

Massachusetts Drought Management Task Force – Meeting Summary

June 9, 2025, 1:00 pm – 3:00 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
Kate Bentsen, Department of Fish and Game (DFG)
Jennifer Pederson, Massachusetts Water Works Association (MWWA)
Lydia Olson, Massachusetts Rivers Alliance (MRA)
Viki Zoltay, Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), Office of Water Resources (OWR)
Dave Celino, DCR Fire
Anne Carroll, DCR OWR
Dalene LaPointe, Department of Public Health (DPH)
Rob Megnia, NOAA – National Weather Service
John Scannell, DCR
Moussa Siri, Water Supply Citizens Advisory Committee (WSCAC)
Marcos Pareto, Department of Public Utilities (DPU)

Other Attendees:

Aaron Miller	Wellesley Water Division	Laurie Ruzala	Town of Yarmouth
Aisha Revulus	EEA	Michael Blanchard	Town of Dover
Alex Taylor	DPU	Michael Souza	MEMA
Allyssa Lane	Dedham-Westwood Water	Patricia Hudson	Town of Dover
Bailey Mullins	DCR OWR	Peter O'Neil	Needham Observer
Brad Chase	DMF	Purvi Patel	EEA
Brittany Segill	MassDEP	Richard Bradley	Superscape Landscape
Bruce Broisman	DPH	Rob Faley	Town of Chatham
Caitlin Spence	EEA	Robert Worthley	Town of Foxborough
Carys Lustig	Town of Needham	Sam Banas	USGS
Deanna Marks	NOAA	Sara Cohen	DCR OWR
Don Cooper	Town of Medway	Stephen Boksanski	BCB Government Relations
Elizabeth McCann	MassDEP	Steven Cheney	Town of Whitinsville
Erin Graham	DCR OWR	Thomas Trainor	Town of Sherborn
Eva Kroh	DCR OWR	Tim Pasakarnis	Cape Cod Commission
Giovanna Recinos	City of Salem	Toni Stewart	DCR OWR
Jason Duff	DCR OWR	Vanessa Curran	DCR OWR
Joe Holbeche	DMF	William Chapman	Town of Edgartown
Karyn Lothrop	DCR Fire		

1. Introduction

Rao called the meeting to order at 1:03 p.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. Hiltunen welcomed the attendees and expressed gratitude for their continued work on the Drought Management Task Force (DMTF).

Rao invited a motion to accept the May 7, 2025 meeting notes. Pederson made the motion with a second from Bentsen. The vote passed unanimously of those present, with minor edits requested to fix typos and to move Siri to the Task Force members list. Rao also invited a motion to accept the May 19, 2025 meeting notes. Pederson made a motion to accept with a second from LeVangie. The vote passed unanimously of those present with a minor edit to move Siri to the Task Force members list.

2. 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: Rob Megnia - National Weather Service (also representing the Northeast River Forecasting Center)

May brought near normal temperatures and well above normal precipitation. Departures in precipitation ranged from 2 to as much as 6+ inches above normal. Only Nantucket was below normal (0.5" below normal). The longer-range precipitation departures show 3-month and 6-month departures near or above normal for most of the state. Sections of the Cape and Islands are below normal (40-80% of normal). Forecasts are showing 0.5 to 1" of new precipitation possible through next Sunday and leaning toward above normal precipitation for the second week of June. Odds favor above normal precipitation through August.

Hydrologic: Brian Loving- USGS

There was significant improvement from April to May for both streamflow and groundwater conditions across Massachusetts. Streamflow conditions on the Cape are still below normal but improved during May. Streamflow elsewhere in the Commonwealth was above normal at all but 4 gages, which were normal. Groundwater percentiles increased at nearly every well monitored from April to May, with levels generally above normal everywhere in May except the Cape and Nantucket.

Maguire asked Loving to comment on the low levels for the Quashnet and groundwater wells on the Vineyard. Loving explained that he does not have specific details on these sites except that he can confirm the groundwater levels are below normal and that Nantucket is worse than the Vineyard.

Siri asked about the lower groundwater levels near Springfield. Loving noted there are two or three wells across the state that sometimes do not reflect the conditions that other areas are seeing, which he has also noticed and will investigate it.

Water Supply: Duane LeVangie – MassDEP

LeVangie reviewed how the WMA program monitors stream gages and wells between May 1st and September 30th. 95 PWS's have active restrictions, five of which are voluntary and 90 mandatory. Of the

90 that are mandatory, 30 are limiting watering to 1 day or less, and 60 are limiting watering to 2 days or more. Nine have ended restrictions since the last Task Force meeting. The current municipal water use restrictions map will continue to get updated regularly.

Boksanski asked if the state has any way of measuring the effectiveness of watering restrictions. Rao commented that water use totals at the end of the year as recorded in Annual Statistical Reports can be used to some extent. LeVangie added that suppliers in the past have presented analyses on effectiveness of restrictions, but it can be difficult to differentiate between the impact of rain compared to restrictions.

Water Supply: John Gregoire – MWRA

Not present at meeting.

