

MWRA's Regional Water Supplier Application

Interbasin Transfer Act - Donor Basin Public Hearing

Massachusetts Water Resources Commission

September 30, 2026

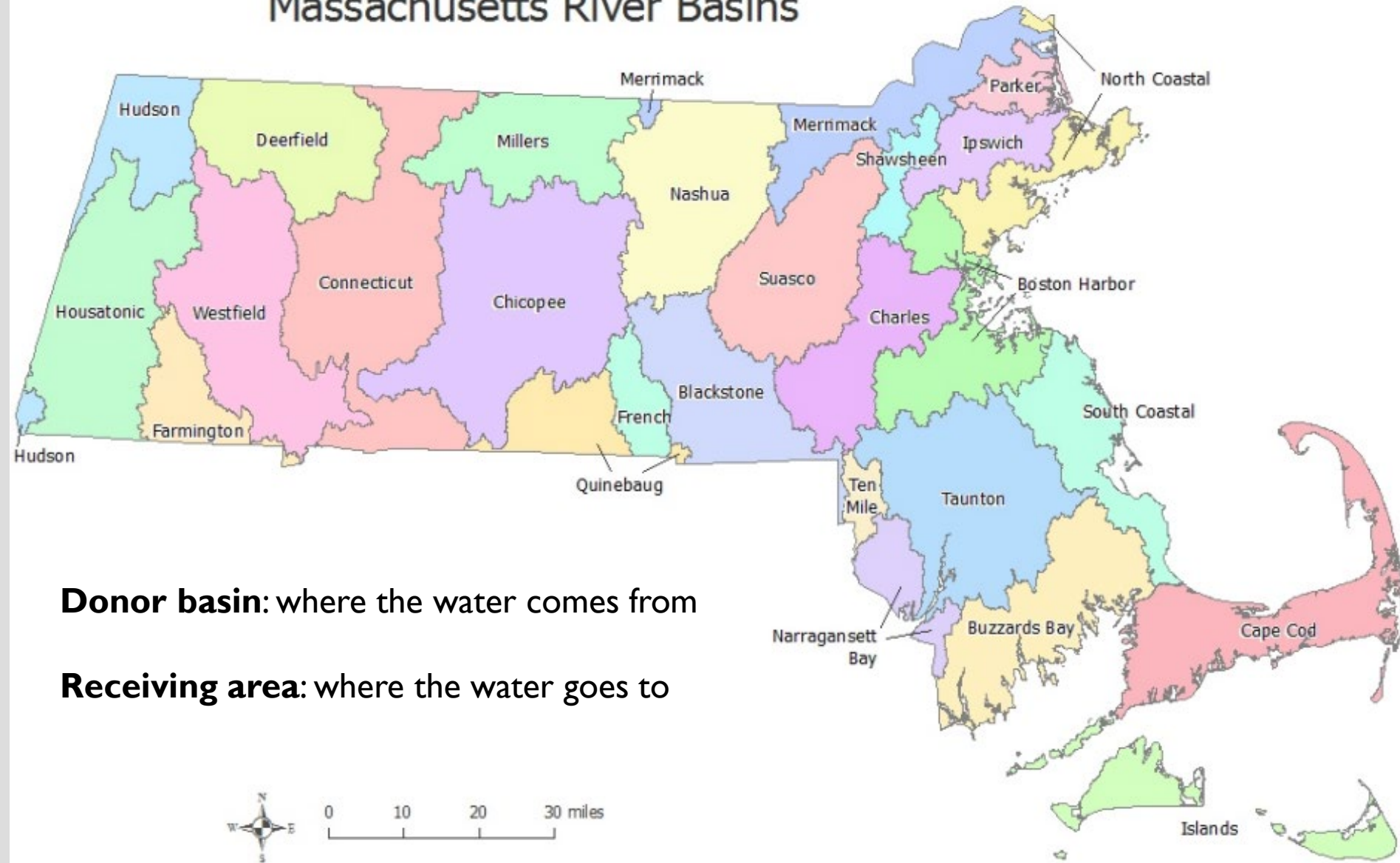
What is the Water Resources Commission (WRC)?

- Created in 1956 by the Massachusetts Legislature
- An 11-member body with 5 public members (representing water resource expertise and interests) and 6 state agencies
- Set up to address flood prevention, water conservation and water resource planning; serves as the coordinating body with state and federal agencies
- Responsible for the Commonwealth's water policy and planning activities to ensure the long-term availability of water for health, safety, economic development, and ecological needs
- In 1983, entrusted with administering the Interbasin Transfer Act

What is the Interbasin Transfer Act (ITA)?

