



## Water Supply Protection Trust

March 12, 2025

Virtual Meeting conducted via Webex

*Rebecca L. Tepper, Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs*

*Frederick A. Laskey, Executive Director, MWRA*

*William Meehan, North Worcester County Quabbin Anglers, Quabbin Fishermen's Association*

*Matthew A. Romero, MWRA Advisory Board*  
*Fred Heyes, Swift River Valley Historical Society*

### **Trustees**

Frederick A. Laskey, Executive Director, MWRA

Matthew Romero, Executive Director, MWRA Advisory Board

Vandana Rao, Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs

Brigadier General William J. Meehan, North Worcester County Anglers and Quabbin Fishermen's

Association Fred Heyes, Swift River Valley Historical Society

### **MWRA**

Dave Coppes, Chief Operating Officer

Rebecca Weidman, Deputy Chief Operating Officer

Carolyn Francisco-Murphy, General Counsel

Katie Ronan, Chief of Staff

Thomas Durkin, Director of Finance

Colleen Rizzi, Director of Environmental and Regulatory Affairs

Stephen Estes-Smargiassi, Director of Planning & Sustainability

Sean Navin, Director of Public Affairs

Michael Cole, Budget Director

James Coyne, Budget Manager

John Gregoire, Senior Program Manager, Western Operations

Hillary Monahan, Project Manager, Environmental Permitting

Valarie Moran, Director of Waterworks

Mike Alteri, Associate General Counsel, Environmental and Energy

### **MWRA Advisory Board**

Nathan Cote, Research & Policy Analyst

Christine Bennett, Research & Policy Analyst

### **DCR**

John Scannell, Director, Division of Water Supply Protection

Dan Clark, Regional Director, Quabbin/Ware

Derek Liimatainen, Deputy Regional Director, Wachusett

Kelley Freda, Regional Director, Wachusett/Sudbury

Joel Zimmerman, Watershed Planning Coordinator

Jarrett Sparks, Budget Director

Scott Campbell, Director of Government Affairs

### **WSCAC**

Moussa Siri, Executive Director

## Other

Dan Hammock, North Worcester County Quabbin Anglers  
Association Clayton Sydla, Quabbin Fisherman's Association

### The meeting was convened at 1:00pm.

1. **Welcome and Introductions** – Trustee Laskey welcomed attendees, introduced himself as the Chair and called the March 12, 2025 meeting of the Water Supply Protection Trust (WSPT) to order. It was noted that the meeting was being conducted via remote participation and would be recorded. The Trustees, as well as several MWRA and DCR Division of Water Supply Protection (DWSP) staff, attended the virtual meeting via Webex. Trustee Laskey called the roll to establish attendance and a quorum. Trustees Laskey, Trustee Rao, Trustee Meehan and Trustee Heyes were present, establishing a quorum. It was noted that Trustee Romero was running late, but expected to join the meeting shortly.
2. **Approval of the Minutes** – A motion was made by Trustee Rao and seconded by Trustee Heyes to approve the December 4, 2024 WSPT meeting minutes. General Counsel Francisco-Murphy called the roll. Trustees Laskey, Trustee Rao, Trustee Meehan and Trustee Heyes approved the minutes.
3. **Financial and Progress Reports** – John Scannell, Director of the DCR Division of Water Supply Protection (DWSP), shared a presentation on the FY2025 Expenditure Update.
  - **Expenditures** – At 67% through Fiscal Year 2025, the DWSP budget is 55% spent. Mr. Scannell noted that Administrative Expenses were a little over spent due to increased vehicle administration fees and other items moved into that category. He reminded the Trust that DWSP can exceed by 25% without Trust approval. He also noted that DWSP would come back to the Trust at the June meeting if necessary.
  - **FY2025 Updates** –
    - Quabbin Window Replacement work re-started last week.
    - FY25 Forestry Lots were approved.
    - Continuing work on Forest as Climate Solutions Initiative.
    - Bird Control Programs continued through the winter as normal, although Wachusett iced over.
    - Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment (CCVA)
      - Phase 1 was complete last year. This included initial data gathering, identifying natural assets and evaluating vulnerability. Twenty-nine critical natural assets were identified that are essential to maintaining high quality unfiltered drinking water. These assets were categorized into seven asset categories: forests, open water, water courses (river/streams), wetlands, groundwater, soils, and infrastructure.
      - The consultant is now working on Phase 2, which involves conducting the assessment. DWSP will likely be able to share the outcomes of the assessment at the September Trust meeting.
    - Roost Counts
      - MassDOT has been conducting weekly drone flights to count roosts.
      - The program conducted 28 roost counts at Wachusett Reservoir and 24 at Quabbin Reservoir, with the highest count reaching 2,443 gulls at Wachusett and 1,082 gulls at Quabbin.
    - Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Status
      - Rapid freeze-up in January caused birds to congregate in small water openings.
      - Dead geese and ducks were observed in the Quinapoxet Basin at Wachusett Reservoir and below the dam at Foss Reservoir on January 28<sup>th</sup>.
      - DCR is developing and updating response protocols.
    - New equipment, including two pickup trucks and plows, were purchased at Wachusett.

