



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

---

**Meeting Minutes for July 14, 2022**

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

*Minutes approved October 13, 2022*

**Members in Attendance:**

Vandana Rao	Designee, Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) (left meeting at 2:30)
Linda Balzotti	Designee, Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)
Duane LeVangie	Designee, Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP)
Anne Carroll	Designee, Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)
Todd Richards	Designee, Department of Fish and Game (DFG)
Hotze Wijnja	Designee, Department of Agricultural Resources (DAR)
Thomas Cambareri	Public Member (left meeting at 2:07 pm)
Vincent Ragucci	Public Member
Kenneth Weismantel	Public Member
Samantha Woods	Public Member

**Members Absent**

Todd Callaghan	Designee, Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management (CZM)
----------------	---

**Others in Attendance:**

Vanessa Curran	DCR, OWR
Erin Graham	DCR, OWR
Kara Sliwoski	DCR, OWR
Viki Zoltay	DCR, OWR
Andrea Downs	Wastewater Advisory Committee
Becca George	DHCD
Don Hearn	Exec. Dir. Golf Course Supts. Association of New England
Dr. Christine Hatch	UMass Amherst Extension
Jennifer Pederson	Mass Waterworks Association
Katie Ronan	MWRA
Kerry Snyder	NepRWA
Maria Pinaud	MassDEP, State Revolving Fund
Sarah Bower	Mass Rivers Alliance
Todd Melanson	Chelmsford Water

Rao called the meeting to order at 1:05 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. Roll call vote for attendance of Commissioners was taken and a quorum was obtained.

**Agenda Item #2: Executive Director’s Report**

Rao provided a summary of drought conditions and the current drought declarations issued following the July 11 Drought Management Task Force (DMTF) meeting. She also reported that the Drought Mission Group has been convened and is taking a closer look at actions required by state agencies and others at each drought level to ensure that we are doing everything we can to respond to the drought.

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

Graham summarized that for the month of June, precipitation was at the low end of normal across most of the state and temperature was above normal. Streamflows were mostly below normal with some record low flows. All the regions are at elevated index levels except the Cape. Groundwater was more mixed, with many below normal but also a good number at normal and a few above normal. Lakes and Impoundments are starting to show impacts from the drought, reflected as levels 1 and 2 for this indicator. The one-month lookback for EDDI is elevated across the whole state. The one-month outlook shows drought removal likely in the western part of MA, and seasonal outlook shows drought removal likely throughout the state.

**Agenda Item #4: Vote to approve minutes from April 14, 2022**

Rao noted that Jen Pederson requested a small edit on page 11 of the April 2022 minutes, first paragraph, the sentence should read:

“She noted when the legislature passed ARPA, MWWA hoped it would be an open solicitation for people to jump in with projects and have a chance, which is not how it happened.”

Rao invited motions to approve the meeting minutes for April 2022.

V O T E	A motion was made by Ken Weismantel with a second by Linda Balzotti to approve the meeting minutes as amended for April 2022, with edit as provided by Jen Pederson.
	The roll call vote to approve was unanimous of those present.

**Agenda Item #5: Revised Evapotranspiration Index for the 2022 MA Drought Management Plan Update**

Rao introduced the presentation stating that this will be an introduction with a follow up presentation later, requesting a vote. Zoltay began with the goals for revision of the indicator, which were timely identification of drought and to capture the effect of temperature. Crop moisture was not a responsive indicator. This change should help to identify flash droughts and with climate change we expect more heat events that can contribute to flash droughts. Data

analysis for this effort was provided by NIDIS and NEDEWS. The draft proposed new indicator was approved by the DMTF technical committee and presented to the DMTF in June 2022.

Zoltay provided a summary of the 5 products considered to replace the Crop Moisture Index. The evaluation criteria included spatial resolution, reference period, historical availability, update frequency and timely availability. Evaluation of indicator performance was based on looking at frequency of occurrence and a good match for target index severity levels' frequencies, and the timing of the indicator relative to past drought onsets, development and ending. In conclusion, we recommend EDDI as the indicator that best met all our performance criteria.

**Comments, questions, and responses:**

Cambareri commented that this is excellent work, and he agrees with the choice of this indicator. Cambareri leaves the meeting. (2:07)

Richards asked about the crop used for reference for EDDI and whether we considered this. Zoltay responded that the product does not allow modification of this parameter. Ragucci stated that this was great work and he asked if it would have impacted the drought declarations differently if we were using this replacement indicator. Zoltay responded that although it is not yet the official index, we have been presenting the 2-month EDDI and using it as guidance at the DMTF meetings. Pederson commented that EDDI is showing a more severe level at times vs CMI. She fears that it will push people to go to a higher level of drought too soon. She would like to see the revised narrative that describes how this index will be used in our decision making. Zoltay responded that we have added language to the proposed DMP revisions to address this concern.

