



*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*

Water Supply Protection Trust Meeting Minutes

March 12, 2026

Virtual Meeting conducted via Webex

Attendance

Trustees

Frederick A. Laskey, Executive Director, MWRA

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

Rebecca Weidman, Deputy Chief Operating Officer

Carolyn Francisco-Murphy, General Counsel

Michael Altieri, Associate General Counsel

Colleen Rizzi, Director of Environmental & Regulatory Affairs

Katie Ronan, Chief of Staff

Thomas Durkin, Director of Finance

Stephen Estes-Smargiassi, Director of Planning & Sustainability

Michael Cole, Budget Director

James Coyne, Budget Manager

John Gregoire, Senior Program Manager, Reservoir Operations

Hillary Coolidge, Project Manager, Environmental Permitting

DCR

John Scannell, Director, Division of Water Supply Protection

Dan Clark, Regional Director, Quabbin/Ware

Kelley Freda, Regional Director, Wachusett/Sudbury

Joel Zimmerman, Watershed Planning Coordinator

Ken MacKenzie, DWSP Natural Resources Director

Scott Campbell, Director of Government Affairs

Lisa Gustavsen, Deputy Regional Director, Quabbin/Ware

Derek Liimatainen, Deputy Regional Director, Wachusett

Jarrett Sparks, Budget Director

WSCAC

Moussa Siri, Executive Director

Other

Daniel Hammock, North Worcester County Quabbin Anglers Association

Clayton Sydla, Quabbin Fishermen's Association

The meeting was convened at 10:08am.

1. Welcome and Introductions

Trustee Laskey welcomed attendees, introduced himself as the Chair and called the March 12, 2026 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.

Four of the five Trustees, as well as several MWRA and DCR Division of Water Supply Protection (DWSP) staff, attended the virtual meeting via Webex. General Counsel Francisco-Murphy called the roll to establish attendance and a quorum. It was noted that Matthew Romero, Executive Director of the MWRA Advisory Board (Designee for Richard E. Raiche, MWRA Advisory Board), was not in attendance.

Trustee Laskey took a moment to express gratitude for the Trust upon discussing his upcoming retirement from the MWRA. He thanked the Trustees for their dedication and hard work, noting that the Trust remains vigilant and dedicated to an important mission. He reflected on the history of the Trust's origin and commended its appointees, who have served the Commonwealth with distinction. Trustee Laskey expressed admiration for the Trust's collaborative spirit and ability to hold productive discussions on all issues from differing perspectives. He emphasized his deep appreciation and respect for the work accomplished over the years.

Trustee Rao commended Trustee Laskey on his incredible career, noting that he has served with distinction. She highlighted his leadership of the MWRA and his ability to foster an incredibly professional team, leading with a level of communication and collaboration that is needed for the Authority, DCR, and EEA by always making staff available and taking on additional responsibilities such as funding. Trustee Rao noted how respectful Trustee Laskey has always been to the watersheds and how incredible it has been to witness his sensitivity and respect for the sacrifices that were made in the watersheds many decades ago. She expressed gratitude for Trustee Laskey's ability to remain mindful of local community needs in his role of managing the watersheds and thanked him for his service on behalf of the Secretary and the Commonwealth. Trustee Rao noted that it has been a pleasure to work with Trustee Laskey and his team, reiterating their responsiveness and availability. Trustee Heyes echoed that sentiment and expressed his gratitude and appreciation for the lack of bias in Trustee Laskey's management approach.

2. Approval of the Minutes

A motion was made by Trustee Heyes and seconded by Trustee Rao to approve the December 18, 2025 WSPT meeting minutes. General Counsel Francisco-Murphy called the roll. The Trustees unanimously voted to approve the minutes.

3. Financial and Progress Reports

John Scannell, Director of the DCR Division of Water Supply Protection (DWSP), shared a presentation on the FY2026 Expenditure Update. A proposed transfer of funds from one subsidiary to another was discussed.

