



Kathleen A. Theoharides, 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 9, 2022

Conducted via Zoom Meeting

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

David Coppes, Chief Operating Officer

Carolyn Francisco Murphy, General Counsel

Michael Altieri, Associate General Counsel

Carolyn Fiore, Deputy Chief Operating Officer

Rebecca Weidman, Director, Environmental and Regulatory Affairs

Katie Ronan, Environmental Analyst

Michael Cole, Budget Director

Matt Horan, Deputy Director of Finance

Tom Durkin, Director of Finance

Valarie Moran, Director of Waterworks

Ria Convery, Special Assistance to the Executive Director

Jim Coyne, Budget Manager

John Gregoire, Reservoir Operations Program Manager

Steven Estes-Smargiassi, Director of Planning & Sustainability

William Sullivan, Senior Program Manager

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

Joel Zimmerman, Regional Planner

Trish McNally, Budget Manager

Kelly Freda, Regional Director, Wachusett/Sudbury Region

MWRA Advisory Board

Joseph Favaloro, Executive Director

Matthew Romero, Deputy Executive Director

James Guidod, Director of Finance

WSCAC

Lexi Dewey, Executive Director

Other

Clayton Sydla, Quabbin Fisherman's Association

Dan Hammock, North Worcester County Quabbin Anglers Association

The meeting was convened at 10:00 am.

Trustee Laskey introduced himself and called the March 9, 2022 meeting of the Water Supply Protection Trust (WSPT) to order. Trustee Laskey called the roll to establish attendance and a quorum. All Trustees were present.

Trustee Laskey welcomed Clayton Sydla, President of the Quabbin Fisherman's Association and Dan Hammock, member of the Board of Directors of the North Worcester County Quabbin Anglers Association. Trustee Meehan further introduced the two individuals, noting their active involvement in local civic affairs and potential interest in future involvement with the Trust. Dan Hammock thanked the Trust for the opportunity to attend the meeting and reviewed his extensive involvement in the community.

Trustee Laskey noted that the Water Supply Protection Trust was created 18 years ago and that MWRA and DCR's Division of Watershed Protection (DWSP) have a very good working relationship with mutual interests in protecting the water supply. He noted that prior to creation of the Trust, there was frustration surrounding MWRA's inability to fund various DWSP activities in the watersheds. The Trust was created as an independent body to review and approve the DWSP budget, to be funded by MWRA. Trustee Laskey noted that the watersheds are a better place as a result of the Trust.

- 1. Approval of the Minutes** – A motion was made by Trustee Taverna and seconded by Trustee Heyes to approve the December 8, 2021 WSPT meeting minutes. The minutes were unanimously approved by the Trust. Trustee Rao thanked Katie Ronan for preparing the quarterly meeting minutes.
- 2. FY22 Financial and Progress Reports** – John Scannell provided an update on DWSP FY22 expenditures, explaining that at two thirds through the fiscal year, the budget was 54% spent. Personnel (AA) and Pensions/Insurance (DD) were underspent because DWSP remains understaffed, despite extensive hiring efforts. Administrative expenditures (EE) was close to spent due to computer charges which were recently moved from IT Expenses (UU). DWSP continues to monitor Administrative Expenses (EE), which will likely exceed the budget by the end of the fiscal year. DWSP is authorized to exceed an account by 25%, prior to seeking approval of the Trust. Energy costs (GG) are climbing dramatically and while currently underspent, will likely meet or exceed the budget. A vehicle order in Equipment (KK) is delayed and will therefore be swapped for a heavy equipment purchase previously planned for FY23, which is available now. Construction Improvements (NN) is underspent as project expenditures typically come towards the end of the fiscal year. Grants (PP) includes salt reduction grants to watershed communities and will be underspent. Three communities have submitted grant requests to fund salt reduction measures including Princeton, West Boylston and Holden.

