

**MASSACHUSETTS**



*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*  
*Louis Taverna, Chairman, MWRA Advisory Board*  
*Fred Heyes, Swift River Valley Historical Society*

**Water Supply Protection Trust**

March 8, 2023

Hybrid Meeting conducted at  
MWRA's Southborough Facility & via WebEx

Trustees

Lou Taverna, MWRA Advisory Board  
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 Historical Society

MWRA

Valerie Moran, Director of Waterworks  
Carolyn Francisco Murphy, General Counsel  
Rebecca Weidman, Director, Environmental and Regulatory Affairs  
Sean Navin, Director, Intergovernmental Affairs  
Katie Ronan, Project Manager, Environmental Permitting  
Matt Horan, Deputy Director of Finance  
James Coyne, Budget Manager  
John Gregoire, Reservoir Operations Program Manager  
Michael Cole, Budget Director  
Steven Estes-Smargiassi, Director of Planning

DCR

John Scannell, Director, Division of Water Supply Protection  
Dan Clark, Regional Director, Quabbin/Ware Region  
Ken McKenzie, Director, Natural Resources  
Derek Liimatainen, Assistant Regional Director, Wachusett  
Lisa Gustavsen, Assistant Regional Director, Quabbin  
Trish McNally, Budget Manager  
Joel Zimmerman, Regional Planner  
Brian Keevan, Environmental Analyst

WSCAC

Lexi Dewey, Executive Director

MWRA Advisory Board

Joseph Favaloro, Executive Director  
Matthew Romero, Deputy Executive Director  
James Guiod, Director of Finance

Other

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

**The meeting was convened at 10:00 am.**

1. Trustee Laskey welcomed attendees, introduced himself as the Chair and called the March 8, 2023 meeting of the Water Supply Protection Trust (WSPT) to order.

The Trustees, as well as several MWRA and DWSP staff, attended the hybrid meeting in-person at MWRA's Southborough Facility. A number of other staff and attendees participated remotely via WebEx. Trustee Laskey noted that pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021 and subsequent acts extending certain COVID19 measures adopted during the state of emergency, the meeting was being conducted partially via remote participation and would be recorded.

All Trustees were present, establishing a quorum.

2. **Approval of the Minutes** – A motion was made by Trustee Meehan and seconded by Trustee Heyes to approve the December 15, 2022 WSPT meeting minutes. The Trustees unanimously approved the minutes.
3. **Financial and Progress Report** – John Scannell provided the following information.
  - **Expenditures** - At 67% through the fiscal year 2023, the DWSP budget is 55% spent. John explained that this is normal, with typical spending. He noted that although Pension and Insurance spending seems low, totals have not yet been received. Energy costs are up and will likely be overspent this fiscal year. Additional survey work was performed this year, which is reflected in Operational Services spending. John reminded the Trust that spending can exceed an account by 25% or 100,000, whichever is lesser, without requiring Trust approval. In response to a question from Trustee Taverna, John noted that DWSP purchased various heavy equipment in FY23 including a mini-excavation, loader, and trucks.
  - **Revenue** – Revenue is up due to hydropower generation and transmission.
  - **FY23 Updates**
    - DWSP is working to develop a new 5-year Watershed Protection Plan, with input from MWRA staff, which will be submitted to MassDEP by June 1, 2023.
    - DWSP staff continue to work on the Ware River Watershed Public Access Management Plan and Wachusett Watershed Public Access Management Plan.
    - The Bird Control Programs at both reservoirs have been successful and have run continuously throughout the year as there was no ice cover on the reservoirs. John noted that DWSP and MWRA have been testing a slightly lower operating band at Wachusett Reservoir, which has proven successful. There was discussion regarding the success of the Bird Control programs over the years and John Scannell credited the hard work of DWSP staff. In response to a question from Trustee Rao, John Gregoire discussed the benefits of operating Wachusett Reservoir at a lower band.
    - Over the past year, DWSP created a new Watershed Protection Act GIS database and is working to create a similar Environmental Quality GIS database.
    - DWSP is waiting for the Comptroller to release funding for the Gate 43 Roadway repairs and is completing required financial paperwork. DWSP will be able to use existing agency contracts, despite some federal funding, and anticipates making the repairs at the end of fishing season. In response to a question from Trustee Meehan, John noted funding is available through FY24 and that staff are working to estimate project costs. Trustee Meehan suggested being prepared to make the repairs prior to the start of fishing season, if possible. There was discussion and John noted that further conversations with the contractor would yield more information.
    - Quabbin Park Cemetery - John noted that further research has been performed and that records associated with 120 individuals buried at the Quabbin Park Cemetery are still missing. Trustee Meehan expressed frustration and disappointment, and asked about the plan going forwarded. He

suggested contracting to research town records and any other available records. There was discussion regarding research possibilities and opportunities.

