

## **Massachusetts Drought Management Task Force – Meeting Summary**

**July 9, 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)  
Andrew Trice, Co-Chair, Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA)  
Gardner Bent, United States Geological Survey (USGS)  
Duane LeVangie, Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP), Water Management Act  
Kate Bentsen, Department of Fish and Game (DFG)  
Jennifer Pederson, Massachusetts Water Works Association (MWWA)  
Heather Clish, Massachusetts Rivers Alliance (MRA)  
Viki Zoltay, Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), Office of Water Resources (OWR)  
Dave Celino, DCR Fire  
Irena Draksic, Department of Public Health (DPH)  
Joe Dellicarpini, NOAA – National Weather Service  
John Scannell, DCR  
Moussa Siri, Water Supply Citizens Advisory Committee (WSCAC)  
Alex Taylor, Department of Public Utilities (DPU)  
Marcos Pareto, DPU

### **Other Attendees:**

Aisha Revolus	EEA	Karen Patneau	Earth Services Corp.
Allyssa Lane	Dedham-Westwood Water District	Luke White	Yarmouth Water Dept
Bailey Mullins	DCR OWR	Matthew Lanen	Falmouth Water
Brad Chase	DMF	Michael Reghitto	Town of Falmouth
Brittany Segill	MassDEP	Pine duBois	Jones River Watershed Association
Bruce Broisman	DPH	Purvi Patel	EEA
Caitlin LeDuc	Town of Natick	Richard Bradley	Superscape Landscape
Deanna Marks	NWS Albany	Rob Faley	Town of Chatham
Elizabeth McCann	MassDEP	Ryan Smith	Charles River Watershed Association
Eva Kroh	EEA	Sara Cohen	DCR OWR
Giovanna Recinos	City of Salem	Tim Pasakarnis	Cape Cod Commission
Jason Duff	DCR OWR	Toni Stewart	Billerica Water Works
Jennifer Durso	MassDEP	Vanessa Curran	DCR OWR
John Gregoire	MWRA		

### **1. Introduction**

Rao called the meeting to order at 10:05 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, Andrew Trice who was filling in for Ben Hiltunen.

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

Rao invited a motion to accept the June 9, 2025 meeting notes, with one edit to correct the spelling of Pederson's name in one place. Pederson made the motion with a second from Siri. The vote passed unanimously of those present.

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

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

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

In June, precipitation departures ranged from 1.5 to 3 inches below normal. 3-month and 6-month departures are near or above normal for most of the state. Some sections of the Cape and Islands are still below normal (40-80% of normal). The current outlook shows 0.25" (central/western MA) to 2" (east/southeast MA) of new precipitation possible through next Tuesday, leaning toward above normal precipitation through the end of July, and equal chances for above/below normal precipitation through September.

### **Hydrologic:** Gardner Bent – USGS

June streamflow conditions across Massachusetts were normal or above normal, except at the Herring River at North Harwich on Cape Cod which was much below normal. Streamflow conditions were mainly normal, but most gages saw a decrease in their flow percentile during June with below normal precipitation and higher temperatures during the month. June groundwater level conditions were mainly normal across much of the state, except for southeastern Massachusetts, Cape Cod, and the Islands where most wells were below normal. Groundwater levels in the Plymouth area, Cape Cod, and the Islands have likely reached their highest level for the year, unless there is a significant rain event(s).

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

LeVangie reviewed how the WMA program monitors stream gages and wells between May 1<sup>st</sup> and September 30<sup>th</sup>. 109 PWS's have reported active restrictions, six of which are voluntary and 103 mandatory. Of the 103 that are mandatory, 29 are limiting watering to 1 day or less, and 74 are limiting watering to 2 days or more. The current municipal water use restrictions map will continue to get updated regularly. LeVangie added that MassDEP is in discussions with a few suppliers regarding emergency declarations but not related to drought.

DuBois asked if the gages that MassDEP uses are listed online somewhere for viewing. Zoltay provided the following link for viewing USGS streamflow and groundwater data:

<https://dashboard.waterdata.usgs.gov/>. DuBois also explained concerns over continued low flows in the Jones River and how withdrawals from Silver Lake might be impacting these flows.

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

Gregoire provided a verbal update. Quabbin and Wachusett are both at normal levels. Demands are about 256 mgd and climbing, which is expected at this time of year. Foss Reservoir is a little low because of a stuck gate that caused the level to lower, but that has since been repaired.

Gregoire asked if the Task Force could get an update from federal partners, specifically regarding the potential for them to lose their office buildings, as well as any other agency impacts. Bent responded that all the New England offices are keeping their leases. USGS has lost some staff, but overall things are going okay. They were recently notified of the additional plans for federal agency staffing reductions, but it is unclear what the full extent of those impacts will be.

Dellicarpini added that NWS is also in good shape overall. They have lost some staff also, which is one of the reasons that the Northeast River Forecasting Center has not been sending a separate staff person to Task Force meetings. Certain changes are being made by the agency to accommodate the workload with fewer staff across the country, including accelerating the schedule for modernizing operations.

**Water Supply: Jennifer Pederson – MWWA**

Pederson provided verbal updates. She concentrated her outreach on the Cape, Islands, and Buzzards Bay. There were no concerns reported by water suppliers in these areas.

