



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

Meeting Minutes for May 12, 2022

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

Minutes approved August 11, 2022

Members in Attendance:

Vandana Rao	Designee, Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA)
Linda Balzotti	Designee, Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)
Kathleen Baskin	Designee, Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP)
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
Vincent Ragucci	Public Member
Kenneth Weismantel	Public Member
Samantha Woods	Public Member

Members Absent

Todd Callaghan	Designee, Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management (CZM)
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Others in Attendance:

Marilyn McCrory	DCR/OWR
Katharine Lange	Mass Rivers Alliance
Read Porter	EEA, Deputy General Counsel
John Scannell	DCR, Division of Water Supply Protection
Kara Sliwoski	DCR/OWR
Becca George	DHCD
Sara Cohen	DCR/OWR
Katie Ronan	MWRA
Erin Graham	DCR/OWR
Viki Zoltay	DCR/OWR
Andreae Downs	MWRA Wastewater Advisory Committee
Vanessa Curran	DCR/OWR
Jennifer Pederson	Massachusetts Water Works Association
Eric Seaborn	DCR
Lexi Dewey	MWRA Water Supply Citizens Advisory Committee

Rao called the meeting to order at 1:06 p.m.

Agenda Item #1: Welcome and Introductions

Rao welcomed attendees and 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. A roll call of members in attendance was taken.

Agenda Item #2: Executive Director's Report

Rao announced that Beth Card has been sworn in as the new secretary for EEA whom many folks know from her years at DEP, her role as Commissioner of DEP's designee on the WRC, and more recently as the undersecretary for EEA. The priorities and activities of EEA will continue in full swing through the rest of the Governor's term including climate change, water, land use and energy use and climate change mitigation.

A Drought Management Task Force (DMTF) meeting was called and held last Friday. The DMTF recommended a Level 1 drought for the Southeast and Islands regions. The declaration by the Secretary went out yesterday. More information is to come on the drought during the hydrologic conditions report.

WRC staff held a training for DCAMM staff regarding water conservation efforts at state facilities. The training was successful and DCAMM staff were interested in being part of demonstration projects for enhancing existing efforts and new projects.

Rao opened the floor to Commissioners for announcements.

Cambareri noted that another water district is having PFAS issues and voted last night on a \$20 million treatment plant.

Weismantel stated that Hopkinton approved \$1 million to explore connecting to the MWRA to solve water quality problems with iron, manganese and PFAS. The cost is estimated at \$43 million to treat all the wells but to connect to MWRA is in the mid \$20s because Southborough is next door and can connect through there.

Baskin described the State Revolving Funds Intended Use Plan which has been released. There will be loan forgiveness available for PFAS with the monies from the bipartisan infrastructure law in the next 5 years. She acknowledged the difficulties of local water suppliers with the new PFAS regulations.

Woods provided information on the Scituate town meeting that approved a \$50 million water treatment plan that has aged out. Scituate may be too far to consider an MWRA connection with Weymouth as the closest town with MWRA.

Rao noted that Pederson put a link in the chat for DEP-recognized water suppliers for their efforts on water conservation. Rao asked the WRC about moving up agenda item #5 given that Ragguci needs to leave in 10-15 minutes. She noted nods from the WRC and no objections.

Agenda Item #5: VOTE: To Allow Remote Participation by the WRC

Rao recounted the advantages of remote meetings to allow more participation especially with the pandemic, but it is slated to expire. Regardless, the WRC may vote to allow WRC meetings to occur remotely. She noted positive feedback on the remote participation so far, especially greater accessibility for those far from Boston. Rao opened the topic for discussion.

Baskin agreed that this is a helpful option, especially considering the continued surges of the pandemic. In addition, as staff move into 100 Cambridge Street, there will be limited desks for

everyone to occupy on meeting days. She also noted previous field trip meetings where alternate locations were used.

Woods added that it is also a more environmentally friendly way to meet and has allowed more public participation by removing the driving and parking worries. She agreed that perhaps meeting once a year in-person for a more social meeting would be desirable.

Weismantel also agreed and noted that there has been no loss in the effectiveness of meetings and ability to participate.

Porter noted that there are some legal limitations about who needs to attend in person that may surface if COVID allowances expire but it is fine to wait until such a circumstance arises.