In response to a question from Trustee Laskey, John Scannell explained that quantifying short-term impacts of salt reduction efforts is difficult, largely due to weather variability from year to year. However, improved water quality and groundwater quality is expected in the long-term. John also noted that community participation in salt reduction efforts is improving, with Sterling and Holden now using brine and other communities working towards using brine. A future challenge will be reducing salt usage at commercial facilities.

In response to a question from Trustee Meehan, John Scannell explained that the Commonwealth contracts for fuel and does not have the ability to buy or pay in advance. Therefore there is no cost savings when fuel prices increase.

FY22 DWSP Updates

- The 2018 Land Management Plan is up for five year review, which will provide an opportunity to evaluate various factors, including the impact of climate change on land management practices, and adjust the plan if necessary. DWSP is coordinating with the Secretariat and DCR Forestry Division to review land management practices holistically.
- The Quabbin Administration Building Well permit was recently approved by MassDEP.
- DWSP recently performed a prescribed burn at Barre Heath and is planning additional prescribed burns on Prescott Peninsula this spring. DWSP hopes to incorporate prescribed burns into the Land Management Plan, which may be beneficial for oak regeneration at certain areas at Quabbin.
- DWSP's Gull Control programs have been running since the early 1990's. This year, extremely low bird numbers were observed at Wachusett throughout the season. DWSP performed very little on-water harassment and observation/shoreline-harassment was limited.
- The Draft Sudbury Public Access Plan is out for public review until February 23 and will likely be finalized later this spring.
- DWSP Education & Outreach staff have worked hard throughout the pandemic to create and post several new informational videos. A new "Understanding the Quabbin" video will be used at the Visitor's Center. Various other videos, including a tour of the Wachusett Reservoir, are posted online.
- DWSP has received about \$1.4 million in Asset Mitigation Funding for specific projects related to building safety. This funding will enable completion of various projects with non-ratepayer money, including the remaining building restoration work at Quabbin Park Cemetery Office Building, work at Quabbin Tower, purchase of a new salt shed at Wachusett, work on the Stillwater Farm barn and structural work at the Lancaster Street Headquarters. John Scannell explained that the funding is only available through the end of FY22, which presents contract and timing challenges. Some of the funds cannot be spent in time, including approximately \$700,000 for replacement of windows at the Quabbin Administration Building. Unless the funding is rolled into FY23, there is not enough time to complete the work by June 30.

Trustee Rao asked for a link to the new videos:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL2yN9X7t6shr1ASUNCA2B8Gk0EHa7sDWH>

In response to a question from Trustee Taverna, John Scannell confirmed that the Asset Mitigation Funding must be spent by the end of FY22 and remarked that this is very difficult, given the quick timeline to contract and complete work. Trustee Meehan asked if the funds could be used to improve access to Boat Lunch Area 3. John Scannell explained that the funding was approved for specific projects, mostly related to buildings, and that substitutions have not been allowed up to this point. He noted that DWSP is evaluating the situation at Boat Launch Area 3 and options for repaving.

Trustee Taverna inquired about the status of the New Salem Building. John Scannell explained that DWSP is working with a new architect to evaluate the designs and costs.

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

- 3. Personnel and Hiring Updates** – John Scannell explained that DWSP is currently at 141 FTEs and that staff have been working very hard to fill positions since being authorized to fill up to 150 FTEs. Various positions have been filled and most have started. One additional position is in the process of being filled, which will likely bring the FTE count to 142 next week. He credited DWSP staff for their hard work. John reviewed a list of eight remaining vacancies, explaining that they are a result of one resignation, one termination and six internal promotions. The positions have been submitted and will be posted upon approval.

Trustee Laskey and Trustee Rao commended DWSP staff for their efforts and success in filling several positions over the past months.

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

4. Draft FY23 Work Plan and Budget – John Scannell explained that the Draft FY23 Work Plan and Budget is typically submitted to the Trust in March, for approval in June. He noted that DWSP worked closely with MWRA Budget staff to develop these materials. He provided the following highlights for FY23.

