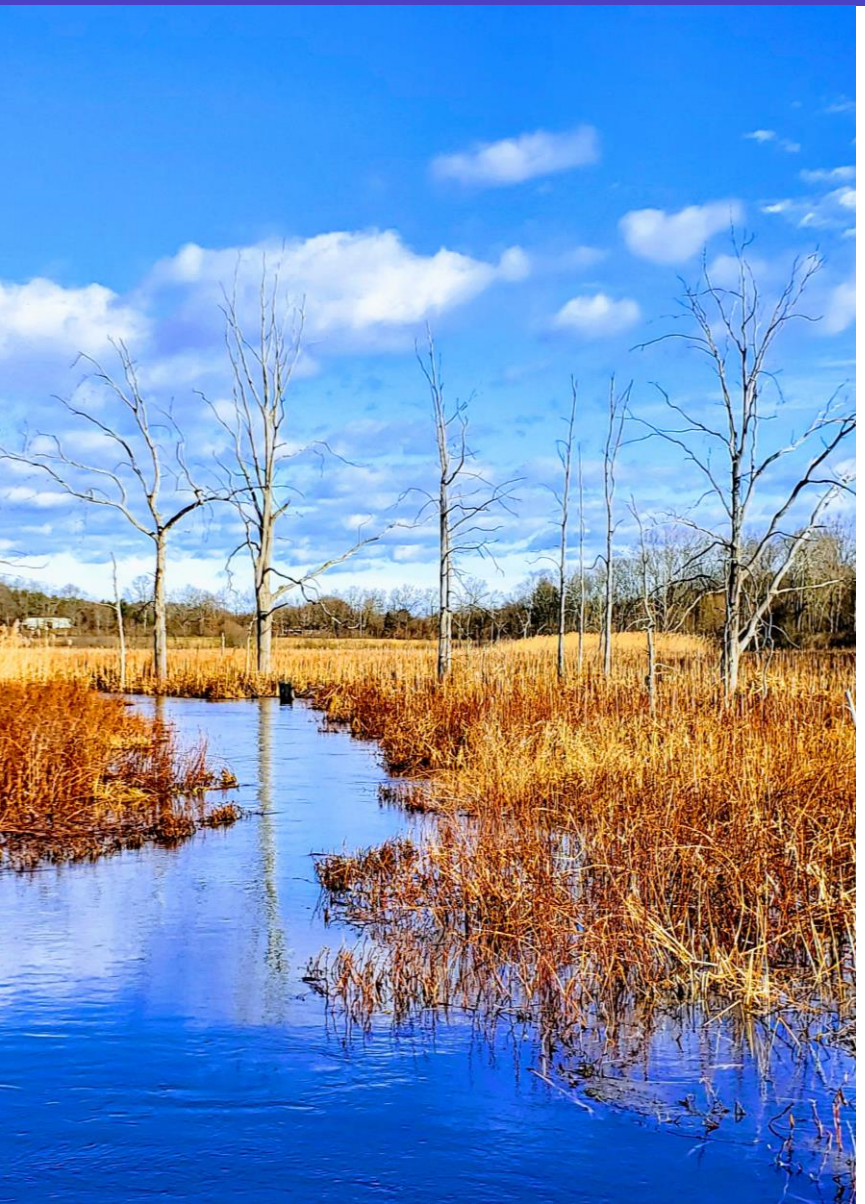
The MA Water Resources Commission

Final Workplan
FY 2026

June 12, 2025

Role of the MA Water Resources Commission (WRC)



Longest running active Commission in the Commonwealth – meeting at least monthly since 1956

- The Water Resources Commission (Commission or WRC) was established in 1956 by the Massachusetts Legislature and was set up to address flood prevention and water conservation, among other things.

- It is responsible for developing, coordinating, and overseeing the Commonwealth's water policy and planning activities to ensure that Massachusetts will have plentiful water to support health, safety, economic development, and ecological vitality for generations to come.