Water Supply: Jennifer Pederson – MWWA

No systems reported supply concerns. Systems in the Southeast Region have had issues with communications over media reporting drought being lifted per the U.S. Drought Monitor, while the state DMP shows something different. Rao noted that this is a consistent issue and suggested we ask that the U.S. Drought Monitor make note of the difference. Pederson recommended that the press releases that get issued after drought declarations get sent directly to meteorologists.

Private Water Supply: Marcos Pareto – DPU

Aquarion is implementing partial restrictions. Dover and Pine Hills are allowed to water twice per week, Millbury is allowed to water on alternating days, and the Ponds of Plymouth are allowed to water once per week.

Wetlands: Tom Maguire – DEP

No updates to report.

Fish and Game: Brad Chase – DMF

Chase described lingering concerns on the Cape regarding low flows and river herring migrations. The recent rain helped, but there was very little water available on fish ladders in March and April.

Massachusetts Rivers Alliance: Lydia Olson

Olson reiterated reports about drought persisting on portion of the Cape. She described one report from the Association to Preserve Cape Cod regarding low levels observed at Minister Pond in Eastham.

Water Supply Citizens Advisory Committee: Moussa Siri

Siri reiterated that conditions have improved, with increases in both the Quabbin and Wachusett Reservoirs.

Agricultural: Michael Botelho – DAR

Not present at meeting.

Fire Danger: Karyn Lothrop – DCR

No updates to report.

Engineering: John Scannell – DCR

No updates to report.

Public Health: Dalene LaPointe – DPH

No updates to report.

3. 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. However, groundwater is still recovering in the Cape Cod, Islands, and southern part of the Southeast Regions. She noted that the most recent U.S. Drought Monitor showed much improvement at the end of May compared to the end of April.

There has been good recovery in the precipitation deficit since mid-August, now ranging from 2-8". The Standardized Precipitation Index (SPI) shows above normal precipitation for May for most Regions. Zoltay explained that both the 6-month and 9-month lookback periods for precipitation should be considered. Evapotranspiration improved to near normal in May throughout the state. Streamflow also recovered and was mostly above normal across the state, except the Cape which still shows below normal levels. Groundwater has become more consistent with the recent rain finally having time to reach the water table. Most of the state has improved to normal for groundwater, except for the Cape and Islands which are lagging in their recovery. KBDI is in the normal range in all Regions. Lakes and Impoundments are somewhat variable, with some lagging and some 100% full in the Western and Southeast Regions.

4. Discussion of Drought Level Recommendations by Region

Western, Connecticut River Valley (CTRV), Central, Northeast – Conditions have improved significantly and precipitation is mostly above or well above normal in these Regions. There was unanimous support to keep these Regions at Level 0 – Normal Conditions.

Cape Cod – Recovery is lagging in this Region, but the lag time is expected based on previous drought experiences. The staff recommendation was to hold the Cape at Level 2 – Significant Drought due to the lag in recovery. A suggestion was made to note in the press release and other communications that the Cape is very groundwater dominated. There was discussion on the need to get more lakes and ponds in the monitoring network on the Cape. Tim Pasakarnis with the Cape Cod Commission explained the history of lake/pond monitoring on the Cape and the efforts to track down the historical data. They are working with USGS to try to find the data, but currently there are no other lakes/ponds with enough historical data to include in the network. There was unanimous support for holding the Cape at Level 2 – Significant Drought after discussion.

Southeast – Except for ET, all other conditions are now above normal. The bottom part of this Region is lagging, but at the regional scale levels are well above normal. There was a suggestion to separate the Region into two declarations because of the distinct split between the northern and southern parts of the Region. Rao noted that the press release could also highlight the differences. Improvements in the last week for the southern part of the Region were also mentioned. There was unanimous agreement after discussion to move the Southeast to Level 0 – Normal Conditions.

Islands – The Islands did not receive as much rain as the rest of the state in May. Groundwater is improving but is still lagging overall. The staff recommendation was to hold this Region at Level 1 – Mild Drought. There was further discussion on separating Nantucket and Martha’s Vineyard. Zoltay showed the map with current groundwater conditions which showed a mix for Martha’s Vineyard. Rao noted that staff would look further into the idea of separating the Islands. One member advocated for doing a county designation with Martha’s Vineyard at Level 0 and Nantucket at Level 1, while one member advocated for moving the whole Region to Level 2 based on continued low groundwater. All other Task Force members supported holding this Region at Level 1 – Mild Drought.

Summary of Recommendations:

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

Southeast, Islands: Level 1 – Mild Drought

Cape Cod: Level 2 – Significant Drought

5. Recommendations for Drought Level Response Actions

Rao summarized the recommendations that had been discussed throughout the meeting. The press release and other communications would note that the Cape is groundwater-dominated and that it takes some time for the groundwater to fully recover.

Pederson asked about the status of the regulations to require irrigation interruption devices that MassDEP was previously working on, which would help prevent people from irrigating during rain events. LeVangie said he would ask his managers about the status of these regulations.

6. 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 July.

Meeting Ended: The meeting adjourned at 2:14 pm.