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

4. **Personnel and Hiring** – John Scannell explained that DWSP is currently at 140 FTEs and that there have been several recent vacancies as staff have been promoted or have moved on. He noted that of 12 current vacancies, two have selected candidates who will start in the coming weeks and two are in the interview phase. In response to a question from Trustee Meehan, John noted that the highest FTE count achieved was 145, during the summer. Trustee Rao reflected that while some level of vacancy is expected at any organization, procedures are now in place at DWSP to fill vacancies as they arise. Trustee Laskey agreed that a vacancy rate is inevitable and that promotions inevitably results in vacancies. Joe Favaloro applauded the efforts of DWSP, agreeing that the processes are now in place without impediment.
5. **Draft FY24 Work Plan and Budget** – John Scannell presented the following Draft FY24 Work Plan and Budget. He noted that the Work Plan and Budget for the following fiscal year is typically presented in March and voted on by the Trustees in June.
  - Division-wide
    - Land protection efforts will continue through purchase of fee and Watershed Preservation Restrictions (WPAs).
    - DWSP staff will continue monitoring WPAs on a regular 2-3 year basis. In response to questions from Trustee Rao, John and Ken McKenzie explained that DWSP staff regularly monitor for changes in property ownership and actively work with new property owners. There was discussion regarding remote monitoring on larger properties.
    - Use of GIS and electronic field data collection will continue to expand and streamline numerous DWSP protection efforts.
    - Staff are working to complete an update to the Terrestrial Invasive Plant Management Plan. John explained that the plan will investigate various options for controlling terrestrial invasive species in the watersheds including prescribed burns and herbicides. There was discussion regarding ubiquitous invasive species, which prevent forest regeneration.
    - The bird harassment program will continue.
    - Water Quality monitoring will continue.
    - Forestry operations will continue.
    - A forest stand adjustment pilot project will be implemented to investigate where timber stand adjustments can help with forest regeneration.
    - Ranger presence throughout the watersheds will continue, in coordination with state and environmental police.
    - Implementation of the Watershed Protection Act and assorted regulations will continue.
    - Major dams will continue to be monitored and maintained, in coordination with MWRA, as well as smaller dams.
    - Education and outreach programs will continue and expand, both online and in-person.
    - The Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) program will continue across the watershed system.
  - Wachusett/Sudbury Region
    - Vegetation management around the Wachusett Reservoir will continue.
    - Beaver control in the Pathogen Control Zone and work to reduce impacts of beaver in other areas in the watershed will continue.
    - White-tailed deer management will continue as DWSP continues to move away from a specifically permitted reservoir hunt, towards including the reservoir zone in the general permit hunt.
    - Road management and upgrades will continue.

- DWSP will continue to work to remove a number of structures and restore a stream on recently purchased property.
  - Successful aquatic invasive species control work will continue in the Stillwater and Quinapoxet basins, in coordination with MWRA. Monitoring in other surrounding ponds and streams, including at South Meadow Pond, will also continue.
  - Work to encourage municipal improvement to salting practices and monitoring will continue. In response to a question from Trustee Rao, John explained that DWSP performs regular salt monitoring and that it will likely take several years to see impacts of salt usage reductions.
  - Continue to work with consultants and MassDOT on the final design of the remaining direct discharge to Wachusett Reservoir at Route 110 in Sterling.
  - DWSP will continue to work with MWRA on preparedness for possible railroad spills. There was discussion and it was noted that MWRA and DWSP have invested a lot of time and effort in preparing for possible emergencies as well as in negotiating improvements during the sale of the railroad.
- Quabbin/Ware River Region
    - Land Management activities will continue.
    - Gravel Resources Management will continue in both watersheds.
    - DWSP hopes to restart conversations regarding the need to manage deer populations in Quabbin Park.
    - Drone work with MassDOT will continue at Quabbin Reservoir to monitor gull roosting.
    - Visitors Center education and outreach will continue, both in-person and online.
    - DWSP will continue to work with MWRA on the Quabbin Administration Building Complex capital improvement design study.
    - New Boat Launch Area processes will continue including boater ID cards, streamlined season pass sales, iPad scanning and credit card sales.
    - DWSP hopes to implement the new Ware River Watershed Public Access Management Plan.

