Faley               | Town of Chatham                           |
| Deanna Marks         | NWS                              | Ronald Parenti          | Acton Water District                      |
| Derek Goodlin        | Town of Yarmouth                 | Sara Cohen              | DCR OWR                                   |
| Don Cooper           | Medway Water                     | Shavaun Callahan        | City of Gloucester                        |
| Elizabeth McCann     | MassDEP                          | Tom Trainor             | Sherborn Groundwater Protection Committee |
| Ellie Kowalski       | Wellesley Water and Sewer        | Toni Stewart            | DCR OWR                                   |
| Eva Kroh             | EEA                              | Giovanna Recinos        | City of Salem                             |

## **1. Introduction**

Rao called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m. and thanked everyone for attending. She asked attendees to enter their names and affiliations in the chat and reminded them that the meeting is being recorded for the purpose of meeting notes. Rao introduced herself and her co-chair from MEMA, Ben Hiltunen.

## **2. Approval of DMTF Meeting Notes**

Rao invited a motion to accept the July 9, 2025, meeting notes. The motion to accept was made by Zoltay and seconded by Broisman. The vote to approve the notes was unanimous of those present. The notes will be posted online on the DMTF meetings webpage.

## **3. Updates on Current Conditions and Impacts**

Presentations supporting some of the updates are made available on the Mass.gov website [here](#). A summary of each is provided below.

### **Weather & Forecast:** Rob Megnia – NOAA National Weather Service (also representing the Northeast River Forecasting Center)

Last six months most of the state is near above normal. Forecast through August 12<sup>th</sup> predicts no precipitation east of Worcester County. Overall, there is little to no precipitation for the state over the next ten days. High probability of above normal temperatures August 10<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup>. Outlook for the 16<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> is likely near normal precipitation and above normal temperatures. No river flooding anticipated during the next ten days.

### **Hydrologic:** Brian Loving – USGS

Relatively normal conditions over the last 45 days at stream gauges for streamflow conditions. The last couple weeks have been closer to below normal but still in the normal range. Cape and Herring Rivers have been setting near record low flows. Groundwater conditions in July and June have been mostly in the normal range across the state. Still very dry/below normal in the Cape and Islands.

### **Water Supply:** Duane LeVangie – MassDEP

29 stream gauges are below trigger as of Aug 4<sup>th</sup>, up from 19 on July 7<sup>th</sup>. Of the monitoring wells used to trigger restrictions in Southeastern Massachusetts and the Cape and Islands, only 3 are below the trigger for July/Aug, down from 4 in May/June. 143 public water systems are implementing restrictions with 10 voluntary and 133 mandatory. There are 239 total PWS in the WMA program.

### **Water Supply:** John Gregoire – MWRA

Quabbin Reservoir is 90.2% full, still in the normal range. Since the last task force meeting it has had a 3.5% drop in water. Precipitation is back above the 10-year average but below the 5-year. MWRA has improved their messaging page. Customers can get certain water conservation fixtures for free.

### **Water Supply:** Jennifer Pederson – MWWA

No concerns from water systems.

### **Private Water Supply:** Marcos Pareto – DPU

No significant updates since the last meeting.

**Wetlands:** Tom Maguire – DEP

Only one report from Haverhill of lower-than-normal stream flow.

**Fish and Game:** Adam Kautza – DFW; Brad Chase – DMF

The focus is on getting juvenile river herring downstream. Conditions on the Cape are described as dire, with some locations requiring hand digging to cut paths for the fish to migrate. Work is being done with local towns, though at times the only option is to block up ponds until water levels are safe.

**Massachusetts Rivers Alliance:** Anna Renkert

They have received numerous reports of low stream flows or dry streams. Four reports of low lake/pond levels.

Pederson asked if beaver activity is impacting streamflow in Reading. Renkert mentioned that she is unsure but will report back with updates.

**Water Supply Citizens Advisory Committee:** Moussa Siri

No major updates.

**Agricultural:** Michael Botelho – DAR

Not present at meeting.

**Fire Danger:** Dave Celino – DCR

There have been 827 fires year to date. Fires in the last three weeks have all been small but are beginning to show drought-induced fire behaviors. KBDI is lower than in 2024 but they expect it to trend upwards over the next month. Overall, there has been no issue with fire control, but it will be important to continue monitoring over the next month especially considering lightning strike fire potential.