- Became effective in March 1984
- Applies to all transfers of water and wastewater across both a municipal and basin boundary
- Administered by the Massachusetts Water Resources Commission (WRC)
- The Office of Water Resources at the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) is staff to the WRC and performs technical and administrative work on the ITA for the WRC

Massachusetts River Basins



Donor basin: where the water comes from

Receiving area: where the water goes to

Goals of the ITA

- Review and approve all Interbasin Transfers
- Donor Basin: Thorough review of environmental impacts
- Receiving Area:
 - Has no other workable in-basin option
 - Imposes strict water conservation conditions/actions on the receiving area for enhanced water efficiency
- Approval process:
 - Provides multiple opportunities for public input at public hearings and WRC meetings (which are public)
 - Final decision includes conditions

Regional Water Supplier Review Procedure

- ITA regulations allow a Regional Water Supply System to file an application for the WRC to evaluate alignment with the donor basin criteria separately from the receiving area criteria
- This pathway allows the WRC to review the impacts of a volume to be provided to multiple receiving areas versus multiple requests for smaller volumes of water
- The Donor Basin portion may be submitted prior to the Receiving Area portion(s) of the application; does not need to identify the potential receiving areas of the Interbasin Transfer
- All of the strict criteria that apply to a regular ITA application still need to be met by both the donor (now) and receiving parties (later)

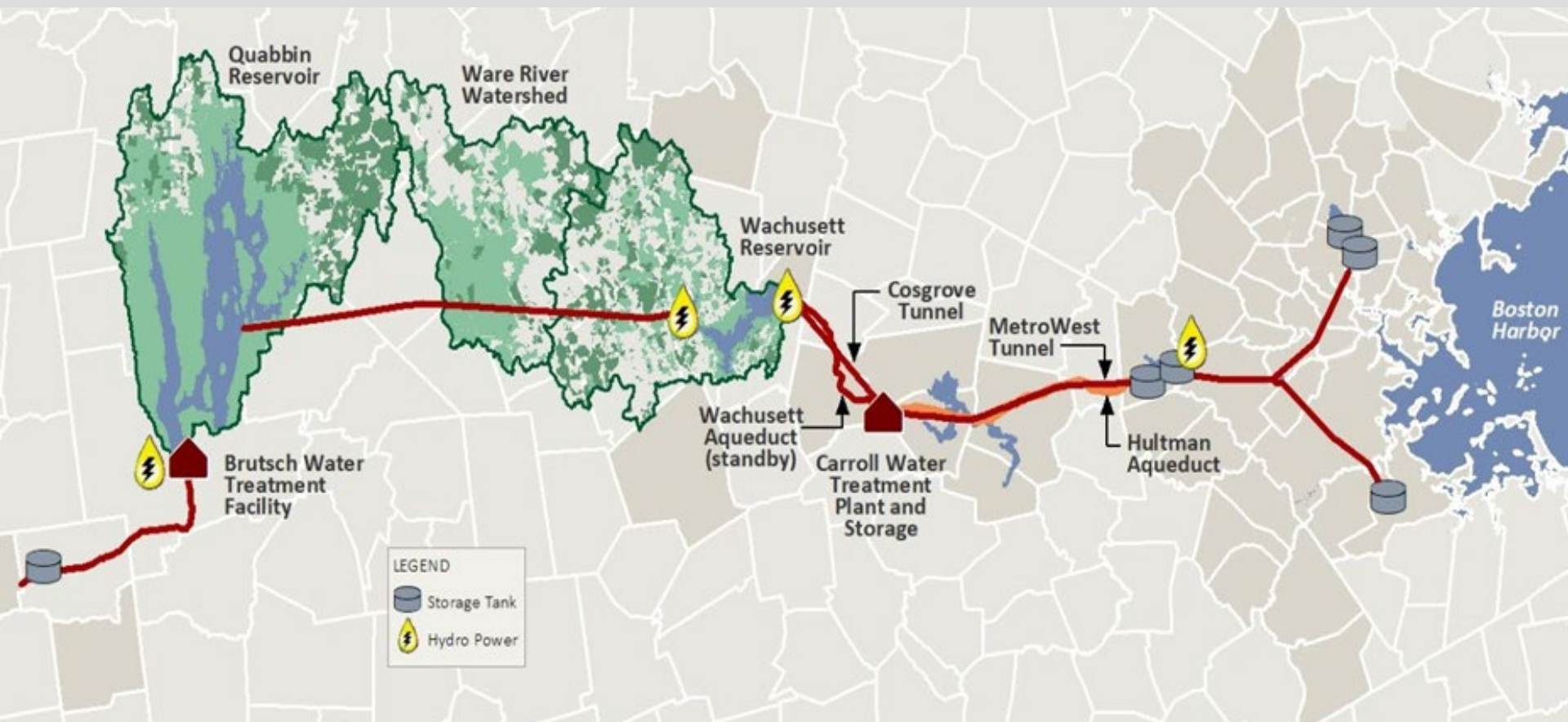
WRC is currently reviewing an application from Sherborn. Also, the following interbasin transfer proposals are presently undergoing MEPA review - Wayland, Weymouth, Natick.

