

Wachusett Reservoir

DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION
DIVISION OF WATER SUPPLY PROTECTION



Demand for Supply

The City of Boston had nearly grown to the capacity of its water supply by 1892. To ensure an ample supply of clean water for Boston and surrounding communities, the Wachusett Reservoir was constructed during the early 1900s by damming the south branch of the Nashua River.

Today the reservoir is fed by the Stillwater River, the Quinapoxet River, and by the Quabbin Reservoir via aqueduct.

World's Largest

At the time of construction, the Wachusett Reservoir was the largest in the world. It remains a great engineering feat and is one of the few unfiltered water supplies in the country.

Flood the Valley

1,700 people from the towns of Clinton, West Boylston, Boylston and Sterling had to be relocated in order to flood the area of the Nashua River Valley.

Hundreds of homes, 6 mills, 8 schoolhouses, 4 churches, 2 cemeteries, and nearly 30 miles of roads and rail lines were removed or dismantled.

37 Miles of Shoreline

The reservoir is approximately 8.5 miles long, 2.1 miles wide (at the widest point), and has 37 miles of shoreline, not including the islands.

When at full capacity, the reservoir holds 65 billion gallons of water.

3 Million People

Wachusett Reservoir, along with the Quabbin Reservoir and Ware River, are the unfiltered source of high quality water for the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority water supply system.

Recreational activities are regulated and limited to protect 3 million people's drinking water.

The Massachusetts Metropolitan Water Works (MWW) Photograph Collection documents the construction of the Boston Metropolitan Water Supply.

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May, 1896. Site of "Nashua" Reservoir, before construction. Pine Hill, West Boylston.



May 1899. Soil stripping at the site of Cunningham's Pavilion, Boylston. All structures and trees were removed before the valley was flooded. Cunningham Ledge is now an island.



September, 1904. Stripping at the site of the Baptist Church, West Boylston. Today known as the Old Stone Church and Thomas Basin.