Ragguci left at approximately 1:25 pm.

Rao noted the loss of keeping up connections among participants, but the Commission has made the best of it and we have continued the usual work that WRC performs with all the discussions that are needed.

V O T E	<p>A motion was made to by Cambareri with a second by Weismantel to approve allowing remote participation by the Water Resources Commission</p> <p>The roll call vote to approve was unanimous of those present.</p>
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Agenda Item #3: Update: Hydrologic Conditions and Drought Status Update

Rao introduced Erin Graham of DCR to provide an update on hydrologic conditions for April 2022. Graham reported that average temperatures were normal to above normal. Precipitation varied with above normal in the Western region and below normal in the eastern part of the state. Cape Cod and Islands regions ended up at index severity level (ISL) 2. Combined with March deficits, the Northeast, Southeast, Cape Cod and Islands regions are at ISL 1. Streamflow was mostly normal to below normal with the Southeast at ISL 1. In the streamflow time series graphic, gages started out normal but at one time were up to 70% below normal before relief from a storm event. Groundwater varies across the state from below to above normal with the Islands region at ISL 1. Lakes and Impoundment are full or close to it. The Keetch Byram Drought Index showed all regions at normal. For the evapotranspiration index, two indices are shown – the one historically used and the one being proposed that will be presented in an upcoming meeting. The Crop Moisture Index (CMI) that has been historically used but does not signal dryness while the Evaporative Demand Drought Index (EDDI) shows elevated evapotranspiration across the state especially for the Southeast, Cape and Islands. Snowfall for the season is below normal with no snow cover remaining.

The drought meeting last week resulted in a Level 1 drought for the Southeast and Islands regions. The US Drought Monitor for last week shows no drought conditions but the map for today shows D0 for the Northeast through the Southeast. The 1-month forecast calls for above normal temperatures for the southern part of the state and equal changes for the northern part. Precipitation is expected to be equal chances. The 3-month outlook shows above normal

temperatures and, for the precipitation, it's equal chances. Graham also showed additional precipitation statistics that are available in the appendix of the full report.

Cambareri asked Graham to trace out the cumulative precipitation departure line for Hyannis. Weismantel asked about the effects of the Bermuda High and when that should be starting. He would like to know about it as an aside during the verbal report. Hotze asked for more information about the EDDI. Graham noted that there was a presentation by EDDI developers and that she will provide a link to it. Zoltay will soon present on it in detail as part of the transition away from CMI which has not been a responsive drought index. Woods commented that significant winds, where she is in the south shore, is really drying out the area. Rao added that a similar comment was made by the Fire Chief.

Agenda Item #4: Vote: Meeting Minutes, February 10, 2022

Rao asked if there were any questions on the meeting minutes. Without questions, she invited a motion to approve the meeting minutes for February 10, 2022.

V O T E	<p>A motion was made by Weismantel with a second by Balzotti to approve the meeting minutes for February 10, 2022.</p> <p>The roll call vote to approve was unanimous of those present.</p>
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Agenda Item #6: Presentation: Draft WRC Work Plan for FY2023

Rao introduced the work plan and commended staff for the work done in the past fiscal year. She noted that this is the draft presentation, and a vote will be sought at the next meeting. Carroll introduced the plan saying that she will highlight new items this year and will refer to staff for details. She started with describing the Drought Management Plan implementation items, including funding to revise the Lakes and Impoundments Index and looking for funding to help finalize the drought management guide for water suppliers. Rao described the drought impact reporter that will allow folks to report impacts during a drought from a farmer to public water suppliers. It will be web-based and user-friendly and should be wrapped up in the coming fiscal year.

Lange from the Massachusetts Rivers Alliance asked if writing a report on the 2020-2021 drought was a requirement of the Commission or the staff elected to write it. Rao clarified that it is something staff has taken on themselves so that there is a record of the drought in one place for future reference, but it will be available for the public as well. This was started with the 2016 drought retrospective that will be online shortly and was inspired during the 2016 drought when data was sought on previous droughts and impacts.

Carroll moved on to announce the receipt of another US Geological Survey grant to allow transferring the entire network to real time. She thanked Zoltay and Sliwoski for their efforts. The state's network is quite robust relative to other states. Zoltay added the newest grant will allow for replacement equipment which frees up monies for other activities.

