



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

Meeting Minutes for May 13, 2021

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

Minutes approved September 9, 2021

Members in Attendance:

Vandana Rao	Designee, Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA)
Linda Balzotti	Designee, Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)
Anne Carroll	Designee, Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)
Kathleen Baskin	Designee, Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP)
Hotze Wijnja	Designee, Department of Agricultural Resources (DAR)
Kate Bentsen	Designee, Department of Fish and Game (DFG)
Thomas Cambareri	Public Member
Vincent Ragucci	Public Member
Kenneth Weismantel	Public Member

Members Absent

Todd Callaghan	Designee, Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management (CZM)
Marcela Molina	Public Member
Samantha Woods	Public Member

Others in Attendance:

Erin Graham	DCR/Office of Water Resources
Marilyn McCrory	DCR/Office of Water Resources
Viki Zoltay	DCR/Office of Water Resources
Jennifer Pederson	Massachusetts Water Works Association
Sara Cohen	DCR/Office of Water Resources
Vanessa Curran	DCR/Office of Water Resources
Katie Ronan	Massachusetts Water Resources Authority
Duane LeVangie	MassDEP
Nina Mascarenhas	EEA Water Policy Intern
Lexi Dewey	Water Supply Citizens Advisory Committee
Andreae Downs	Wastewater Advisory Committee to the MWRA
Sarah Bower	Mass Rivers Alliance
Peter Weiskel	US Geological Survey
Katharine Lange	Mass Rivers Alliance
Warren Lent	Green Industry Alliance

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

Agenda Item #1: Welcome and Introductions

Rao announced that the meeting was being recorded for the purpose of meeting minutes only and all votes would be taken by roll call. Members and attendees were asked to type their name

and affiliation in the chat window. Those who wish to speak during the meeting were also asked to indicate this in the chat window.

Agenda Item #2: Executive Director's Report

Rao reported that drought conditions have improved, with more details to be provided in the hydrologic conditions report. She then announced Peter Weiskel's upcoming retirement from USGS and offered congratulations and thanks for his many years of service. Weiskel said that Paul Barlow, the Associate Director for hydrologic studies for USGS' New England Water Science Center, will be representing USGS at WRC meetings moving forward. Commissioners and attendees thanked Weiskel and wished him well.

Tom Cambareri joined the meeting at 1:13 p.m.

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

Graham provided an update on the hydrologic conditions for April 2021. Monthly average temperatures were normal to above normal. April started out dry but precipitation started to pick up mid-month. Most regions ended up around normal, while the Northeast Region was above normal. Longer look-back periods are still showing dryness. Streamflow was very low at the beginning of April and the monthly medians ended the month low. The Western, CT River Valley, and Central regions are at Level 2 and the Northeast at Level 1. The Southeast Region just missed Level 1 at the 31st percentile (cut-off is 30th percentile). Groundwater levels were mixed. Only the Western Region was at Level 1, while several other regions were on the cusp in the low to mid 30's. All regions except the Islands have individual wells below the 30th percentile.

For lakes and impoundments, most are greater than the 30th percentile values. Graham noted that the natural pond on the Cape is still low for this time of year and holding steady. KBDI (Keetch Byram Drought Index – fire potential) and CMI (Crop Moisture Index) are reported seasonally and will be included starting next month. Snowfall for April was variable. The U.S. Drought Monitor showed D0 (abnormally dry) and D1 (moderate drought) in all areas of the state except for the Cape Cod and Islands regions.

Graham provided an update from the May 6, 2021 Drought Management Task Force (DMTF) meeting. The Western, CT River Valley, Central, and Cape Cod drought regions remained at Level 1, while the remaining regions (Northeast, Southeast, and Islands) are at Level 0. Rao suggested that staff should include the DMTF drought declaration map in the hydrologic conditions report and presentation moving forward and include it for the April report prior to posting it online.

Agenda Item #4: Vote on the Minutes of February 2021

Rao invited a motion to approve the meeting minutes for February 11, 2021.

V	A motion was made by Weismantel with a second by Balzotti to approve the meeting minutes for February 11, 2021. The roll-call vote to approve was unanimous of those present, with the exception of Vincent Ragucci, who did not vote.
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Agenda Item #5: Discussion: Draft WRC Work Plan for FY2022

Rao introduced the WRC draft work plan for FY22 which is developed each year to give the WRC and its staff direction on projects and other policy and regulatory matters. Today will be a discussion with a vote to accept at the June meeting. Carroll began the discussion on the work plan. FY2021 was the first year during which staff worked remotely for the entire fiscal year. Staff have made a lot of progress, and there is a lot to build on. There is also one new initiative to discuss. Each staff member will discuss the topic(s) for which they are the lead.

Zoltay discussed the drought dashboard website which presents the drought indices and automatically calculates and updates them, which saves staff time. It also provides the ability to look at weekly updates. She also discussed staff serving as DMTF staff, creation of a drought impact reporter, and monitoring network analyses. The hope is to fully automate the groundwater network to real-time measurements.