Regional Water Supplier Review Procedure

- The Regional Water Supplier must provide an **annual report** to the WRC listing the Receiving Areas which have joined its system, when, and for how much volume
- **10 years after the donor basin approval, if any amount of water remains available:**
 - The Regional Supplier must file a report with the WRC describing any changes related to the donor basin criteria that may have occurred since the approval
 - The WRC will evaluate this report within 6 months
 - No significant change: Original approval continues under original terms
 - Significant change: Following a public hearing, the WRC will revise the approval for the remaining water
- **20 years after the donor basin approval**
 - Approval for any remaining amount of water expires [cannot be allocated w/o review]

MWRA's Regional Water Supplier Application

- MWRA is proposing to increase its present rate of interbasin transfer by 20 million gallons per day (MGD) to allow for the expansion of its service area to multiple public water systems
- MWRA has its water supply sources in the Chicopee River and Nashua River Basins
- MWRA's application is to evaluate the environmental impacts of the transfer on the donor basin



Map of MWRA Water System

Donor Basin Application Criteria

- For the donor basin, the WRC determines whether the application meets certain criteria*:
 - Compliance with MEPA - No MEPA thresholds exceeded as a result of the donor basin application; MEPA review will be required for each receiving area application, before any actual transfer of water occurs
 - Reasonable Instream Flow – (see next slide)
 - Impacts of Groundwater Withdrawals - Not applicable; MWRA system has only surface water sources
 - Cumulative Impacts – that the effects of the proposed transfer do not worsen the impacts of all past transfers on water resources in the donor basin

*WRC staff may seek clarification or additional details during the review process

Reasonable Instream Flow Analysis Review

The review will evaluate whether, with the proposed additional transfer:

- the safe yield of the Quabbin/Ware/Wachusett system (300 MGD) is enough to meet future demand under normal and drought conditions
(existing demand + growth + the proposed transfer request)
- the required releases to the Nashua and Swift Rivers and the Ware River flow requirements will continue to be met
- there will be any impacts to streamflow

*Current withdrawal ~ 200 MGD

For an Applicant Seeking Water from
the MWRA Water System –
Receiving Area

Receiving Area Application Criteria **(for entities seeking water)**

- Compliance with MEPA
 - A MEPA environmental review must be completed for the proposed increase
- Viable Sources
 - All reasonable efforts are made to identify and develop all Viable Sources in the receiving basin of the proposed Interbasin Transfer
- Water Conservation (details on next slide)
 - All practical measures to conserve water are taken in the receiving area
- Management of land around surface water sources in the receiving area

Receiving Area Water Conservation (for communities seeking water)

- Receiving area applicants must prove they are using water efficiently, and are measured against performance standards for the following items:
 - **Water conservation** – need to have a water conservation plan for the service area
 - **Water loss control** – must address all losses of water, including leaks and repairs
 - **Metering** – of all water users and a program of meter maintenance and replacement
 - **Rates and billing** – implement cost effective rate structures and monthly billing
 - **Local drought management plan**, emergency response plan – WRC reviews and approves

Public Comments

- WRC staff will receive and record all comments, which will be addressed in a forthcoming Response to Comments document
- Comments may be submitted in writing by mail or email until 5 PM on October 7th
 - By email: vanessa.curran@mass.gov
 - By mail:
Water Resources Commission
Attention: Vandana Rao, EOEEA
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900, Boston, MA 02114
- Draft decision in the fall/early winter
- Public Hearing on the draft decision before WRC vote

Resources

- Interbasin Transfer Act –
<https://www.mass.gov/interbasin-transfer-act>
- Interbasin Transfer Act Regulations –
<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/ita-laws-and-regulations>
- MWRA Regional Water Supply Application –
<https://www.mass.gov/doc/mwra-regional-supplier-ita-application/download>