Under water conservation standards, "conservemawater" website (www.mass.gov/conservemawater) has been a big accomplishment and staff are still looking for input from folks including noting missing items. Staff is planning to update the water

conservation questionnaire and potentially make it an electronic collection system rather than a static questionnaire. Software recommendations are welcome. Pederson asked to confirm that the water conservation questionnaire was the same between MassDEP Water Management Act and the WRC Interbasin Transfer Act. Carroll and LeVangie both confirmed that this is correct. Pederson recommended considering using the Annual Statistics Reporting system which is an interactive database, although updates made by public water suppliers have been known not to carry over from year to year. Carroll said that they are considering that and other options before moving forward and working with IT to consider options.

Weismantel suggested that a question be added that asks what works for best practices. Perhaps send out an interviewer to public water suppliers who are in the top and bottom 20% and find out what works. Carroll added that best practices highlights at the beginning of meetings may be informative. For those in the bottom 20%, she has seen peer-to-peer workshops that may be helpful in this context. Woods requested that the system be such that it makes the data available to the public. Carroll said that it will be considered to potentially release data without identifiers to individual suppliers for data privacy. Woods noted it is public data so they should be available.

Carroll continued with interbasin transfers, noting that there are on-going reviews with Foxborough, Groton, and some new ones like Lynnfield Center and others that will be brought to the WRC. Work continues on Performance Standards.

Under water needs forecasts, updates continue as needed by MassDEP. For USGS interpretive studies a lot of work is happening. Rao described the Climate and Hydrorisk project that was presented to the WRC earlier in the year and discussed the advancements that will be made in Phase 2 provided funding comes through. The low flow statistics project continues to progress. The historical groundwater data project is funded by MassDEP. This is for wells that have manual monthly readings only and data for the rest of the days of the month will be estimated. It may also be used for new locations where there is no historical data so that with estimated historical data the wells can start to be used. Pederson asked what's the purpose of this effort. Rao said that the data could be used to see how far conditions are from the past record, future projections, trends, Frimpter method, and align more closely the manual wells and real time wells. Zoltay added that filling in the monthly data with daily values will help estimate true high and low values for Frimpter and drought monitoring, respectively. In addition, wells lost during the well replacement project that now have new wells with no historical data will be able to be used if there is historical data to calculate percentiles.

Growing Wild for Pollinators item will be covered as a presentation under the next agenda item. This replaces MassEco from last year which was meant to be outreach to schools on water conservation. During research, staff discovered that there is already a great program called Growing Wild for Pollinators and decided to participate in that program. It encourages planting native species which often need less water among other benefits. Rao added that there will be an intern this summer who will help reach out to schools for education.

Woods noted that they just did a pilot in the Scituate schools on native pollinator plants and is happy to share that curriculum. The name was Grow Native Scituate. Woods recalled that Cohen had presented on how to assess water rates for water suppliers and offered North and South Rivers Watershed Association's help to do such assessments for water suppliers by their intern.

Cohen noted that they did such training that was well received but no additional trainings are on the books right now. Developing a spreadsheet tool is being considered.

Rao talked about the next two items on the flood protection PL566 program and national flood insurance program thanking Bill Salomaa and Joy Duperault and her team, respectively. They conducted important work on behalf of the WRC. Carroll added that Joy Duperault recently presented on the flood insurance program and that they also conduct significant work providing MEPA [Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act] reviews for various projects, as technical experts on flooding issues. Salomaa should be invited in the future to also present. Rao added that he also represents the WRC on the Board of Certification of Operators of Drinking Water Facilities.

Cohen described the last item, stakeholder engagement, which for the coming year is a placeholder and not necessarily tied to a specific, anticipated activity. It is meant to recognize that at any point activities can come up where anything from good communication to actual stakeholder engagement or consensus building for decision-making may be needed. One example from before was getting input on the www.mass.gov/conservemawater website. It is something Cohen often does for the WRC and DCR and is an available resource for the WRC. Pederson asked about the Ipswich Basin facilitation that Cohen has been doing and whether any funds allocated for that project comes back to DCR to support her work on that. Cohen answered that her current job description includes not only technical work but also facilitation and is therefore part of her salary. She does not do both technical and facilitation work on the same project. Pederson added that her thinking was about having that project's money support her work would free up money for another project. Rao commended Cohen on her facilitation work and the expertise that she has developed in this field.

