



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

Meeting Minutes for March, 13, 2025

Meeting conducted remotely via Zoom meeting platform, 1:04 p.m.

Minutes approved June 12, 2025

Members in Attendance:

Vandana Rao	Designee, Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA)
Chris Kluchman	Designee, Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC)
Duane LeVangie	Designee, Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP)
Tyler Soleau	Designee, Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management (CZM)
Anne Carroll	Designee, Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)
Kate Bentsen	Designee, Department of Fish and Game (DFG)
Hotze Wijnja	Designee, Department of Agricultural Resources (DAR)
Thomas Cambareri	Public Member
Christine Hatch	Public Member
Vincent Ragucci	Public Member
Kenneth Weismantel	Public Member
Samantha Woods	Public Member

Members Absent

Others in Attendance:

Adrienne Nunez	Massachusetts Municipal Association	Jason Duff	DCR OWR
Alicia Brennan	MassDEP	Jeannette Morrison	DCR
Amyrose Herrick	DCR	Jennifer Durso	MassDEP
Anne Malenfant	CDM Smith	Jennifer Hughes	MEPA
Caitlin Spence	EEA	Jennifer Johnson	CDM Smith
Capria Curtin	MassDEP	Jennifer Pederson	Massachusetts Water Works Association
Cathy Kam	DPU	Jo-Anne Goodman	DCR
Colleen Rizzi	MWRA	John Scenna	Lynnfield Center Water District
Dan Crocker	DCR DWSP	Katie Paight	DCR OWR
David Butler	MassDEP	Linjun Yao	MassDEP
David Libardoni	Nutter McClennen & Fish LLP	Lisa Rhodes	MassDEP
Donald Sutherland	Hopkinton Water and Sewer Advisory Board	Lydia Olson	Massachusetts Rivers Alliance
Emily Wilcox	MassDEP	Mackenzie Greer	DCR
Eric Meyer	MassDEP	Max Nyquist	DCR DWSP
Erin Graham	DCR OWR	Moussa Siri	WSCAC
Ethan Parsons	DCR	Nadia Madden	DCR OWR
Francesco Attaccalite	DCR OWR	Nick Couris	Lynnfield Center Water District
Greg Stewart	USGS New England Water Science Center	Paul Gallagher	Hopkinton Water & Sewer Advisory Board
Hillary Monahan	MWRA	Purvi Patel	EEA
Hong-Hanh Chu	EEA	Rebecca Faucher	MassDEP
		Rebecca Weidman	MWRA
		Sara Cohen	DCR OWR

Sarah Bower	MassDEP	Tim Reardon	EOHLC
Sarah Miller	MDAR	Toni Stewart	DCR OWR
Sharon Lee	MassDEP	Vanessa Curran	DCR OWR
Shi Chen	MassDEP	Victoria Wu	MassDEP
Stephanie Kelley	MassDEP	Viktoria Zoltay	DCR OWR

Rao called the meeting to order at 1:04 p.m.

Agenda Item #1: Welcome and Introductions

Rao introduced herself and announced that the meeting was being recorded for the purpose of meeting minutes 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. A roll call was made for Commissioners in attendance.

Agenda Item #2: Executive Director's Report

Rao summarized the drought status and the latest Drought Management Task Force meeting. A press release and drought alert were released that declared conditions had worsened across the state. Rao stated that the state reached a Level 3 - Critical Drought in the CTRV, Central, and Northeast Regions. The Western, Southeast, Cape, and Islands Regions had been declared a Level 2 – Significant Drought. She asked that people share the alert because there was still a need to conserve indoor water. She reminded everyone that a short drought video had recently been released for social media, with links to view it online and on the EEA Instagram page. Rao then asked Duff to share the video with the commission. The video is posted available for viewing online (<https://youtu.be/Pc-KeTrnWVc>).

Rao highlighted that the intent of the video was to focus on specific indoor water efficiency tips. She noted that the following week was Fix-A-Leak Week, which would conclude on March 22 with World Water Day. EEA plans to launch a series of social media messages promoting water conservation. She expressed appreciation to Duff for his work on the video and for collaborating with the communications team to coordinate this outreach.

Rao went on to mention that the current week was National Flood Safety Awareness Week. The WRC's Flood Hazard Management Program at DCR has been heavily engaged in outreach to municipalities and communities they work with. In addition, the DCR and EEA communications teams put out messaging related to flood awareness. Rao stated that floods and droughts are often exacerbated by similar issues, such as increased impervious cover that results in insufficient recharge.