Rao summarized the process moving forward. We are finalizing a redline of the MA DMP. It will first go to the DMTF and then the WRC for review, edits, and then final vote.

Rao noted that she needed to leave the meeting during agenda item 6, and that Anne Carroll would chair the remainder of the meeting in her absence.

**Agenda Item #6: Financing Water Infrastructure through the State Revolving Fund Program**

Rao introduced Maria Pinaud, the Director of Municipal Services at the DEP Bureau of Water Resources. Pinaud is responsible for overseeing the State Revolving Fund (SRF) projects. The SRF program provides loans for priority water infrastructure projects.

Pinaud stated that she will provide a general overview of the MA SRF program which is jointly administered by the Mass Clean Water Trust and MassDEP. Mass DEP oversees the projects, and the Clean Water Trust manages the funds. The SRF provides low-interest loans to cities and towns across the Commonwealth for water infrastructure projects to assist in compliance with the Clean Water and Safe Drinking Water Acts. To date, the SRF has provided over 8.1 billion in funds to nearly 300 communities, benefitting over 97% of the population.

Pinaud summarized the advantages of financing through SRF including fixed low-interest rates at 2%, with some projects qualifying for zero interest such as those addressing PFAS. Loans have flexible repayment terms and can be financed for up to 30 years. The loan forgiveness program

uses established affordability tiers to provide principal forgiveness based on need for disadvantaged communities.

Additional subsidy programs are available through the Trust, including a grant program up to \$150,000 to develop asset management plans. Also, the housing choice loan program allows an interest rate reduction of a half point in interest for those who have met their housing choice designation. PFAS remediation and Nutrient reduction projects are also eligible for zero interest loans provided they meet certain requirements. Lastly, the 100% principal forgiveness loans for lead service replacement planning projects was rolled out on July 1<sup>st</sup>.

Supplemental funding through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) will be available from 2022 to 2026 for loans and loan forgiveness to disadvantaged communities. This supplemental funding will greatly expand the program's capacity for both the Drinking Water and Clean Water SRF programs for the foreseeable future. EPA estimates that a total of approximately 1.1 billion will be invested in MA through the BIL supplemental funding.

Pinaud finished by summarizing the overall SRF Loan Process which can take up to two years. She highlighted several key points in the process such as the June 30<sup>th</sup> deadline for securing local approval for the project, as well as the October loan application deadline.

SRF program information:

<https://www.mass.gov/state-revolving-fund-srf-loan-program>

Resources for borrowers:

<https://www.mass.gov/resources-for-borrowers>

To apply:

<https://www.mass.gov/lists/state-revolving-fund-applications-forms>

Carroll thanked Pinaud for the presentation and confirmed that it will be shared following the meeting.

### **Comments, questions, and responses:**

Weismantel asked if Drinking Water SRF funds could be used to fund meter replacement for residential meters. Pinaud replied that it would be SRF eligible, but it depends on the scope of the project if makes the Intended Use Plan. The ranking system is a five-tier system, which allows you to easily identify the project's ranking. Weismantel asked if the ranking system is publicly available and Pinaud said she would post it in the chat (refer to part IV: <https://www.srfmadep.com/state-revolving-fund-applications-forms/dw/dwpef.pdf>). Pederson stated that meters often fall below the line because they don't meet the public health criteria, however maybe BIL funding will help in this regard by increasing the overall amount of funding available. Pederson also highlighted that the 100% principal forgiveness on lead service lines planning is still a loan that needs local approval and then gets forgiven after the fact. Some towns are grappling with this requirement because they may not have local approval and therefore cannot apply. Pinaud reiterated that local approval was a requirement and must be obtained prior to application for a loan.

Weismantel emphasized that the WRC is very concerned about unaccounted for water (UAW) and that putting meter replacement on the list would likely benefit this goal. We'd therefore like to see it higher on the list. Pinaud replied that she would make note of that thinking.

To view Pinaud's complete presentation, see link to exhibits listed at the end of this document.

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

Meeting adjourned, 2:43 pm

**Documents or Exhibits Used at Meeting:**

1. WRC Meeting Minutes: April 14, 2022
2. Interbasin Transfer Act project status report, June 29, 2022
3. Hydrologic Conditions in Massachusetts, June 2022 (available at <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/monthly-hydrologic-conditions>)

*Compiled by: AC*

*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, 8<sup>th</sup> floor, Boston, MA 02114.*