Rao opened the floor to comments. Woods stated that more WRC staff is needed. Rao commented that staff has achieved a lot and leveraged other state resources to accomplish all their work but of course with more staff more could be done.

Agenda Item #7: Presentation: Growing Wild for Pollinators

Carroll introduced the program and Eric Seaborn, DCR's Director of Natural Resources, thanking him for including the Office of Water Resources in the program. Seaborn thanked Carroll and Curran for the opportunity to present to another audience given all the connections in natural systems. DCR and DAR both have background in recognizing the importance of pollinators and working to protect them; therefore, there was an opportunity to work together by using public lands as an avenue for both pollinator protection and educating those visiting them. Public lands alone are not enough so educating the public is important for them to do it at their homes.

Pollinators have numerous benefits including supporting biodiversity and contributing to healthy ecosystems, survival and distribution for a vast number of plant and wildlife species, crops to produce fruits and vegetables, and increasing soil moisture, carbon sequestration, flood resilience, water quality, biodiversity and species richness. Challenges facing pollinators include habitat degradation, habitat loss/ habitat conversion, climate change, invasive species, disease, pesticide exposure, and pollution.

There are three types of management by DCR for pollinator habitats including limited mow zones, managed meadows, and pollinator gardens. Seaborn showed a map with the locations of these areas across the state. The interactive map provides information on the habitat's name, town, and size. Future map upgrades will add more information for each habitat.

Elements of the Growing Wild Movement are to lead by example and foster public involvement. Public involvement includes not only education but also providing Growing Wild starter kits through local nurseries. Lots of resources are available online as well such as nurseries offering native species. There is also a calculator that allows estimating the climate benefits of less mowing. In the future, additional benefits will be added such as absorbing rainwater and fostering other species. The plan is to have a map that includes both state and public properties that are habitat.

Downs asked whether they've been able find nurseries that do not use neonicotinoids [pesticides]. Seaborn said they had not asked specifically about this, but Carroll noted that last year the plants were labeled as such. Downs asked whether there is guidance on growing the native species without pesticides. Seaborn said that they can certainly add information on this and in messaging. Downs mentioned a recent article on this topic and how fireflies are being affected.

Cambareri left the meeting at 2:44 pm.

Lange asked when the calculator will be available. Seaborn noted that the calculator shown is already available through the website "Leading by example". Rao said that they can send out a link in the next meeting announcement and that linking to this website from the water conservation website would also be useful. Carroll added that amending the calculator with a water saving portion is also likely not too much effort. Woods noted that she will be integrating this with next year's curriculum with schools and thanked Seaborn for the efforts

Seaborn continued with describing future plans such as engaging everyone including those without gardens. One example is encouraging window planters. He showed a map detailing the proximity of environmental justice communities with more than two-third of such communities living within a mile of a DCR property. They are also exploring avenues for assisting schools in developing their own gardens such as the pilot project with Lowell. The Lowell School District has a vegetable garden which supplements the school's food offerings and as an educational mechanism. DCR is working with a Lowell food security non-profit called Profit Mill City Grows to restore landscaping and create two pollinator gardens at two schools. The students will create the garden design. Another site work is at the Abraham Lincoln School in Lowell where a sloped retaining wall area will be made into a pollinator garden. The garden that this is part of is an educational after school program about gardening and vegetable growing.

Rao thanked Seaborn and noted the synergy between this program and goals of the WRC. Carroll invited Seaborn to return and show after photos of the Lowell school gardens. Hotze added that this project aligns with the Pollinator Protection Plan that was released a few years ago by DAR. He also has personal experience with the species when planting pollinators in his own yard.

Rao invited a motion to adjourn.

V O T E	A motion was made by Weismantel with a second by Woods to adjourn the meeting. The roll call vote to approve was unanimous of those present.
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The meeting adjourned at 2:56 p.m.

Documents or Exhibits Used at Meeting:

1. WRC Meeting Minutes: February 10, 2022
2. Draft WRC Work Plan, FY2023
3. Interbasin Transfer Act project status report, May 6, 2022

Compiled by: vz

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, 8th floor, Boston, MA 02114.