- ❖ **Expenditures** – At 67% through Fiscal Year 2026, Mr. Scannell noted that the DWSP budget is on track for this time of year (other than Personnel), with 45% spent. Mr. Scannell explained that expenditures under AA (Personnel) and DD (Pensions/Insurance) were displayed using different colors on the presentation slide, as the Commonwealth recently changed over their financial system and the updated February numbers for Personnel and Pensions/Insurance have not yet been obtained. Mr. Scannell noted that \$7.5M was spent of the Personnel budget through January, and generally DWSP spends about \$1M each month. He clarified that the value presented on the slide

should be \$1M higher and the Pensions/Insurance value should be several hundred thousand dollars higher as well. Mr. Scannell noted that updated numbers should be obtained soon.

- ❖ **Revenue** – Revenue is on-target for the year – about 91% of revenue collected. A large portion of that was from hydro & transmission, just under \$663,000.
- ❖ **Proposed Transfer of Funds Between Subsidiaries** – Request to transfer \$300,000 from AA (Personnel) to NN (Construction Improvements) for the repaving of the Quabbin Park Middle Entrance Road.
 - DCR is having the East Entrance Road paved this spring and received quotes for the Middle Entrance Road as well.
 - Doing the work this spring will lead to cost savings over waiting for a future date.

Dan Clark, Regional Director of Quabbin/Ware, added that the two entrances are in tough shape despite patch-work. He emphasized the importance of fixing them properly. A motion was made by Trustee Heyes and seconded by Trustee Rao to authorize the transfer of \$300,000 from the AA (Personnel) subsidiary to the NN (Construction Improvements) subsidiary. General Counsel Francisco-Murphy called the roll. The Trustees unanimously voted to approve the motion.

❖ **FY2026 Updates –**

- Continued work on Forests as Climate Solutions.
 - Focused on improving forest monitoring and providing better transparency for public-facing websites to help folks better understand the forest work in progress.
 - The Commonwealth is looking to identify lands (both Commonwealth and private lands) to be designated as forest reserves. More to come on this topic potentially in the June WSPT meeting.
- In 3rd Phase of Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment, projects are focused on more data collection.
- Bird Control Programs continued on reservoirs until ice over.
- Four acquisition projects were completed this quarter:
 - 4.25-acre Watershed Preservation Restriction (WPR) in Petersham
 - 26.32-acre WPR in Petersham (Anderson)
 - 2.32-acre fee acquisition in New Salem
 - 43.3-acre WPR in Sterling
- The GIS Coordinator and staff continued work on altering content to meet the Commonwealth's new accessibility rules. This will require changes to the GIS products and DWSP's website content by an April deadline.
- DCR received three applications for the 2026 Salt Reduction Grants. Grants were awarded to the Towns of Paxton, Sterling, and West Boylston.
- The Camel Brook Bridge Repair Project was completed.
- Quabbin Administration Roof and Chimney Replacement Project: Bids were received. Staff currently reviewing and awarding the project; cost is \$2.7M.

Trustee Rao posed a question regarding salt reduction. She asked Mr. Scannell if his team engages with MassDOT on this. She noted that it would be great if more than just cities and towns around the watersheds could follow a similar type of approach or protocol. The goal is to see less salt in all water bodies across the Commonwealth. Trustee Rao questioned if DWSP guidelines have made it to other communities. Mr. Scannell responded that his team has worked quite a bit with MassDOT. DOT has provided assistance and brine for use in DWSP parking lots. DWSP staff members have presented at MassDOT-related events. Mr.

Scannell noted that other communities are paying attention and asking questions, and that the topic is gaining traction elsewhere as well.

4. Personnel and Hiring Update

Mr. Scannell summarized DWSP's ongoing hiring efforts. He reported that the Commonwealth is currently in a hiring freeze and DWSP has unfortunately been impacted. DWSP now has 13 staff vacancies: 5 vacancies at Quabbin, 5 vacancies at Wachusett, and 3 Division staff.

- ❖ Quabbin Maintenance Lead (FOTL) – vacant since July
- ❖ Wachusett Environmental Analyst 4 – vacant since September
- ❖ GIS Analyst – vacant since July
- ❖ 1 Administrative staff
- ❖ 9 Maintenance staff across both regions

Mr. Scannell explained that agencies have caps on the number of FTE staff they can employ, and DCR is currently over its cap. As a result, DCR is not allowed to fill vacant positions. Staff in the Commissioner's Office have had conversations with Trustee Laskey in relation to moving Water Supply positions out from under the agency's cap and instead creating a separate cap for the Trust-funded positions. Mr. Scannell noted he remains hopeful that vacancies will be filled as soon as possible.