Rao moved on to highlight federal developments. She called attention to the cooperative program between MA and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), which helped to establish, operate, and maintain the monitoring network that provides data for the hydrologic conditions report. USGS and the State co-manage those networks, with USGS taking on most of the operational management. Rao pointed out that this cooperative program has supported many scientific advancements that enhanced the state's understanding of water resources, hydrology, and water quality—informing current decisions and actions. She raised concerns about potential office closures, which could severely impact morale and USGS's ability to support MA. Lastly, Rao emphasized the incredible partnership with USGS and the valuable work they have done for the state over the years, work that has been critical for planning, design, engineering, and

restoration efforts. She acknowledged the USGS staff's good work and assured them of support during this time of uncertainty. Rao then opened the floor to commissioners for comments.

Ragucci agreed on the value of the USGS partnership and highlighted additional strong relationships with agencies like NWS, NOAA, and EPA. He suggested that the Commission send a letter expressing concern about federal program cuts.

Rao said that the state was assessing how to communicate these concerns and considering outreach to other agencies such as the EPA and FEMA. Cambareri also expressed concern about the impacts he had read about in the WBUR article

(<https://www.wbur.org/news/2025/03/07/usgs-massachusetts-trump-administration-cuts-water>), which are affecting local offices. He voiced his support for actions both individually and collectively as a Commission. LeVangie explained that losing network data would have a huge impact on the Water Management Act permits, which relies on the data to trigger conditions. Woods also supported writing a letter to emphasize the network's importance and the need for its upkeep. Rao added that much of the state's climate change work relies on this long-standing network as well.

Weismantel also added his support for sending a letter. Additionally, he thanked LeVangie and Wijnja for their help with his PFAS research in Hopkinton, through which he linked two contaminated areas to potential historical uses. He mentioned that it might be time for the Commonwealth to start regulating the land application of residuals and biomass made from sewer sludge. He also recommended amending existing regulations to make sure PFAS is not allowed to be applied to the land. Rao suggested that Baskin could come to the Commission to discuss the topic.

Cambareri noted his surprise at a change in the State Revolving Fund (SRF) which changed its allocation method. The policy change could impact how funds are allocated to wastewater treatment plant projects. Rao noted that Baskin could talk about this at a future meeting. Pederson noted in the chat that the Drinking Water SRF was capped at 10 or 15 million.

Bentsen introduced a new staff hire who recently started in the culvert replacement program. The new hire, a culvert replacement specialist, would help communities meet the state's Stream Crossing Standards (SCSs). DER is also planning to offer workshops this summer about the SCSs. Five dates have been set, and she will send these out after the meeting.

Soleau joined the meeting at 1:30 p.m.

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

Rao introduced Graham to present the Hydrologic Conditions for February 2025.

- *Temperature*: Monthly average temperatures were near to below normal. Departures were mostly in the -1° to -3° range.
- *Precipitation*: Precipitation was mostly normal. There were a few sites in the below-normal and above-normal ranges. All Regions are showing deficits at the 6-mos look-back.
- *Snow Cover*: At the end of the month there was snow cover in the western to northeastern parts of the state mostly in the 2 to 4-inches of snow water equivalent range. The season-to-date snowfall departure ranges from 0 to -30 inches.
- *Streamflow*: February streamflow was below normal. Only two gages were in the normal range. All Regions are at elevated Index Severity Levels (ISLs). Twenty-one of the 63 gages did not report for February because of ice. At the beginning of February most of the gages

were below normal. This trend continued until the precipitation event on the 16th and 17th. Streamflow again decreased until warmer temperatures at the end of the month melted snow.

- *Flooding*: There was no flooding to report.
- *Groundwater*: February groundwater was mostly below normal. There were some wells in the normal range and one well that was above normal. All Regions are at elevated ISLs.
- *Lakes and Impoundments*: At the end of February, all but one of the reported lake and impoundment levels were below their 30th percentile. All Regions have elevated ISLs except for Cape Cod where data wasn't available because of ice.
- *MA Drought status*: Rao gave an update of the MA Drought status during the Executive Director's report. Changes since last month included the Western Region from Level 1 to Level 2 and the Connecticut River Valley Region (CTRV) from Level 2 to Level 3.
- *US Drought Monitor (USDM)*: From the end of January to the end of February there was some slight expansion of D1 in the Northeast and Southeast Regions, and Nantucket went from D0 to D1.
- *NOAA Climate Prediction Center outlooks*: The March outlook shows no strong signal for temperature and precipitation. The 3-month outlook shows chances leaning for above-normal temperatures and no strong signal for precipitation. The monthly and seasonal drought outlooks show drought persisting in the northeast and northwestern parts of the state as well as on Nantucket, and drought remaining but improving in the northern part of the state.