Structure of the MA WRC

Agency Members

Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
Chair & Member - Rebecca L. Tepper, Secretary
Designee - Vandana Rao, Executive Director

Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities
Member - Edward M. Augustus Jr., Secretary
Designee - Chris Kluchman

Department of Conservation and Recreation
Member - Brian Arrigo, Commissioner
Designee - Anne Carroll

Department of Environmental Protection
Member - Bonnie Heiple, Commissioner
Designee - Kathleen Baskin

Department of Agricultural Resources
Member - Ashley Randle, Commissioner
Designee - Hotze Wijnja

Department of Fish and Game
Member - Tom O'Shea, Commissioner
Designee - Todd Richards

Office of Coastal Zone Management (non-voting member)
Member – Alison Brizius, Director
Designee - Tyler Soleau

Public Members

Thomas Cambareri, Centerville, MA (representing groundwater industry)

Christine Hatch, Belchertown, MA

Vincent J. Ragucci III, North Reading, MA

Kenneth Weismantel, Hopkinton, MA

Samantha Woods, Norwell, MA

Water Resources Commission & Staff, December 2023 meeting

Staff to the MA WRC

Leadership Team

Vandana Rao, EOEEA, Director of Water Policy/ED of the MA WRC
Purvi Patel, EOEEA, Assistant Director of Water Policy
Anne Carroll, DCR, Director, Office of Water Resources (OWR)
Vanessa Curran, DCR, Deputy Director, OWR

Staff to the WRC at DCR Office of Water Resources and Dam Safety

Eric Carlson, Environmental Engineer
Sara Cohen, Water Resources and Stakeholder Engagement Specialist
Jason Duff, Water Resources Planner
Joy Duperault, Director, Flood Hazard Management Program
Erin Graham, Environmental Engineer
Nadia Madden, Floodplain Management Specialist
Baily Mullins, Environmental Analyst
Katie Paight, Floodplain Management Specialist
Toni Stewart, Water Resources Scientist
Viki Zoltay, State Hydrologist
William Salomaa, Director, Office of Dam Safety

Workplan
Fiscal Year 2026
(July 2025 through June 2026)

- This work plan will guide Commission staff activities over Fiscal Year 2026.
- In addition to the specific tasks described within and ongoing administrative tasks, in FY26 WRC staff expect to undertake a substantial effort to comply with accessibility standards per Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Workplan Focus Areas

1. DROUGHT MANAGEMENT

2. HYDROLOGIC MONITORING & ANALYSIS/USGS

3. WATER EFFICIENCY

4. DROUGHT RESILIENCY GRANTS

5. INTERBASIN TRANSFER ACT

6. WATER DATA MANAGEMENT & WNF

7. FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT

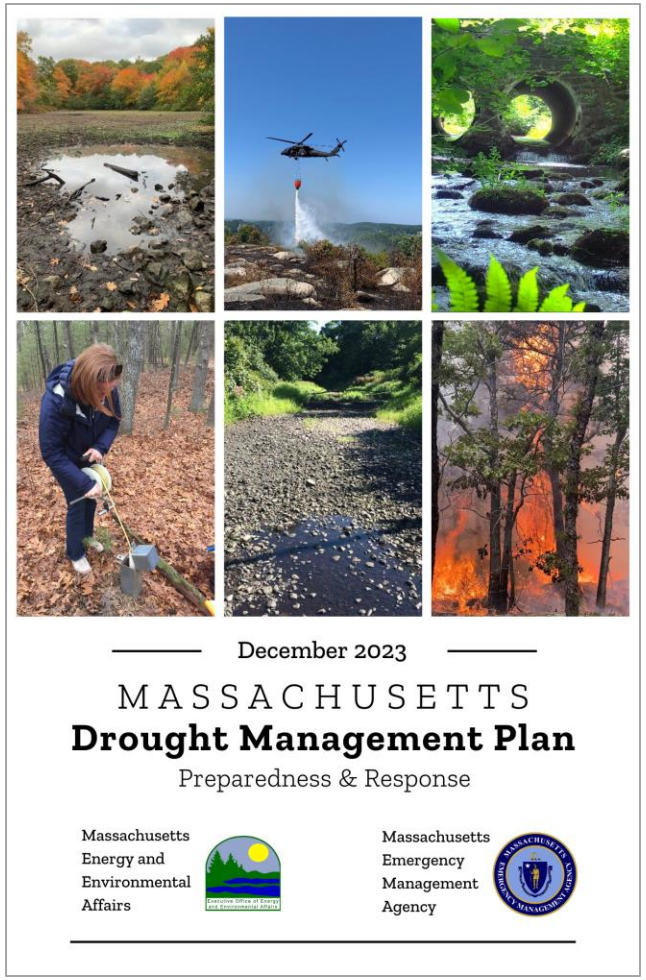
8. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT & REGIONAL COLLAB