- New Salem Storage Building
  - A new storage building was put up in New Salem. It was insulated, which will allow equipment to be serviced out of the weather.

Trustee Meehan asked about the status of architectural plans for replacement of the New Salem building. Dave Coppes explained MWRA intended to put together a study to go to DCAMM to hire an architect this fiscal year. However, retirements have resulted in the need to reprioritize the capital improvement program and the study phase has been moved to 2027. He explained that for MWRA to conduct capital work for DCR, a DCAMM process is required, which is rigorous and time consuming. This makes it difficult for MWRA to move forward with capital projects for DCR.

- The Forestry Building on Blue Meadow Road was recently demolished. The building was obsolete and within the 400 foot buffer zone.
- Forestry Management – DWSP has been working to update the public facing forestry website.

Trustee Laskey noted that the report was accepted and placed on file.

**4. Personnel and Hiring Update** – Mr. Scannell summarized DWSP’s ongoing hiring efforts. He reported that DWSP’s current FTE count is 146. He explained that a new accounting position will be starting soon and three vacancies are in the hiring process. Mr. Scannell noted that the staff work to fill vacancies as quickly as possible. Trustee Laskey thanked Mr. Scannell and his staff for all their hard work, noting the importance of staffing.

**5. Presentation of Draft FY2026 Workplan and Budget** – Mr. Scannell presented the following Draft FY2026 Workplan and Budget.

- Division-wide
  - Continue Land Protection efforts, guided by the Land Acquisition Model for each watershed.
  - Continue Watershed Preservation Restriction (WPR) monitoring with most parcels being monitored on a 2-3 year schedule. Parcels purchased with federal fund are monitored annually.
  - Continue the use of GIS and electronic field data collection.
  - Continue to control beaver populations in the Pathogen Control Zones.
  - Continue bird harassment programs at both reservoirs.
  - Continue to monitor and analyze water quality in tributaries and the Reservoirs, including sampling for plankton.
  - Continue forestry operations, with expanded focus on public process for proposal review.
  - Continue Forests as Climate Solutions work.
  - Continue forest stand adjustment pilot project.
  - Continue to maintain Ranger presence in the watersheds to monitor and control public access.
  - Continue implementation of the Watershed Protection Act and Regulations (3113 CMR 11.00).
  - Continue to monitor and maintain dam.
  - Continue education and outreach programs.
  - Continue to administer the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) program funded by MWRA.
- Wachusett/Sudbury Region
  - Continue to maintain lands around the Wachusett Reservoirs.
  - Continue to manage white-tailed deer populations in the Wachusett and Sudbury watersheds through deer hunting permits.
  - Continue to implement the Wachusett Internal Road Plan, which can be challenging in light of climate change on forest roads.
  - Continue work led by MWRA on controlling invasive species in the Stillwater and Quinapoxet basins, as well as DCR work in South Meadow Pond complex in Clinton.

- Continue work on road salt issue.
- Major Projects - Paving of Clinton Maintenance Yard and replacement of Garage windows.
- Quabbin/Ware River Region
  - Continue to maintain lands and roadways around the Quabbin Reservoir.
  - Continue active forestry operations.
  - Continue drone work in conjunction with MassDOT to monitor gull roosts at Quabbin and Wachusett Reservoirs.
  - Continue successful implementation of controlled deer hunts at Quabbin, including implementation of the Quabbin Park Deer Management Plan. A controlled hunt was conducted in the Park for the second year. Staff are now conducting pellet surveys, should have more regarding impact to overall density of deer in the park soon.
  - Continue to operate the Visitor Center at Quabbin.

The meeting ended at approximately 1:30 pm due to external interference and disruption.