**Engineering and Forestry:** John Scannell – DCR

No overall concerns for drought impacting forest.

**Public Health:** Dalene LaPointe – DPH

No update.

**4. Presentation of Index Severity Levels per MA DMP**

Zoltay provided an overview of the drought management plan and its associated index severity levels. She explained that drought data is typically reported on a regional basis, though there are options to assess conditions by watershed or county. From mid-August of 2024 through February, the region experienced the onset of drought with variable conditions. Between March and May, most areas showed signs of recovery, particularly in streamflow and groundwater levels except for Cape Cod and the Islands, where improvements were limited. June and July brought mixed conditions, with uneven precipitation across the state. May saw well above normal rainfall, but precipitation since then has been inconsistent. While the I-90 corridor received relatively good rainfall, areas along the New Hampshire and Vermont borders experienced lower amounts. Overall, there has been a precipitation deficit of approximately 4 to 10 inches since mid-August.

Evapotranspiration (ET) has not played a major role in this drought so far, although Cape Cod and the Islands have experienced elevated ET levels, while the rest of the state remains near normal. Streamflow percentiles relative to monthly medians are near normal for most Regions, though the eastern half of Cape Cod has been more severely impacted and remains drier. The groundwater index remains at level 2 for Cape Cod and the Islands, while other Regions are at level 0. KBDI is increasing across the state. Lakes and impoundments are currently below normal in Central Massachusetts, the Northeast, and Cape Cod, but remain near normal elsewhere.

Precipitation conditions are currently at level 2 in the Western Region, the Northeast, and Cape Cod. Central Massachusetts is at level 1, while all other Regions remain at level 0. Streamflow is designated as level 1 in Cape Cod, with no applicable data for the Islands, and level 0 across the remaining Regions. Groundwater is at level 2 in Cape Cod and the Islands and level 0 elsewhere.

Lakes and impoundments are at level 1 in Central Massachusetts, the Northeast, and Cape Cod, with no available data for the Islands. All other Regions are reporting normal conditions. Evapotranspiration (ET) is at level 1 in the Western Region, the Connecticut River Valley, Central Massachusetts, and the Islands, while other areas are at level 0. The KBDI is currently at level 2 statewide, with the exception of the Islands, which are at level 1.

## **5. Discussion of Drought Level Recommendations by Region**

**Western, Connecticut River Valley (CTRV), Central, Northeast, Southeast** – Discussed that moving Central up to Level 1-Mild Drought is not necessary at this time even though several of the indices have dipped to just below normal. The task force agreed to hold the region at Normal for another month and to observe for any further deterioration. The Task Force agreed that the other four regions were still Normal.

**Cape Cod** – Celino recommended elevating the drought status to Level 2, citing the rising KBDI as a key indicator. It was noted that given the high level of confidence that conditions will not improve in the near term, a shift to Level 2 would be appropriate. Gregoire also supported the recommendation, referencing current groundwater levels and precipitation data as justification. Pederson also noted the increasing dryness and associated public safety risks. Ruzala expressed concern about the public response to changes in drought status, noting that water departments in the region often receive a significant volume of complaints when drought levels are adjusted. He advised maintaining Level 1 if feasible. Pederson acknowledged Ruzala's remarks, recognizing the difficulty of managing public reaction. Duane echoed these sentiments, noting the challenges posed by public resistance to heightened drought restrictions. Others agreed that elevating the drought recommendation to Level 2 to reflect the drying conditions especially with decreasing groundwater levels that have dipped into severity level 2.

**Islands** – Discussion focused on if this region should continue to be separated into two counties for the time being. The two being Nantucket and Dukes County.

**Summary of Recommendations:**

Western, CTRV, Central, Northeast, Southeast: Level 0 – Normal Conditions

Islands: Nantucket, Level 1 – Mild Drought; Dukes County, Level 0 – Normal Conditions

Cape Cod: Level 2 – Significant Drought

**6. Recommendations for Drought Level Response Actions**

Rao summarized the recommendations that had been discussed throughout the meeting.

**7. Next Steps**

The recommendations would be forwarded to the Secretary for a final decision on updated drought declarations. The Task Force will meet again in early September.

**Meeting Ended:** The meeting adjourned at 11:44 am.