Trustee Meehan and Trustee Heyes commended Maria Beiter-Tucker at the Quabbin Visitors Center for her Quabbin hikes and tours.

- FY24 Major Project Highlights
  - Quabbin Gate 43 Road Reconstruction.
  - Quabbin Administration Building Hanger Door Replacement Design.
  - Wachusett Building Demolition.
  - Aquatic Invasive Plant Control at the South Meadow Pond Complex near Wachusett.
  - Final design of Route 110 Direct Discharge Elimination.
- FY2024 Draft Operating Budget
  - \$21.971 million operating budget, which is a 3% increase.
  - \$1.01 million revenue is projected.
  - An additional \$295,000 is budgeted for Personnel from FY2023 due to pay raises.
  - A 20% increase in utility costs is budgeted to reflect actual/proposed spending.

John Scannell answered a few clarifying questions from the Trustees. Trustee Laskey noted that the report would be accepted and placed on file.

## 6. Miscellaneous Updates

- **DWSP Forestry** – John Scannell explained that DWSP continues forestry work on all active projects. Ken McKenzie explained that DWSP recently provided a variety of information to the administration,

in response to a request, regarding active forestry projects as well as projects within the last four and a half years. This information outlines the DWSP forestry program and its scientific basis. Specifically, DWSP provided information regarding forestry lot acreage, municipality, bid amount, successful bidder, management objectives, photos and narratives. DWSP hopes this information will inform larger conversations and looks forward to continuing to answer questions.

There was discussion and questions from the Trustees. Trustee Heyes commended staff for conveying the importance of the DWSP forestry program for watershed management. Joe Favaloro stressed the need to differentiate between forestry in the watersheds and other areas, as well as the importance and priority of the issue. There was discussion. John Scannell explained that DWSP presented the science to convey the importance of forestry in watershed management and maintaining water supply. He also explained that the process of preparing, approving, and bidding lots is continuous, and that only the sale of lots in March is currently on hold.

Trustee Rao noted that is typical for new administrations to ask questions and seek information on topics that agencies are working on, and that providing this information and updating the new administration is part of that effort. It was noted that Undersecretary Stephanie Cooper is very familiar with this issue. There was discussion regarding next steps and it was decided to closely monitor the situation for the time being. Trustee Laskey pointed out MWRA and DWSP's history of land stewardship, noting that the agencies have purchased hundreds of acres of land in the watersheds, which are now permanently protected.

- **Ware River Watershed Public Access Management Plan Update** – John Scannell noted that DWSP continues to work to update the Ware River Watershed Public Access Management Plan. A plan was submitted for public review in the fall and the comment period extended through February. DWSP will be meeting with the new Secretary to review the plan and hopes to complete the update by the end of FY23. Trustee Meehan told the other Trustees that he was recently asked by an individual to support water skiing at Long Pond. He explained that he had told that individual that the Trust and Trustees should not be involved, but stated his personal support of efforts to encourage continued water skiing. John Scannell noted that water skiing at Long Pond is a challenging situation, and that DWSP is aiming to protect the watersheds to the best of its ability.

In response to a question from Trustee Heyes, Dan Clark explained that monitoring of the keystone bridge at Quabbin will continue until a decision regarding next steps is made.

Trustee Heyes asked about the Forestry NR Building and Ranger Station, which are slated to be mothballed. Dan Clarke explained that DCR Cultural Resources Office are evaluating the buildings to determine their cultural significance, noting that changes that have been made over the years may impact their significance. John Scannell explained that both buildings have costly health and maintenance issues, and that hybrid work schedules provide the ability to consolidate staff in the Quabbin Administration Building.

Trustee Meehan asked for an update regarding ranger enforcement and feedback on the feasibility of providing educational information to offenders in lieu of citations. It was noted that change of administration and resignation of the former EEA General Counsel has temporarily stalled this analysis, but that the MWRA General Counsel is working with the new interim EEA General Counsel on the issue. There was discussion regarding the issue and GIS Ipad Incident Reporting. John clarified that DWSP Rangers can ask offenders for identification. Trustee Laskey suggested putting the issue first on the agenda for the June meeting.

**The Trustees unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 11:25 am.**