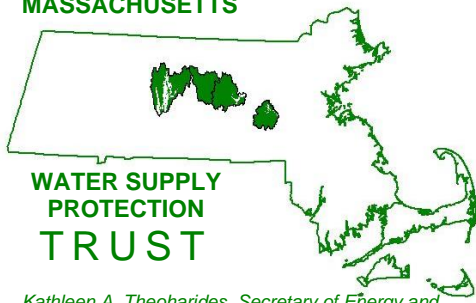


**MASSACHUSETTS**



*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**

June 2, 2021

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

Carolyn Francisco Murphy, General Counsel  
Sean Navin, Director of Intergovernmental Affairs  
Katie Ronan, Environmental Analyst  
Michael Cole, Budget Director  
Matt Horan, Deputy Director of Finance  
Tom Durkin, Director of Finance  
Ria Convery, Special Assistance to the Executive Director  
Angela Atchue, Associate General Counsel  
Jim Coyne, Budget Manager  
John Gregoire, Reservoir Operations Program Manager  
Steven Estes-Smargiassi, Director of Planning & Sustainability  
Leo Norton, Assistance Manager of Rates, Revenue & Finance

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  
Jamie Carr, Regional Director, Wachusett/Sudbury  
Brian Keevan, Environmental Resource Analyst  
Yuelin Lee, DCR Quabbin/Ware Region  
Kurt Gaertner, Director of Land Policy and Planning, EEA

MWRA Advisory Board

Joseph Favaloro, Executive Director  
Matthew Romero, Deputy Executive Director

WSCAC

Lexi Dewey, Executive Director

## **The meeting was convened at 10:03am.**

Trustee Laskey introduced himself and called the June 2, 2021 meeting of the Water Supply Protection Trust to order. He noted that the public meeting was being conducted via remote participation pursuant to Governor Bakers March 12, 2020 order suspending certain provisions of the open meeting law, that the meeting was being recorded, and that all votes would be conducted by roll call.

Carolyn Francisco-Murphy called the roll to establish attendance and a quorum. All Trustees were present.

- 1. Approval of the Minutes** – A motion was made by Trustee Taverna and seconded by Trustee Heyes to approve the March 3, 2021 meeting minutes. Carolyn Francisco-Murphy called the roll and the minutes were unanimously approved by the Trust.
- 2. Covid19 Response Update** – John Scannell and Fred Laskey
  - John Scannell provided an update for DWSP, explaining that many Covid19 restrictions have been lifted and the Quabbin Visitors Center has reopened. Maintenance and ranger staff have been in field throughout the pandemic. Other staff continue to work remotely and are in the field when necessary. DWSP will likely transition to a hybrid model in November. John noted that all work necessary to meet protection plans, continues to be accomplished.
  - Fred Laskey noted that a substantial level of MWRA staff are back in buildings and that MWRA is assessing space requirements moving forward. He explained that headquarters in the Navy Yard will be abandoned and staff will move to Chelsea, Deer Island, or Southborough going forward. He noted that staff have risen to the occasion and continued to progress on watersheds capital projects, despite Covid19.

### **3. FY21 DWSP Spending Update – John Scannell**

John Scannell provided an update on DWSP spending through April. Spending was down by approximately \$1 million, in personnel and associated expenses. Projects are being accomplished and that most subsidiaries will be spent by year end. In response to a question from Trustee Taverna, John explained that the FY2021 budgeted \$19.8 million for total expenditures and that \$13.3 million (73%) had been spent through April. John reiterated salaries are expected to remain underspent, while other line items will be spent by end of year.

Tom Durkin noted the importance of submitting fiscal year spending to MWRA staff in time to make fourth quarter payments. John Scannell explained that staff have been working throughout the year to get this information more quickly and that DWSP has switched to monthly billing to assist with the effort. John thanked Trish McNally and Michael Cole for their work.

The report was accepted and placed on file.

### **4. Approval of FY22 Work Plan and Budget – John Scannell**

John Scannell explained that the FY22 Budget and Work Plan had not changed since it was presented at the March 3, 2021 meeting. John noted that DWSP currently has 134 FTEs. He explained that three additional positions are in the hiring process and that DWSP has recently received approval to pursue another three positions, which will bring the total to 140 FTEs. The following summary of the FY22 Work Plan was provided.

- FY22 Work Plan – Major Highlights
  - Continue land acquisition efforts.
  - Continue use of GIS to streamline field data collection.
  - Continue work on water quality database.
  - Continue sampling and aquatic invasives modeling, with assistance from UMass.