- Watershed Protection Plan - FY23 is the fifth and final year in the implementation schedule of the FY19-23 Watershed Protection Plan. Therefore a major task in FY23 will be development of the FY24-FY28 Watershed Protection Plan.
- Division Wide
 - Continue land acquisition to target critical parcels in the watersheds for purchase.
 - Continue monitoring 149 Watershed Preservation Restrictions on a 2-3 year timeline.
 - Continue use of GIS and electronic field data collection to streamline protection efforts.
 - Finalize Land Management Plan Review.
 - Continue to manage wildlife impacts in the watershed including Gull Harassment program, controlled hunts and management in the Pathogen Control Zone.
 - Continue forestry operations and monitoring to ensure no impacts to water quality.
 - Continue to maintain Ranger presence to monitor and control public access.
 - Continue water quality and stream flow monitoring, in coordination with MWRA.
 - Continue water quality contract with UMass Amherst, including chloride work.
 - Continue aquatic invasives monitoring and removal, in coordination with MWRA.
 - Continue work with MassDOT aeronautics to track gull roosts, especially at Quabbin.
 - Continue Deer Management plans, including a watershed-wide hunting permit for general hunting at Sudbury, Wachusett, Ware River and areas of Quabbin.
 - Continue controlled hunts at Quabbin and Wachusett. DWSP hopes to move forward with a controlled hunt at Quabbin Park due to forest impacts in that area.
- Quabbin/Ware
 - Continue Ranger presence to monitor and control public access.
 - Finalize and implement the Water River Watershed Public Access Plan.
 - Continue maintenance of Quabbin Park Cemetery. All major projects being undertaken by DWSP and MWRA will be complete by end of FY23.
 - Continue to monitor and analyze water quality throughout the reservoir and watersheds.
 - Continue work with MWRA on new drinking water well at Quabbin Administration Building.
 - Continue forestry operations and monitoring to ensure no impacts to water quality.
 - Continue maintenance of lands around the Quabbin Reservoir including management of unwanted vegetation on dams and dikes, in coordination of MWRA and Office of Dam Safety.
 - Continue to monitor and maintain smaller dams in the watersheds.
 - Continue boat cleaning and streamlined boater registration process. Credit card-only boat rentals will be implemented this season, with public outreach and a grace period. Trustee Meehan expressed concern that folks could be turned away as a result. John Scannell reassured Trustee Meehan that DWSP will not turn folks away and is working on a process to avoid that situation. He also noted that moving to credit card-only rentals will improve security at the Boat Launch Areas and will be implemented slowly.
- Wachusett/Sudbury
 - Continue structure removal and buffer zone restoration on purchased lands, including the Kush property in Sterling.
 - Continue road salts reduction efforts.
 - Continue work with MassDOT on the final remaining direct discharge in Sterling.

- Major Projects
 - Complete Gate 40 culvert replacement with box culvert to meet future flows due to climate change. DWSP recently awarded the contract, which will extend into FY23.
 - Abate metal surfaces on the Quabbin Spillway.
 - Finalize design work of the New Salem Building with new architect.
 - Complete demolition of buildings on Kush, the property in Sterling.
 - Build new salt storage sheds in Clinton and West Boylston.
 - Repair fence on the North Dike at Wachusett.
- FY23 Draft Operating Budget
 - The total DWSP FY23 Draft Operating Budget is \$21.03 Million. This is a 2.7% increase from FY22, mostly due to personnel and associated costs.

Trustee Taverna asked how DWSP plans to address the number of violations in the watersheds. John Scannell explained that while Rangers have the ability to identify and ticket repeat offenders, the majority of violations come from new visitors who are unfamiliar with the rules. For this reason, DWSP is proactive with signage and Rangers seek a high rate of face-to-face interactions with new visitors.