**Private Water Supply: Alex Taylor – DPU**

Aquarion reduced their watering restrictions with the last drought declaration. The Ponds of Plymouth and Pine Hills systems are allowing watering two days per week between 5pm-9am and 7pm-7am, respectively. All other Aquarion systems are allowing watering every other day.

**Wetlands: Tom Maguire – DEP**

Not present at meeting. Maguire notified Rao via email that he had no updates from regional staff.

**Fish and Game: Kate Bentsen – DER, Brad Chase – DMF**

Bentsen had no updates to report. Chase explained that there are ongoing concerns about getting juvenile herring out of spawning grounds, specifically in the eastern part of Cape Cod. He also explained that there are concerns in other areas of the state where water supply interactions with coastal rivers are potentially impacting migrations.

**Massachusetts Rivers Alliance: Lydia Olson**

Olson reiterated concerns over low flows in the Jones River. Mass Rivers also recently received a report from NSRWA that the Weir River Water System has been conducting outreach to customers to encourage less water use on lawns due to concerns over low flows in the Weir River.

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

Siri reiterated that the MWRA system has no supply concerns.

**Agricultural: Michael Botelho – DAR**

Not present at meeting.

**Fire Danger: Dave Celino – DCR**

Not present at meeting.

**Engineering: John Scannell – DCR**

No updates to report.

No updates to report.

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

Zoltay reviewed how DMP indices and severity levels were calculated, as well as the drought regions. She traced recent hydrologic trends, noting that the drought began in mid-August and worsened through mid-October, resulting in record low streamflows. Precipitation in late November provided temporary relief, and December's normal to above normal precipitation improved conditions. However, January's below normal precipitation caused declines again. Recovery in streamflow and groundwater began in March and April, except on the Cape and Islands. By mid-May, significant recovery had occurred across most of the state, and by the end of May there was above normal precipitation and more improvement overall across the state. In June, conditions have been mixed, with some areas drying out and groundwater still recovering in the Cape Cod, Islands, and southern part of the Southeast Regions. She noted that the most recent U.S. Drought Monitor was still showing drought conditions ranging from D0 to D1 in these areas.

The Standardized Precipitation Index (SPI) for June varied across the state, with lower precipitation in the eastern side of the state. The total deficit since the start of the drought ranges from 4-12" below normal. Zoltay explained that in the final summary table, the 2-month lookback would be used for most of the state since those regions are out of drought, but for the Cape and Islands the 9-month lookback is going to be shown because the drought still continues and recovery is lagging behind the rest of the state. Evapotranspiration (ET) was mostly normal in June. Departure from average ET is below 1" in all Regions. Streamflow in June was mostly normal to above normal across most of the state. One gage on the eastern side of the Cape is below normal, which reflects what others have described over low flows being observed in that area. Groundwater varied across the state, with mostly normal to above normal levels. Certain areas are starting to lower, especially the eastern part of the Cape and Nantucket. KBDI showed drying of the top eight inches of soil moisture. Lake and Impoundments was mixed with the Western, Northeast, and Cape Cod Regions showing some below normal levels.

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

**Western, Connecticut River Valley (CTRV), Central, Northeast, Southeast** – Conditions continue to be in the normal range. Looking at the 1-month lookback, precipitation is starting to look below normal, but not a significant concern yet. All Task Force members agreed to keep these Regions at Level 0 – Normal Conditions.

**Cape Cod** – Conditions have improved. The 9-month lookback for precipitation is still at index severity level 2, but all other indices are showing improvement and are now at level 1. The staff recommendation is to move this Region to Level 1. All Task Force members agreed to move the Cape to Level 1 – Mild Drought.

**Islands** – Groundwater has gone down by three percentile points. Precipitation is still at index severity level 1. While there are concerns over groundwater, the staff recommendation was initially to hold the

Islands Region at Level 1 for now and to keep an eye on the groundwater. There was further discussion on separating the two islands. Pederson described that Nantucket is in a very different situation than Martha's Vineyard. Rao asked Task Force members for their opinions on having separate declarations for the two islands. Bent noted that Martha's Vineyard is in the normal range, including the wells that are not included in the monitoring network. He added that the Vineyard is close to the long-term median as of the end of June. Several Task Force members voiced support for separate declarations. Rao asked members to vote for either moving Martha's Vineyard to Level 0 and keeping Nantucket at Level – 1 or keeping both islands at Level 1. All Task Force members agreed to move Martha's Vineyard to Level 0 – Normal Conditions and keeping Nantucket at Level 1 – Mild Drought.

**Summary of Recommendations:**

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

Islands: Nantucket- Level 1 – Mild Drought; Martha's Vineyard- Level 0 – Normal Conditions

Cape Cod: Level 1 – Mild Drought

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

Rao summarized the recommendations for drought levels that had been discussed throughout the meeting. The press release and other communications should come out in the next couple of days.

**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 August.

Rao ended by providing an overview of a new educational drought video that covers the topic of why water suppliers sometimes have to implement water use restrictions even when they are not facing supply constraints within their system. The video is posted online at: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/drought-tips-tools-resources>.

**Meeting Ended:** The meeting adjourned at 11:38 am.