5. Presentation of Draft FY2027 Workplan and Budget

Mr. Scannell presented the following Draft FY2027 Workplan and Budget. The Board will vote in June.

- Division-Wide
 - Land protection efforts will continue, guided by the Land Acquisition Model for each watershed. Staff will continue to look for other sources of funding to expand protection efforts as allowed.
 - Watershed Preservation Restriction (WPR) monitoring will continue with parcels being monitored on a 2- to 3-year schedule (federally-funded WPRs monitored annually per agreement).
 - Continue the use of GIS and electronic field data collection to expand and streamline numerous protection efforts including EQA data collection, Ranger incident reporting, Quabbin Fishing Area management, and public access mapping tools.
 - Implement the bird harassment programs at both reservoirs to continue source water quality standard compliance.
 - Control beaver populations in the Pathogen Control Zones; work to reduce impacts of beaver in other areas of the watershed.
 - Monitor and analyze water quality in tributaries and reservoirs, including sampling of the reservoir for plankton. Continue extensive hydrologic monitoring (stream flow, groundwater, precipitation, and snowpack).
 - Continue road salt reduction efforts including expansion of Watershed grant program to Quabbin and Ware River watersheds.
 - Continue forestry operations, with expanded focus on public process for proposal review. Continue forest stand adjustment pilot project to enhance tree species diversity, resiliency, wildlife habitat, tree vigor, carbon storage, and stand diversity.
 - Continue work on Forest and Climate Solutions goals.
 - Monitor and maintain major dams in the system, as well as smaller watershed dams.
 - Maintain Ranger presence to monitor and control public access. Enforce DWSP regulations through education and targeted patrols. Work with State and Environmental Police to enforce more serious violations.

- Continue implementation of the Watershed Protection Act and Regulations (313 CMR 11.00).
- Continue education and outreach programs both online and in-person that showcase the mission and accomplishments of DWSP.
- Continue to administer the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) program across the watershed system.
- Wachusett/Sudbury Region
 - Continue to maintain lands around the Wachusett Reservoir including vegetation management, mowing, and monitoring of dam and dike structures.
 - Continue to implement the Wachusett Internal Road Plan, including routine maintenance and upgrades to higher priority roads.
 - Continue efforts with MWRA to control aquatic invasive species in the Stillwater and Quinapoxet basins. Monitor watershed ponds and streams for presence of aquatic invasive species, including efforts at South Meadow Pond complex.
 - Construction phase of the final Direct Discharge Elimination Project on Route 110 in Sterling. This project will eliminate discharge to the Reservoir by collecting runoff from the roadway, treating it and discharging it off watershed.
- Quabbin/Ware River Region
 - Maintain lands around the Region, including vegetation management, mowing, monitoring of dam and dike structures, and forest road maintenance and upgrades.
 - Continue forestry operations. Active forest lots will be monitored by Foresters to ensure that all Best Management Practices (BMPs) are being followed to ensure continued water quality protection.
 - Continue drone work in conjunction with MassDOT aeronautics division to conduct gull roost monitoring at Quabbin Reservoir and deer density at Quabbin Park.
 - Continue successful implementation of the Quabbin Park Deer Management Plan.
 - Continue to operate the Visitor Center at Quabbin, pairing in-person and on-line educational opportunities.
 - Work closely with MWRA on the Quabbin Administration Complex capital improvement design study.
 - Continue work on control of Swollen Bladderwort in Pottapaug and O'Laughlin Ponds.
 - Work with MWRA on the installation of a new salt storage shed at the DWSP Oakham field office to be jointly shared by both agencies.
- FY2027 Major Project Highlights
 - Quabbin
 - Completion of Admin Building roof
 - Emergency generator replacement
 - Erect storage building in Belchertown
 - Quabbin Park paving
 - Wachusett
 - Clinton Maintenance Yard paving
 - Ranger Station upgrades
 - Gates Road (Sterling) parking lot paving and stormwater improvements
 - Aquatic invasive plant control South Meadow Pond Complex

FY2027 Draft Operating Budget

- \$27.7M operating budget
- \$1.135M revenue projected

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

6. Update on DEP Annual Review

Mr. Scannell presented the following Annual Review update.