9. BOARDS & COMMITTEES

1. Drought Plan Implementation and Updates

- Implement the products of the USGS groundwater records extension project to allow the use of additional groundwater sites in the Drought Management Plan (DMP)
- Assess and integrate appropriate recommendations from the USGS report titled "Evaluation of the lakes and impoundments drought index for the Massachusetts Drought Management Plan" into DMP
- Revise streamflow and groundwater stations used in the DMP based on the completed network analyses
- Extend the historical record for CoCoRaHS precipitation stations so that they may be used in the DMP
- Finalize the 2020 and 2022 Drought Retrospective reports.
- Continue to revise and refine the PWS **Local Drought Management Plan** Guidance working document based on feedback and develop a checklist for preparation and review of drought plans C

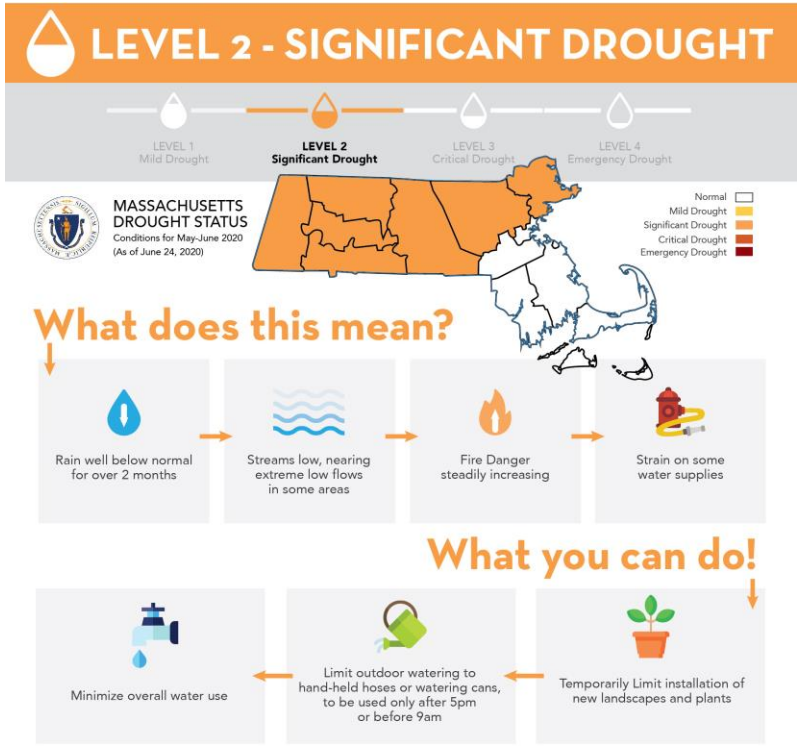
C = with EEA Climate Team/ResMass



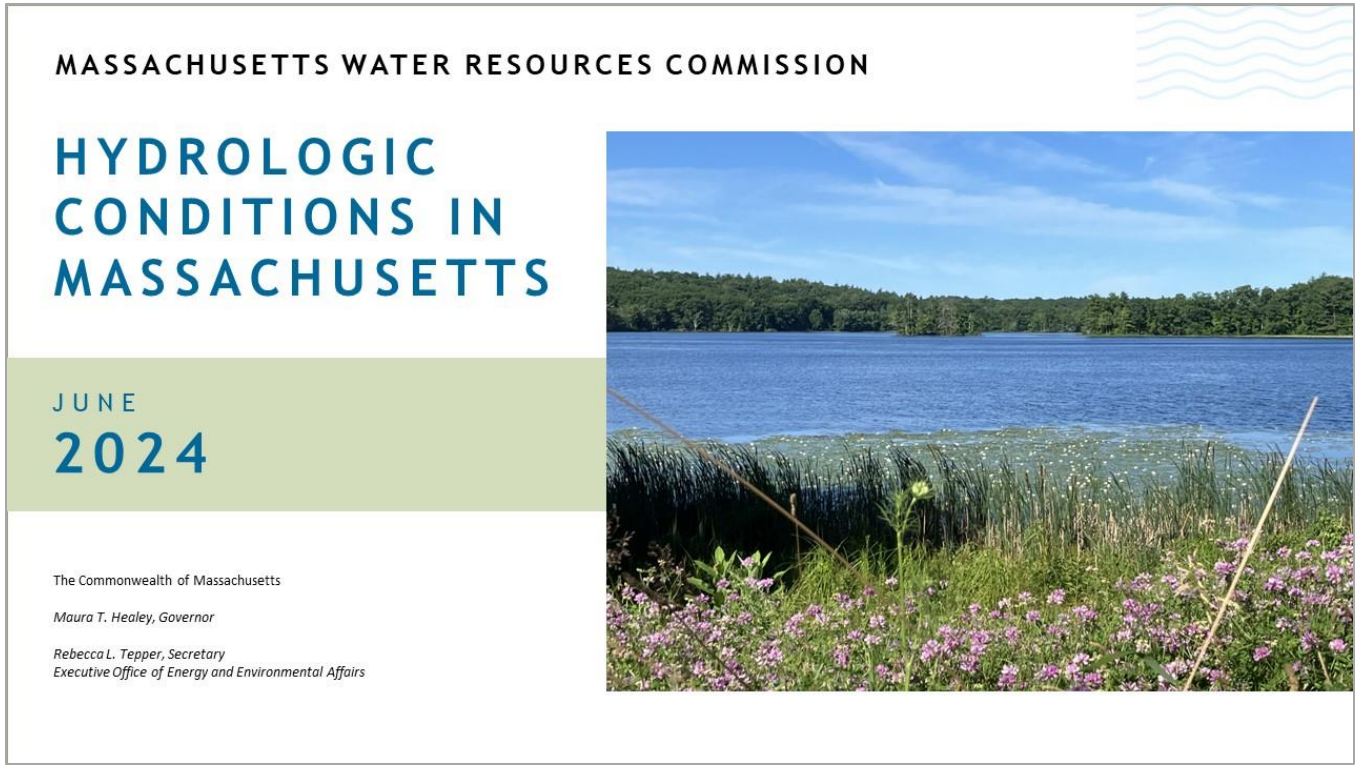
1. Drought Plan Implementation and Updates