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

5. Miscellaneous Updates

- **Quabbin Park Cemetery** – Dan Clark noted that DWSP recently performed vegetation management in the cemetery, including tree removal, with more planned. As previously noted, upgrades to the Office Building will be complete by end of the fiscal year. Headstone cleaning requests have been transitioned to an online platform. This streamlines the process and coordinates with DWSP’s new ArcGIS grave viewer application. The cemetery will likely reopen for burials for the season in the coming weeks.
- **Watershed Research Permits** - Trustee Meehan asked for an update on research permits in the watersheds. Dan Clarke explained that in 2021, 26 research permits were issued at Quabbin, of which 17 were renewals and 9 were new requests. There were two new requests at Wachusett and one new request at Ware River. The vast majority of these permits are related to natural resource research, such as forest structure or wildlife. One unique permit involves sonar scans of a burial ground in the watershed. All researchers are qualified and affiliated with recognized organizations. Dan noted that a summary of all the research permits and the annual research reports can be provided to the Trust. He confirmed that there is no permanent construction associated with any of the research permits. One project involves semi-permanent stream gauges for long-term water quality monitoring.
- **Quinapoxet Dam Removal** - Trustee Laskey noted the Governor included funding in the supplemental budget for the Quinapoxet Dam removal project, which will open up about 17 miles of fisheries habitat. Funding was also included for the removal of the Edwards Pond Dam in the Wachusett watershed. Trustee Laskey and Joe Favaloro have been advocating for the legislature to include this funding in the final budget.
- **Railroad Purchase** - Trustee Laskey reported that the purchase of the Pam Am Railroad by CXS is in the final stages. He credited Matt Horan for negotiating with CXS to ensure beneficial safety upgrades for the Wachusett Reservoir.
- **MWRA Project in the Watersheds** – William Sullivan provided a presentation outlining the status of several MWRA capital projects taking place in the watersheds.
 - Repair of River Road in Clinton was complete in early 2022.

- The Wachusett Lower Gatehouse Crane Bridge was removed in 2021.
 - The Wachusett Reservoir Dam Bastion Building is being rehabilitated. The contract recently began and is expected to be complete in 2023.
 - The Wachusett Lower Gatehouse windows and doors are being replaced in 2022.
 - The Wachusett Lower Gatehouse Pipe and Boiler Replacement Project is a significant undertaking, and is expected to be complete in 2024.
 - Wachusett Lower Gatehouse Roof and Repointing Project is expected to be complete in 2024.
 - The Quabbin Administration Building Well and Pipeline has been approved by MassDEP. The goal is to have the drinking water well in service by October 2022.
 - The new Quabbin Maintenance Building on Blue Meadow Road in Belchertown is under design and construction is scheduled to begin in 2023.
 - The Quabbin Administration Building Rehabilitation Project is underway with a code review, which will inform design. Construction is expected to begin in 2024.
 - The Quabbin Cemetery Hazardous Material Abatement Project involved abatement of the Office Building and demolition of the well pump house and storage shed. Work was complete in 2021.
 - The Quabbin Aqueduct Shaft 2 Project involves replacing deteriorating concrete and is expected to be complete by the end of 2022.
 - Improvements and repairs to the Foss and Sudbury Dams will begin in 2023 and are expected to be complete in 2024.
 - The Quinapoxet Dam Removal Project will restore free passage of fish and wildlife while managing sediment and protecting water quality.
 - The Wachusett Dam North Dike Overtopping Project involves installation of a parapet wave wall at the Leominster Pump Station and a berm at the end of the dike to prevent overtopping. The project is scheduled for 2023. There was discussion related to Leominster's legislative rights to obtain up to 1 mgd from the Wachusett Reservoir as well as about historic and potential interest.
- **Spill Response Training** - John Gregoire explained that MWRA, together with DWSP, is planning the annual Spill Response Training at Wachusett Reservoir in late May. He noted that CSX has indicated interest in participating in the training and working with MWRA and DWSP on other emergency response preparedness.

Trustee Laskey requested a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was made by Trustee Taverna and seconded by Trustee Rao.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:09am.