- DEP met with DCR and MWRA in the fall for field inspection.
- DEP issued the Wachusett letter in January 2026 and the Quabbin letter in February 2026. Letters list requirements and any timeline for completing requirements.
- The two letters were very similar to 2025. They approved the watershed protection program and had similar general requirements.
- DEP requires a mid-year update letter on watershed programs and sometimes other submittals.

Quabbin/Ware River Inspection Letter

- Requirements:
 - a. Update letter to DEP by August 31, 2026 with info on watershed programs.
 - b. Hiring: DCR DWSP shall submit to MassDEP a staffing update by August 31, 2026, and at any time that DCR DWSP determines that watershed vacancies may impact watershed programs.
 - c. By January 10, 2027, MWRA shall submit to MassDEP a summary of the diversions from Ware River to Quabbin Reservoir completed during 2025, specifying dates and water volumes.

Wachusett Inspection Letter

- Requirements:
 - a. DCR shall submit an update letter to DEP by June 1, 2026 with info on watershed programs.
 - b. DCR shall provide a staffing update within the written watershed update due on June 1, 2026 or at any time that DCR DWSP determines that watershed vacancies may impact watershed programs.

7. Miscellaneous – Invasive Species Control, Herbicides

- ❖ Trustee Laskey expressed concern over the usage of herbicides in the watersheds for invasive species control. He recalled the money spent over the years to protect drinking water quality in the reservoirs and how the addition of Roundup into the watersheds could potentially carry risks. Trustee Laskey explained his request for staff to reassess and thanked the Commissioner for getting involved. The herbicide effort has been placed on hold pending further review.
- ❖ Mr. Scannell offered to send the Board a copy of the letter from the Commissioner regarding the herbicide issue. He noted that the plan is to step back and study the issue further, per request of the Commissioner. Trustee Heyes noted the significance of optics and politics within state government. He offered a personal anecdote from experience using Roundup to treat his own land, noting high regeneration that is now above the invasives which would not have been possible without the herbicide usage. Trustee Heyes reiterated his understanding of the politics and visuals involved, stating that he hopes the Trust can find a way to navigate invasive management as it is a long-term problem.

- ❖ Trustee Rao asked a question regarding DCR's approach to invasives, specifically on topic of glyphosate and targeted application. She questioned under what circumstances an herbicide like Roundup is used and how widely the application would be. Trustee Rao emphasized the issue of water quality implications in spot-treatment versus much wider spraying, application distance from the water, etc. Trustee Laskey agreed and added that Trustee Rao's questions are all core concerns and will be part of the discussion with the Commissioner in the near future. Mr. Scannell noted that this topic could be placed on a fall 2026 WSPT agenda. Trustee Laskey agreed and noted that the Trust will aim for a more in-depth discussion toward the end of the year to help provide guidance for a path forward.

Trustee Meehan requested an update on Swollen Bladderwort. Mr. Scannell responded that both Pottapaug and O'Laughlin Ponds have been closed. He reminded the Trust that Bladderwort is a floating plant that easily breaks into fragments and can spread rapidly. It is a relatively new invasive in this part of the United States and there is not much information on it. Mr. Scannell explained that staff have been working with an MWRA contractor to try to control the plant in both ponds – though the amount in Pottapaug is greater than the amount found in O'Laughlin. DWSP held a public meeting in the beginning of February 2026 to provide the fishing community with more information and is currently working with the Commissioner's office to identify next steps. Mr. Scannell noted he hopes to have a decision relatively soon, ideally by mid-March. Trustee Meehan explained that the fishing community has offered to participate in efforts to remove the invasive, noting that folks are eager to volunteer in any way possible. Mr. Scannell thanked Trustee Meehan and stated that his team is working to research volunteer opportunities. He noted appreciation for public comment on the topic, but expressed disappointment in the public sentiment that it could be an MWRA attempt to close the Reservoir off to the fishing community. Mr. Scannell highlighted DWSP's robust fishing program and MWRA's commitment to public access. He explained that it was a painful sidenote to the public meeting. He emphasized the fact that public access and protecting our reservoirs are not mutually exclusive, and that fishing is a very strong example of that. Trustee Meehan expressed agreement and understanding.