Continue ongoing programs:

- Serve as staff to the MA Drought Management Task Force (DMTF)
- Maintain and enhance the Drought Dashboard
- Provide input to the U.S. Drought Monitor via Northeast Drought Early Warning System (DEWS)

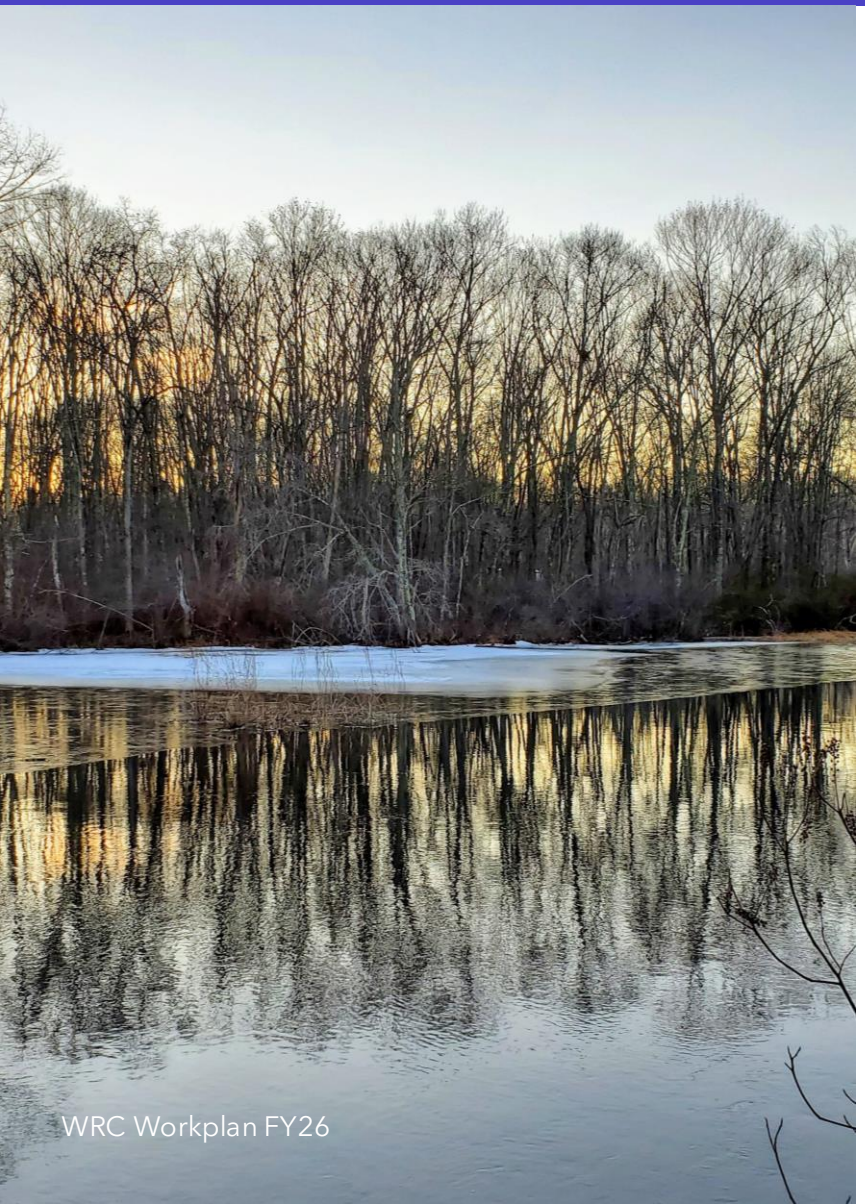


2. Hydrologic Conditions Monitoring and Analysis



- Complete revising and expanding the hydrologic network guided by the results of the network analyses
- Complete the USGS study examining the **Drivers of Low Flows in Massachusetts** such as changes in climate, land use, and water use
- Continue to manage and provide technical input on the **Climate and Streamflow Projections and Risk** project that is developing probabilistic projections for precipitation, temperature and streamflow at the watershed and subwatershed scale using newly-developed methods by Tufts U., Cornell U., and USGS C
- Manage and provide technical input on the **Riverine and Pluvial Flood Mapping** project that is developing an online tool to view existing flood maps and to download flood models and building new models where none exist C
- Complete the **Groundwater Flooding Vulnerability** study with UMass Amherst

2. Hydrologic Conditions Monitoring and Analysis



Continue ongoing programs:

- Precipitation program, with monthly data collection, QA/QC, analysis, and database maintenance
- Monthly hydrologic conditions reporting to WRC, and DMTF as needed
- USGS and State Geologist's Office Cooperative Program for hydrologic data collection

C = with EEA Climate Team/ResMass

3. Water Efficiency

Continue ongoing programs:

- Encourage water efficient landscaping through ongoing projects and collaborations such as the MA Native Plant Palette (https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massachusetts-native-plant-palette) web application development and participation in the annual Growing Wild for Pollinators Program (https://www.mass.gov/guides/growing-wild-massachusetts)

- Support the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's WaterSense program as a promotional partner, including participating in national campaigns such as Fix-a-Leak Week

- Represent MA in national conservation organizations such as the Alliance for Water Efficiency (AWE) and its research and education/outreach subcommittees, including active participation on a newly formed AWE Working Group to address financial sustainability of water utilities in the face of demand reductions and other relevant working groups as they are formed

- Facilitate projects of the WRC's Water Efficiency Advisory Committee and convene meetings as needed

www.mass.gov/conservemawater

4. Drought Resiliency Grants

C

- Conduct second annual round of grant funding to municipalities, water suppliers, and other eligible entities through the EEA Drought Resiliency and Water Efficiency grant program
- Review grant program structure by soliciting feedback from stakeholders and improve as necessary to streamline the application process
- Coordinate with FY2025 awardees for presentations to the WRC on grant project outcomes

PRESS RELEASE

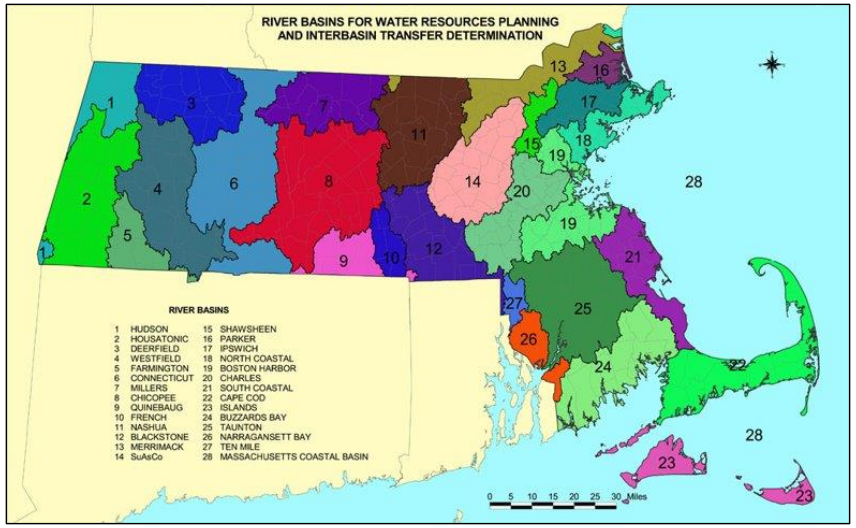
Healey-Driscoll Administration Awards $500,000 to Improve Drought Resiliency and Water Efficiency