Graham discussed the lakes and impoundments drought index which is comprised of a mix of regulated reservoirs and unregulated waterbodies. Many water supply reservoirs have skewed data as they are frequently within a narrow band and frequently report the same levels. Staff is seeking to expand the network and focus more on natural waterbodies.

Rao added that the drought retrospective report on the 2016-2017 drought is almost ready to release. Staff also plan to start working on the Drought Management Plan (DMP) guidance for public water suppliers (PWS).

Zoltay discussed that staff is seeking a new index for evapotranspiration to replace the crop moisture index. The hope is to find a more relevant Massachusetts specific index. This will need to be reviewed by the DMTF.

Pederson appreciated that Rao recognizes the need to get back to DMP guidance for PWS and would like to see it finalized in the coming year.

Carroll discussed the Conserve MA Water toolkit which was previously launched. Rao added that this website has lots of information for various water users. Staff is letting stakeholder groups know about the toolkit and thinking about best ways to get the word out.

Weismantel added that the key is to track metrics for the water conservation standards to know where the Commonwealth is in meeting these standards. Rao responded that this is on staff radar and tracking metrics appears as a bullet on the workplan.

Cohen said that staff continues to add resources and check the site for functionality and completeness. Please send any feedback on the website to staff. In the coming year, another effort will be to enhance the capability of PWS to manage data and set rates. Staff plans to provide direct training and outreach work to PWS in the fall, with an eye toward balancing affordability and equity needs with setting water rates and full cost pricing.

Curran discussed upcoming and ongoing projects related to the Interbasin Transfer Act (ITA). Projects in the works include Auburn, Foxborough and Reading modifications, and Plainville. Staff plans to continue working on an update of the ITA performance standards to be in line with the

ITA regulations and water conservation standards. Staff will also conduct pre-application meetings as needed and annual follow-ups of existing approvals. Another task for the year is to work on the notification process for any emergency connections that may be subject to the ITA or have interbasin transfer implications. Emergency declarations are generally exempt from the ITA but staff will need to collaborate with DEP to ensure the WRC, its staff, and DCR Office of Water Resources are aware of any of potential interbasin transfers that may come up due to emergencies.

Weiskel added that USGS is working with the state to make groundwater levels real-time. Rao confirmed that this effort is included in the WRC workplan under the broader USGS cooperation task.

McCrary discussed water needs forecasts, which are completed by staff using methodology approved by WRC in 2007 and revised in 2017. The forecasts are done in coordination with DEP and its Water Management Act permitting schedule. Quite a few forecasts have been completed since 2008. Staff worked with approximately 180 PWS in 25 basins and developed 118 final forecasts and 39 temporary allocations. There are some forecasts still in draft status, and others for which staff has reviewed data. Many of these are registered only systems and don't need a permit or forecast. Staff is in the process of coordinating with DEP on a schedule for 9 basins (Buzzards Bay, Ipswich, Westfield, Cape Cod, Charles, Concord, Millers, Boston Harbor, and Taunton basins). In most of those there are 2 or 3 temporary allocations; however, there are more temporary allocations in the Concord basin which need to be looked at when the permits come up for renewal. Also, it is likely that staff will get an additional couple dozen forecasts to work on as basins come under review by DEP.

LeVangie added that for the 9 basins many have been under review for a couple years (such as the Ipswich and Cape) so not all of those need projections. Most relevant and new are the Islands and Buzzards Bay basins to start reviewing this year, as well as the Concord, for which some letters have gone out - some are under review, and some need temporary allocations. It is hard to predict who might ask for more water and when. McCrary said the Islands forecasts are final and should not need to be reviewed by WRC staff. Rao reminded the commission that there is a lot of coordination between PWS/town staff and WRC staff, which takes a lot of effort and staff time.

Rao discussed two USGS interpretive studies, the first being a climate and streamflow projections and risk project which is a cooperative study with USGS, Tufts University, and Cornell University. In a few months the project will generate updated climate projections for MA that are downscaled and specific to the state. This will lead to having better precipitation projections, at scales that have been lacking so far. EEA agencies have invested in these better climate projections. The second project is a low flow statistics study.

Carroll introduced a new initiative which is a pilot outreach program on environmental careers with a focus on water. Staff plans to start with 5th grade students as they already have the water cycle in their curriculum. The intent is to introduce concepts around water and opportunities for careers, beginning in the fall, starting with Gateway Cities. If successful, the program could be expanded. This fits with the EEA Secretary's initiative around diversity, equity, and inclusion.

FEMA anticipates an influx of funding which it is hoped can be used for an additional staff person for MA's Flood Hazard Management Program.

Pederson asked if facilitation in the Ipswich Basin should be on the workplan. Carroll responded that there was a task force established in 2016 by Senator Tarr in the Ipswich Basin in response to the 2016 drought. In the last drought the task force was resurrected. MAPC is the lead facilitator. In addition to her technical work at DCR, Cohen also does some separate work on consensus building and facilitation. Under this latter role, she is cofacilitating with MAPC to gather stakeholders around the idea of long-term water security. The conversation will include all or most PWS that rely on the Ipswich Basin for their sources, some planning departments, and environmental advocates, to work toward regional collaboration over the long-term in the face of apparent increased frequency of drought and water insecurity. DCR is not a stakeholder, but only a facilitator in this process.