Agenda Item #4: VOTE: Meeting Minutes, December 2024

Rao invited motions to approve the meeting minutes for December 2024. Weismantel and Kluchman both noted one occurrence of misspelling of their names.

V O T E	<p>A motion was made by Weismantel with a second by Ragucci to approve the meeting minutes for December 12, 2024, with edits as provided by Weismantel and Kluchman.</p> <p>A roll call was made with the vote to approve being unanimous of those present.</p>
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Agenda Item #5: Presentation/VOTE: Draft Staff Recommendation for Lynnfield Center Water District's Interbasin Transfer Act (ITA) Application/Proposal to Obtain Supplemental Water Supply from MWRA

Curran acknowledged the presence of Nick Couris and John Scenna from the Lynnfield Center Water District (LCWD) and Anne Malenfant and Jennifer Johnson from CDM Smith on behalf of LCWD. She reviewed the key elements of the application, a summary of public comments, and changes to the staff recommendation since the draft presented at the February WRC meeting. The presentation can be viewed at: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/review-the-meetings-of-the-water-resources-commission>

Highlights included:

- A review of LCWD's four existing groundwater sources in the Ipswich and North Coastal basins, several of which are facing PFAS, iron, manganese, and nitrate contamination. Treatment solutions are being developed for the sources in the Ipswich Basin.

- The ITA proposal involves LCWD receiving a maximum volume of 0.83 MGD from the MWRA, on a supplemental basis, sourced from reservoirs in the Chicopee and Nashua River Basins and wheeled through Wakefield.
- The staff recommendation includes a number of conditions, which were described and can be found in the written staff recommendation attached to the WRC monthly packet.
- A public hearing was held by zoom on Feb. 26 on the Staff Recommendation dated February 13, 2025, at which no comments were received. No written comments were received either.
- A Commissioner's suggestion offered at the February WRC meeting to replace all meters every 10 years was reviewed by staff in light of the Water Conservation Standards and the ITA Performance Standards. The suggestion was not incorporated, as staff determined that neither set of standards specifies such a timeline, and the recommended condition to conduct annual M36 Audits would be the most appropriate determinant of the necessity to replace meters and the frequency thereof. The Commissioner who had made the suggestion commented in the chat that he appreciated the explanation and supported the recommended approach.
- Changes in the staff recommendation compared to the February 13th version were reviewed. These are described in the presentation slides and can be viewed in detail in the redline document contained in the March monthly packet.
- Additionally, a few textual changes were made after the mailing of the monthly packet so were not reflected in the mailed redline version. Curran stated that these changes had been reviewed and agreed to by the applicant, and she presented them, as follows:
 - In the section on Water Loss Control, within Criterion #3 (Water Conservation), language was adjusted to specify that M36 audits will occur annually, leak detection surveys will occur at least every three years, and water loss control activities will be implemented as needed.
 - Language was struck requiring submittal to WRC staff all future updates to the water loss control program resulting from future M36 audits, as it was deemed sufficient to receive the initial program details based on the 2024 M36 audit, and the full audit results for five years after ITA approval and upon request, thereafter.
 - In the Meter Repair/Replacement Program section in Criterion #3, the phrase "continually updated" was changed to "ongoing" in describing the water loss control program, in recognition of the fact that changes to the program would occur only as needed, based on results of the M36 audit.
 - These minor changes were also made to the summary of conditions at the end of the document.
- Staff are seeking a vote on this recommendation at the current meeting, ahead of the vote deadline of April 27, 2025.

Discussion/Questions:

Pederson asked what the impetus for the changes were, given that there were no public comments. Curran explained that the changes were made from further feedback received from LCWD after the public hearing and from comments received at the February WRC meeting. Pederson expressed concern that the requirements around the M36 audits appeared quite stringent and did not offer a "functional equivalence" determination that would allow the applicant to eventually be done with the audit process, similar to the approach used in the Water Management Act (WMA) program. Curran explained that the requirements in the staff

recommendation come from the ITA Performance Standards, which have moved away from the 10% standard used in the WMA toward increased reliance on a long-term auditing process.