13 Applicants Awarded Funds to Improve Water Management and Enhance Climate Resiliency Across Massachusetts

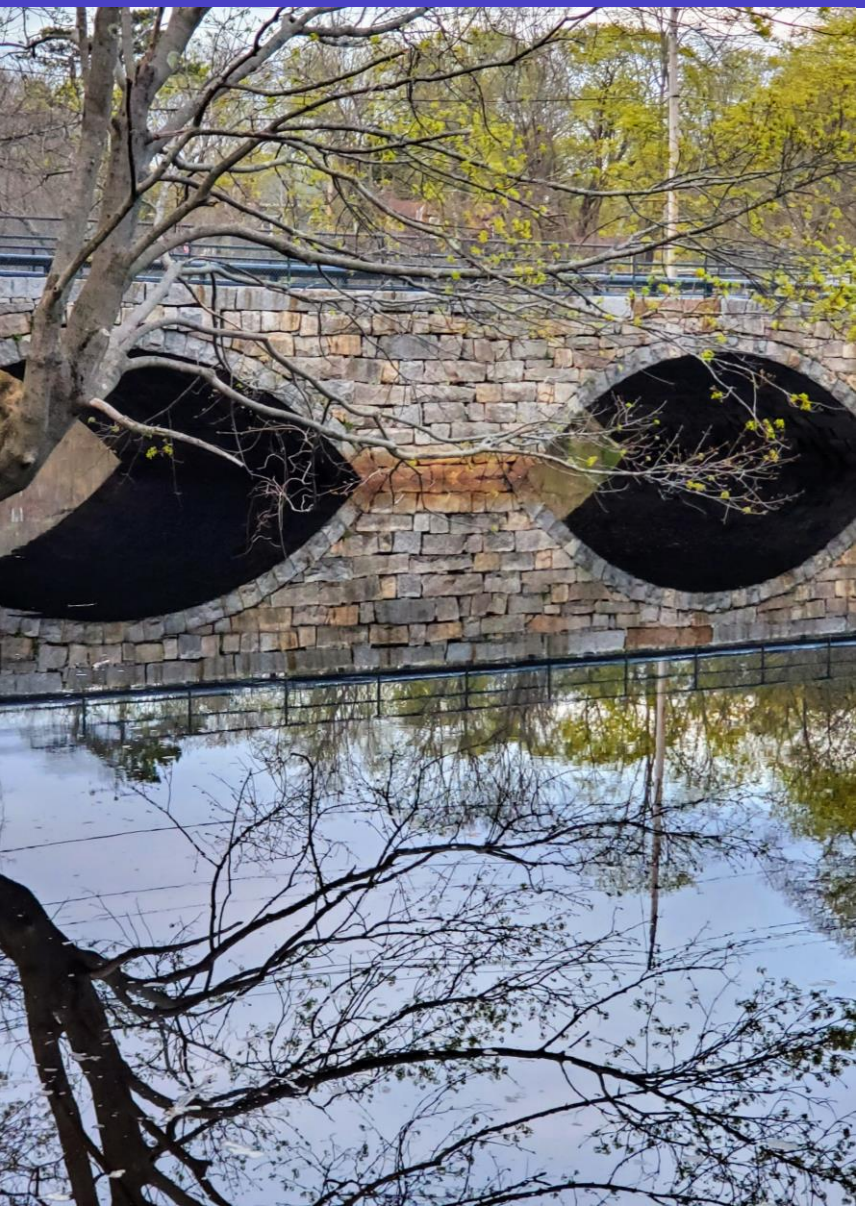
5. Interbasin Transfer Act (ITA) and Regulations

- Conduct ongoing reviews: Avon, Dover, Dracut, Hopkinton, Oxford, Sherborn, South Weymouth Naval Air Station, Swansea, Weymouth
- Conduct pre-application meetings as necessary and provide technical assistance to applicants
- Conduct annual follow-ups and reviews for existing approvals to ensure compliance with Conditions
- Evaluate potential ways to streamline the ITA process in response to the Unlocking Housing Production Commission's Report, Building for Tomorrow, February 2025

The ITA has enabled communities to continue to grow and to develop new housing stock and expand businesses by providing them with access to out-of-basin drinking water sources and wastewater disposal when they do not have local viable options or have other capacity constraints.