- Continue work with MassDOT on drone monitoring of gulls on the reservoirs. Expand drone use for forest monitoring and develop DWSP drone program.
- Continue deer management across the watersheds.
- Continue forestry operations, including active monitoring and water quality sampling. Continue long-term paired watershed study.
- Continue Ranger presence throughout the watersheds.
- FY22 Work Plan - Quabbin
  - Continue work with MWRA at Quabbin Park Cemetery.
  - Continue Boat Launch Area (BLA) monitoring. Electronic payments have streamlined operations and boat rentals have resumed after pause in 2020, due to the pandemic.
  - Develop Ware River Public Access Plan, which was previously on hold, and host public meetings.
- FY22 Work Plan - Wachusett
  - Continue forest and water quality monitoring.
  - Continue removal of structures on purchased land, including the Kush property.
- FY22 Work Plan - Both Watersheds
  - Continue dam monitoring.
  - Continue education and outreach, both in-person and remote.
  - Develop Sudbury Reservoir Access Plan.
- FY22 Work Plan - Major Project Highlights
  - Replace failing culvert at Quabbin Gate 40 with a new box culvert.
  - Continue work at Quabbin Park Cemetery.
  - Address the final direct discharge, located at Wachusett on Route 110, with MassDOT. Upon completion of this project, all direct discharges to the reservoir will be treated or eliminated. Trustee Laskey acknowledged this major accomplishment and there was discussion.
- FY22 Budget
  - The total DWSP FY22 operating budget is \$20.4 million. This includes an increase of about 3%, mostly due to pay raises and benefit costs.

Tom Durkin noted appreciation for DWSP's cooperation over the past months. He explained while the MWRA Board of Directors voted to adjust personnel costs, MWRA would reimburse DWSP as necessary. He explained that the budget reflects what staff consider the best recommendation to the Board and that adjustments are made to virtually all line items.

In response to a question from Trustee Taverna, John Scannell explained that two of the three vacancies in the progress of being filled, are high-level environmental quality positions that were vacated after recent retirements.

In response to a question from Trustee Taverna about the New Salam facility, John Scannell explained that recent engineering design work resulted in high costs to rebuild the facility. MWRA and DWSP are revisiting the matter to consider more cost effective alternatives. Trustee Taverna requested the information and there was discussion.

In response to a question from Trustee Taverna about the Ware River Watershed Access Plan, John explained that the plan had previously been put on hold at the request of the Commissioner and that DWSP hopes to restart the process soon, including hosting public meetings. John also noted that DEP requested that the plan be complete by August, though DWSP will likely need to seek an extension. There was discussion regarding past concerns about

mountain biking in the watershed. John noted that DWSP rangers have been working with the mountain biking community, which has helped achieve better compliance and reduce illegal trail activity.

Trustee Laskey referenced the current vacancy rate and FY22 DWSP appropriation. He explained that if DWSP hires faster than expected, the funding would simply flow from MWRA to DWSP. It was noted that the matter is purely administrative. Joe Favaloro noted that the Advisory Board specifically recommended reducing the DWSP FY22 budget by increasing the vacancy rate and securing a portion of the FY21 surplus to be used in the event staffing increased beyond 136. He agreed the measure was an accounting tool to help reduce the increase in water assessments.

Carolyn Francisco Murphy called the roll. The Trust unanimously approved the FY22 Budget and Work Plan.

## **5. Staffing – Joe Favaloro**

Joe Favaloro requested a moment to express his continued concern regarding continued understaffing at DWSP and stated that the decision-making power of the Trust should be clarified on the matter. Working closely with Senator Gobi, the MWRA Advisory Board added language to the senate budget, to strengthen the role of the Trust related to staffing. He noted that the MWRA Board of Directors strongly endorsed the language and it would be included in the final budget to be signed by the Governor. He requested that the Trust also endorse the proposed language and memorialize endorsement in a letter.

A motion was made by Trustee Taverna and seconded by Trustee Heyes to endorse the language, as proposed by Joe Favaloro. Trustee Rao noted that she would need to abstain from the vote and requested that correspondence on the topic be from the other individual Trustees, rather than the Trust as a whole. Trustee Laskey noted that her abstention did not diminish the efforts or commitment of Secretary or Trustee Rao to adequately fund of the watersheds. Trustee Rao acknowledged the awkwardness and lauded the progress made on the matter to this point.

Carolyn Francisco Murphy called the roll. Trustee Laskey, Trustee Heyes, Trustee Meehan and Trustee Taverna voted to endorse the language. Trustee Rao abstained. Trustee Laskey thanked Mr. Favaloro and Trustee Taverna for all their hard work on the matter.