LeVangie clarified that the WMA approach to the M36 was similar to what is recommended in the staff recommendation, if 10% UAW is not able to be achieved. Upon further questioning by Pederson, he agreed to check the language in the WMA permits to see if there were meaningful differences between the two programs in terms of undertaking M36 audits in perpetuity.

Rao explained that in the past an ITA applicant with UAW of 20%, as was recently experienced by LCWD, would unlikely be able to be approved. The use of the M36 in the Performance Standards allows a means to confidently focus on identifying and correcting the sources of UAW over time, providing greater opportunity for approval under the ITA.

V O T E	<p>A motion was made by Weismantel with a second by Wijnja to approve the draft staff recommendation for LCWD's Interbasin Transfer Act application to obtain supplemental water supply from MWRA, with edits, as discussed.</p> <p>The roll-call vote to approve was unanimous of those present.</p>
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Agenda Item #6: Presentation/VOTE: Draft Staff Recommendation for Sunrise Senior Living's Request for Determination of Insignificance Under the ITA

Curran acknowledged David Libardoni who attended on behalf of the proponent. This is a proposal for a 99 unit assisted living and memory care facility in Sharon. Onsite disposal was determined not to be feasible, and Sharon does not have a municipal sewer system, so they are proposing to tie into Norwood's sewer system. This is the second request the Commission has received for the under 10,000 gallons per day (gpd) or less path. The legislation that allows Sunrise to tie into Norwood's system and discharge into MWRA does limit the maximum transfer to 10,000 gpd. About 35% of Sharon's water supply comes from the Taunton River Basin, while about 65% comes from the Boston Harbor Basin, so losses are about 3,500 gpd from the Taunton Basin and 6,500 gpd from the Boston Harbor Basin. The Basin of discharge will be the Massachusetts Coastal Basin. Staff have reviewed and recommend that this project does meet the criteria for insignificance. No environmental impacts are expected, and Sharon's water use has gone down over time (580 million gallons (mg) pumped in 2003 down to 404 mg in 2023). Staff are requesting a vote today, and the deadline for a vote is April 7. There were no questions.

V O T E	<p>A motion was made by Vincent Ragucci with a second by Ken Weismantel to approve the Draft Staff Recommendation for Sunrise Senior Living's Request for Determination of Insignificance Under the ITA.</p> <p>The vote to approve was unanimous of those present.</p>
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Agenda Item #7: Presentation: A Home for Everyone: The Massachusetts Statewide Housing Plan and What it Means for Water Resources

Rao introduced Tim Reardon, Chief of Data and Research at EOHLC. Reardon gave an overview of current work in progress under the Healey Administration including the establishment of EOHLC and a number of relevant initiatives. He then introduced the housing plan, titled "A Home for Everyone". Stakeholder engagement included a statewide survey, regional listening sessions, and 22 stakeholder sessions.

The presentation can be viewed at: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/review-the-meetings-of-the-water-resources-commission>. Presentation highlights included:

- Housing shortages, affordability struggles, and rising population with specialized needs are putting immense pressure on the state's housing systems, affecting residents across all income groups.
- An EOHLC housing needs assessment found that MA needs to add 222,000 year-round homes to its housing stock to accommodate new housing, latent demand from overcrowded housing, seasonal conversion, and improving the vacancy rate.
 - Kluchman commented in the chat that additional details are available at the [Housing Needs Assessment EOHLC Feb 2025.pdf | Mass.gov](#).
- 22% of net household growth is multiple adults with no children under 18 (roommates, couples, adult children living with parents). 25% of net household growth is families with children.
- Regional needs for housing are expected to increase the most in Eastern and Central MA, with a focus on the Merrimack Valley which has the most overcrowded housing. Reardon outlined a number of activities proposed to increase housing abundance in the state.
- There is a need to achieve a state of housing abundance. Lack of supply is the root cause of housing crisis.
 - Carroll asked what kinds of disagreements are expressed around the housing shortage. Reardon explained that this is usually expressed at the local/municipal level. Kluchman added that master plans for most communities acknowledge the need for housing growth.
 - LeVangie commented that young people are moving out of state and that there is mixed messaging about the housing crisis in the media and asked if there are incentives for boomers to give up housing. Reardon explained the importance of downsizing incentives for older generations and that even a small percentage shifting to smaller units could unlock larger homes. Reardon also noted the importance of multifamily construction and accessory dwelling units. Kluchman explained that increasing the number of households is important to keep in mind.
 - Hatch asked to what extent water availability is considered in housing availability plans. Reardon noted that this would be explained later.
 - Goodman asked if Massachusetts has considered limiting the number of residential houses corporations can buy. Reardon explained that this has not been looked at in detail.
- Protecting existing homes and affordability requires considering how housing stock is protected from natural disasters, protected from speculation, and that vacant homes can be brought online.
- Providing direct support to households includes providing direct subsidies, workforce development and training, and protecting residents from rent hikes.
- Building a stronger safety net is essential and can be done by coordinating across communities of care, and making sure supportive housing is available and continuing efforts to prevent evictions and foreclosures.
- Work together for the Commonwealth means strengthening partnerships with municipalities, conducting joint planning and research, and ensuring housing stock and production goals are aligned with state transportation and climate and land use goals.