Weismantel asked if it's possible to do all this work within the expected budget? Rao answered that most tasks are related to staff time. The cooperative program with USGS' budget is expecting an increase.

Pederson asked about SWMI (the sustainable water management initiative). She is concerned that the science is set in a period of time with no plan to update. What is the long-term plan? With concern about PFAS operators are shifting sources and we need to ensure the science is current. Rao answered that this has not been on WRC staff radar but can take it under advisement. Baskin added that DEP has not discussed this but can bring it back to the agency for discussion.

The last two items on the workplan are PL566 flood protection lands and the board of certification of drinking water operators, for both of which DCR's Bill Salomaa is the lead.

Agenda Item #6: Presentation: Water Conservation Discussion – Public Sector & Institutions

Rao gave a presentation on water conservation in the industrial, commercial, institutional, and public sectors. The presentation is available at <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/review-our-meetings>.

Rao first provided an overview of the relevant sections of the Massachusetts Water Conservation Standards and areas that the Public Sector and Industrial-Commercial-Institutional (ICI) sectors chapters apply to – industrial facilities; private sector and nonprofit entities; state facilities; policy and regulatory entities; commercial facilities; institutional facilities; municipal bodies, boards/departments, facilities and public works; and office parks and buildings. She went over the standards and recommendations in the ICI and Public Sector chapters.

The second half of the presentation was focused on how the standards have been implemented so far, with a few case studies highlighted. The 'Leading by Example' program at the Department of Energy Resources works with agencies, authorities, and public colleges and universities to develop strategies and programs to support clean energy and sustainability efforts across state government. Recently, Governor Baker signed Executive Order 594 which, among other things, seeks implementation of water conservation at state facilities - *"Agencies shall implement efforts to reduce water consumption by following the recommended best practices in the Massachusetts*

Water Conservation Standards and any future updates.” Rao then went on to highlight water conservation efforts at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Worcester State University, DCAMM (Division of Capital Asset Management & Maintenance), DCR, and the Office of Technical Assistance at EEA.

Finally, Rao talked about the new Climate Bill – S9: An Act creating a next-generation roadmap for Massachusetts climate policy. On March 26, 2021, Governor Baker signed climate legislation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and protect environmental justice communities. The Bill called for changes in efficiency standards for plumbing fixtures. According to the Bill, *no new commercial dishwasher, commercial steam cooker, faucet, showerhead, spray sprinkler body, urinal, water closet or water cooler shall be sold or offered for sale, lease or rent in the commonwealth unless the efficiency of the new product meets or exceeds the efficiency standards set forth in the regulations adopted pursuant to the bill.*

Tom Cambareri left the meeting at 2:24 pm.

Weismantel liked the Leading By Example portion of the presentation. The public sector, especially the Commonwealth, does need to lead by example. Is there an estimate of how much water is used by the public sector or ICI? It’s important to focus efforts on areas where the greatest potential conservation can take place. Rao said that statewide data on public sector and ICI use are hard to get. Locally many PWS may have a better understanding of large water users.

Pederson asked if the discussions with the plumbing board are to update the code to match S.9. Rao does not know exactly how that will translate as the bill was recently signed but looks forward to getting more details and will keep the WRC posted. Pederson also asked if DEP could comment on if ASRs (Annual Statistical Reports on water usage) break down use by billing category? Baskin will need to report back. Cohen added that there are five category breakdowns. Most communities attribute the majority of use to the residential sector.

Wijnja commented that lately it seems that most months’ temperatures are reported above normal in the hydrologic conditions report. NOAA has updated their new climate normals which were recently implemented. The latest three complete decades were used to calculate new normals. Will the hydrologic conditions report start referencing the new climate normals? Graham responded that any products utilized from the Northeast Regional Climate Center will be switching to the new climate normals but haven’t been updated yet. DCR indicators that are calculated in-house use the entire period of record. Rao added that the drought of record in MA is from the 1960s and using longer periods of record captures those data.

Weiskel added that the aforementioned Tufts/USGS/Cornell study will form temperature and precipitation projections to 2100, which will hopefully provide insight into how we can plan for ongoing change.

V O T E	A motion was made by Weismantel with a second by Balzotti to adjourn the meeting. The roll-call vote to approve was unanimous of those present.
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Meeting adjourned, 2:59 p.m.

Documents or Exhibits Used at Meeting:

1. WRC Meeting Minutes, February 11, 2021
2. Draft WRC Work Plan, FY2022
3. Interbasin Transfer Act project status report, April 29, 2021
4. Hydrologic Conditions in Massachusetts, April 2021 (available at <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/water-data-tracking>)

Compiled by: vc

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.