There was discussion on risk assessment in the watersheds. Trustee Meehan questioned if there has been any change in Ranger patrolling due to the current global political climate, and noted extra vigilance would be appropriate. He advised increased patrolling in high-risk areas and facilities. Trustee Meehan suggested staff meet to assess vulnerability. He also requested follow-up information regarding the Quabbin Cemetery and the issue of damaged stones. Mr. Scannell responded that MWRA and DCR have spent a great deal of energy identifying the risks to the watersheds over the years. He explained that Rangers have expanded and focused their patrols in the last few weeks regarding critical infrastructure, along with initiating discussions with Massachusetts State Police. Staff are aware and making sure work is continuing on the matter. Trustee Laskey echoed the sentiment and discussed the extensive security measures at MWRA since September 11th. Mr. Scannell noted that Rangers receive notifications about potential risks and are very much on top of the issue.

Dan Hammock, North Worcester County Quabbin Anglers Association, questioned where to find statistics for violations recorded in the watershed. He acknowledged the common goal of maintaining the pristine water quality and reminded the Trust that regulations exist to make that possible. Mr. Hammock emphasized the importance of enforcing regulations and recording violations, noting that water quality becomes compromised if regulations are not enforced and that filtration is costly if water quality declines.

The topic of Quabbin Cemetery was introduced. Mr. Hammock requested clarification on Cemetery protocol and written permissions needed to restore a gravestone. He detailed his personal interest in the matter and expressed concern for the maintenance of the Cemetery for generations to come. He inquired about a documented plan of how to proceed when a gravestone is damaged.

Mr. Clark provided a response regarding DWSP's approach to Cemetery policy. He explained that individual graves are essentially private property, and that deeds are issued to a specific grave site. Money exchanges hands, and at that point, that piece of land is privately owned within the Cemetery. By extension, anything that is placed on that grave site is privately owned as well. Because those are pieces of private property, the responsibility of repair falls to the owners, which is industry standard. Mr. Clark explained that his role involves verifying that the individuals doing work on any individual grave site have permission from the grave owners to do so. He emphasized that this is industry standard. DCR takes responsibility of perpetual care of the grounds with mowing, etc. and tries to minimize risk from vegetation on Cemetery infrastructure. Mr. Hammock expressed appreciation for Mr. Clark's explanation and noted that he looks forward to working together to preserve graves as best as possible.

Mr. Scannell took a moment to express his gratitude for Trustee Laskey's many accomplishments over the course of his career. He noted the Direct Discharge Project and commended Trustee Laskey's ability to obtain funding. Mr. Scannell noted that Trustee Laskey has always been a strong advocate for obtaining resources and championing hiring efforts. He has been a strong supporter of land acquisitions, and has always held a deep understanding of the best way to protect the watersheds. Mr. Scannell noted that the Quinapoxet Dam Removal Project was wonderful to see happen but it was Trustee Laskey's patience and consistent efforts to move the project along that ultimately led to MWRA being able to complete the work backed by the Board. He remarked that Trustee Laskey was measured and persistent. Mr. Scannell then discussed the Quabbin Park Cemetery and its long-standing needs that Trustee Laskey was eager to address, and funding was ultimately provided by MWRA because Trustee Laskey advocated for its success. Mr. Scannell commended Trustee Laskey for always looking at the "big picture" when navigating a challenge, and noted that his unique perspective has served the watersheds very well. Trustee Laskey thanked Mr. Scannell for his kind words and recalled a past collaboration around the development of a boating solution that benefited local fishermen regarding invasives. He discussed the development of a steam-cleaning protocol for power-washing boats to avoid the introduction of invasives into Quabbin. He expressed gratitude to the Trust for working together on such important issues over the years. Trustee Meehan echoed that sentiment and expressed his appreciation for Trustee Laskey's service, wishing him well in his retirement.

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting by Trustee Rao. The motion was seconded by Trustee Heyes. General Counsel Francisco-Murphy called the roll. The Trustees unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 11:22am.