- Wijnja asked to what extent this plan considered the land needed for additional housing and how this will compete with demands for agriculture. Reardon explained that a lot of the homes needed can be built in areas already developed and that is the most cost-effective and environmentally sustainable path. Kluchman added that programs like 40R smart growth zoning and housing production plans encourage municipalities to plan multifamily housing.
- Weismantel asked if state building codes were identified as a cost driver in housing. Reardon explained that there are discussions in the policy and development community about building codes, specifically energy codes which is a top category needed to find more cost savings. Weismantel noted that Hopkinton's adoption of the super stretch code increased home costs by 5%, impacting affordability.
- Carroll asked why residential construction industry employment is so low. Reardon explained that it is not necessarily low, but lower than in 2008. There are also efforts to understand how much more labor and skilled workers to achieve level of production is needed.
- Woods noted that areas most in need of housing already face water and wastewater infrastructure challenges, which posed an obstacle to development, highlighting the need for regional coordination and financial support for modernizing systems.
- Morrison asked if recommendations for production of new units have been adjusted for potential future increases in building material costs. Reardon explained that they have not.
- Next steps for spring 2025
 - EOHLC will launch an online interactive website with additional research, data dashboards, advocacy resources, and action steps for more affordable housing.
 - The plan will be in a digital format and used for myth busting, local engagement, advocacy, and legislative and budgetary prioritization.
- Ongoing next steps
 - Findings and recommendations of Affordable Homes Act commissions will be added to the plan.
 - EOHLC will work with regional planning agencies and municipalities to explore how to align housing production plans with regional production targets.

Soleau left the meeting at 3:01 pm. Woods and Ragucci left the meeting at 3:10 pm.

Discussion/questions:

Weismantel commented that our education system is pushing people away from the trades. Reardon noted that there are discussions with labor and workforce development on how to address the issue.

Siri asked how much additional water demand the housing development will cause in the current climate change conditions and what would be the impact of this project on water resources knowing water resources are under stress. Reardon explained that that is in the work ahead and noted housing needs exist irrespective of water resources. He added that it is important to be able to address housing even with water scarcity.

Rao highlighted the Commission's role in assessing water supply needs amid increasing housing demand, noting that improved water efficiency has freed some capacity for development.

Siri noted the lack of water supply considerations in housing projects and emphasized that water availability should be assessed before development begins. Reardon explained that the housing plan focuses on statewide needs, not specific projects, emphasizing that water planning should happen before permitting. He highlighted efforts to align housing demand with infrastructure capacity and aimed at proactive zoning and resource planning to avoid last minute permitting challenges.

Pederson commented that water capacity limitations have already prevented developments, like in Maynard. She encouraged early discussion on water resources availability and greater flexibility in permit allocation to avoid delays when housing demand rises.

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

Meeting adjourned, 3:23 pm.

Documents or Exhibits Used at Meeting:

1. WRC Meeting Minutes: December 12, 2024
2. Draft for WRC Discussion and Vote, dated March 13, 2025: WRC Staff Recommendation on the Interbasin Transfer Act Application for Lynnfield Center Water District's Proposal to Obtain Supplemental Water Supply from MWRA
3. Draft for WRC Discussion and Vote, dated March 13, 2025: WRC Staff Recommendation for Sunrise Senior Living's Request for Determination of Insignificance under the Interbasin Transfer Act
4. Letter dated February 20, 2025 from the WRC to MEPA regarding the Environmental Notification Form (ENF) for the Dam Repair/Replacement – Turnpike Lake in the Town of Plainville
5. Interbasin Transfer Act project status report, February 28, 2025
6. Hydrologic Conditions in Massachusetts, February 2025 (available at <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/monthly-hydrologic-conditions>)

Compiled by: (initials)

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 10 Park Plaza, Suite 6620, Boston, MA 02116.