6. Water Data Management and Needs Forecasting



- In coordination with MassDEP and EEA IT, develop a centralized data management system to consolidate, share, visualize, analyze, and map many sources of water use data collected or compiled by OWR staff and MassDEP Water Management Act (WMA), Drinking Water, and Water Utility Resilience programs
- Develop water needs forecasts (WNF) in coordination with the schedule for MassDEP WMA permit renewals or as otherwise requested and mutually agreed upon
- Provide technical and policy support for the WMA program and any associated regulations/guidance, as needed

7. Floodplain Management

C

- Provide project lead/coordination for **Statewide Floodplain Management Framework**
- Help with development of the **Massachusetts Flood Management Plan**
- Integrate tools and findings from **Flood Vulnerability Assessment for Environmental Justice Communities** into ongoing outreach and training efforts
- Continue to work on higher standards for the **MA Building Code**

NATIONAL FLOOD INSURANCE PROGRAM

Executive Order 149 (1978) - Designates the Commission as the state coordinating agency to implement the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and implement flood plain management criteria for state-owned properties in special hazard areas.

7. Floodplain Management

Continue ongoing programs:

- Serve as the state coordinating agency for the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP)
- Coordinate with FEMA and MA communities for compliant local implementation of the NFIP in all floodplain development
- Support local communities in their efforts to implement the NFIP by offering training, technical assistance, and federal/state/regional/local coordination
- Support the revision of the ResilientMass Plan and review of various floodplain grant applications (MEMA, MVP, DER, CZM, etc.)
- Offer training and technical assistance/coordination with other floodplain stakeholders such as realtors, insurance agents, conservation commissions, regional planning commissions, etc.
- Co-lead the MA Silver Jackets Team with MEMA, and continue to coordinate with other state agencies on statewide floodplain management matters
- Provide technical review/comments on MEPA projects in the floodplain

8. Regional Collaboration and Stakeholder Engagement

- Lead facilitation team for the North Shore Water Resilience Task Force, a group of communities and organizations convened by the state legislature, working collaboratively to improve water supply resilience and ecosystem health in the Ipswich River Watershed
- Provide facilitation and process design services to a stakeholder group in Southeastern MA working to develop a structure for collaboration on a sustainable water future for that region
- Work with the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) and participate in other regional collaborative efforts (such as those led by planning agencies and municipalities) to inform WRC water policy work
- Develop a vision and/or policy for strategic dedication of WRC resources toward regional collaborative efforts affecting water resources across the Commonwealth

Continue ongoing programs:

Support the projects in this Work Plan and emerging WRC priorities, as needed, by designing, facilitating, and/or advising on stakeholder engagement and consensus-building processes

North Shore Water Resilience Task Force, 2024

9. Boards and Committees

- Continue to serve on the Board of Certification of Operators of Drinking Water Facilities and review and approve certifications of drinking water facility operators
- Serve on various water resource-related technical and policy boards and committees as needed, such as:

    1) Northeast River Forecast Center Partner Advisory Board,

    2) State Hazard Mitigation Interagency Committee,

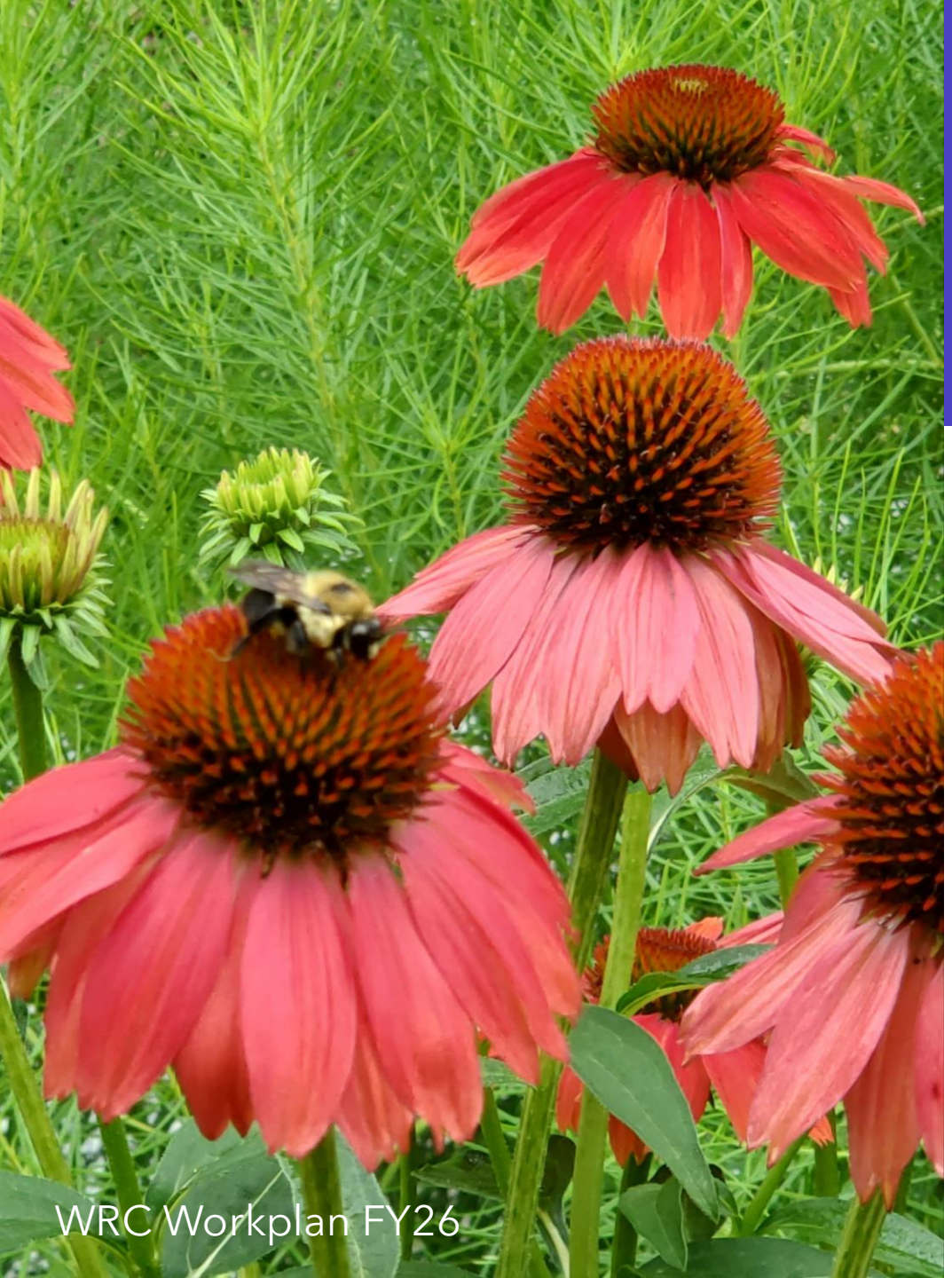
    3) Water Management Act Advisory Committee,

    4) Socioeconomic Projections Committee (MassDOT and Regional Planning Agencies),

    5) Old Colony Planning Council Regional Water Plan Steering Committee

Planning and Strategy Efforts for Work Beyond FY26

1. Begin process design for the next-generation water supply policy, with a priority focus on sustainable, strategic, and optimized use of water resources
2. Begin assessment of what additional resources around data management and rate setting are needed to help water suppliers stabilize revenue in the face of drought-related water use restrictions, weather fluctuations, and shifts in demand over time
3. Begin reviewing the water conservation questionnaire to identify the revisions needed
4. Explore opportunities to enhance water conservation outreach efforts and materials
5. Explore opportunities to collaborate with other state agencies such as OTA, DCAMM, EOED and DOER to enhance water use efficiency both in the public sector and in the Industrial, Commercial, and Institutional sector
6. Review the WNF methodology to identify the next round of updates needed to reflect industry and policy advances



Thank you

Vandana Rao and Anne Carroll

Weblinks

Interbasin Transfer Act: www.mass.gov/interbasin-transfer-act

Precipitation Data: https://www.mass.gov/info-details/precipitation-data

Drought: https://www.mass.gov/drought-management

Flood Hazard Management Program: www.mass.gov/guides/floodplain-management

Water Needs Forecasts: www.mass.gov/doc/water-needs-forecast-policy-and-methodology/download

Water Conservation Standards: www.mass.gov/service-details/details-on-the-2018-massachusetts-water-conservation-standards

Massachusetts Water Conservation Toolkit: mass.gov/conservemawater

USGS: www.mass.gov/cooperative-water-resource-planning-program