## **6. Green Certification – Brian Keevan**

John Scannell noted that Brian Keevan had previously presented to the Trust on green certification at the December 2020 meeting. At that time, the Trust requested a comparison of the DWSP forestry program to the two certification standards available for our region. The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is a worldwide program, with specific standards for the northeastern United States. Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) is exclusive to North America and is slightly newer.

Brian reviewed the green certification process, explaining that the landowner contracts an independent certification body, or audit team, to perform the review, collect materials, consult with stakeholders, and perform onsite audits of field practices. The audit team typically consists of academics and researchers from across the country, who spend a few days onsite and before leaving to prepare a report based on their findings. The certification agency then reviews the report and, if appropriate, issues certification for five years with annual audits. Recertification is subsequently required every five years. Brian noted that the certification process is very involved and estimated that the certification process could take several weeks.

Brian explained his analysis of how DWSP's current forestry program compares to the two certification standards. He noted that this was an in-house, desktop review based on his own professional experience and knowledge.

- SFI has 15 overarching objectives, which contain 37 performance measures, with 101 indicators.

- FSC has 10 overarching principles, which contain 56 criteria, with 189 indicators.
- The indicators for both sets of standards are detailed and quantifiable. To achieve certification, the forestry program seeking certification must document alignment with indicators.
- Brian reviewed each indicator, from both sets of standards, and categorized DWSP's ability to document alignment with that indicator, based on his knowledge. He categorized alignment level as; generally aligned, mostly aligned, unsure/somewhat not aligned, generally not aligned, or not applicable. Brian explained that his analysis indicates that DWSP's forestry program is overall in alignment with FSC standards. He noted that he has less experience with FSI and therefore was less comfortable making judgements. He noted that no indicators from either FSC or FSI were categorized as "generally not aligned", which is unsurprising given that DWSP was certified for 13 years under FSC and that the standards were incorporated into the current forestry program.

In response to a question from Trustee Taverna, Brian explained that based on his analysis, DWSP performs most strongly on indicators related to sustainability, environmental issues, biodiversity, and water quality. He provided more detail and concluded that DWSP's forestry program appears to be overall in alignment with the certification standards.

Trustee Heyes noted that indigenous people's rights are a major consideration and suggested that the topic should be carefully examined. He referenced personal experience with FSC and suggested that the quality of the work at Quabbin is typically exemplary. He also noted that the amount of staff time required for certification is extensive and estimated that it may be equivalent to one FTE. He acknowledged understanding of the benefits of certification and public perception, but suggested the need to evaluate the cost/benefits and whether there is another way to address public concern.

There was further discussion regarding the importance of indigenous people's rights and Trustee Heyes shared his personal experience. Brian Keegan explained that DWSP's annual forestry proposals are reviewed by the DCR Office of Cultural Resources and archeologist, who review the proposals for known historic sites and potential archeological sites.

Trustee Laskey suggested that it may be prudent to address issues the previously discussed staffing issues, prior to pursuing certification.

Trustee Rao noted that the presentation was helpful to see how the DWSP forestry program compares to the certification standard and that it was heartening to see that the program is highly in alignment. She suggests that this analysis provides validation and credited good work by agencies in watersheds over the past few decades.

Trustee Laskey requested that the presentation be shared with the MWRA Board of Directors.

## **7. Review of MassDEP Annual Inspection Letters – John Scannell**

John explained that MassDEP performs an annual review of the water supply program including both the watershed protection program as well as MWRA items, such as intakes and other infrastructure. The inspections typically occur in the fall and WSPT typically receives response letters back from MassDEP at the beginning of the calendar year. However, this year there were delays related to the pandemic and the letters were recently received. Overall, the response letters were typical and requested updates on certain topics as usual. John noted that the Wachusett letter raised new concerns about staffing and requested quarterly updates on the matter.

John Scannell also explained that the Quabbin letter is typically more detailed and often requests more extensive information and documentation regarding both watersheds. This year, items requested in the Quabbin letter included the following: an update on the FY21 land acquisition program, a list of public access infractions, information on any illegal trails identified in the Ware River, a request for notification prior to expansion or reduction in wildlife programs, wildlife monitoring reports, a forestry summary, and a summary of aquatic

invasive monitoring for the year. DEP was also interested in environmental quality assessments, development of the water quality database, and the status on New Salem facility. A new item, is a request from MassDEP to complete the Ware River Public Access Plan to by the end of August, though an extension can be requested.

John Scannell explained that although MassDEP included new concern over the staffing, the letters are otherwise typical and continued to approve the wavier. There was discussion and Trustee Laskey expressed concern over seemingly very specific language regarding understaffing and concerns that it could eventually lead to degraded water quality.

In response to a request from Trustee Taverna, John Scannell noted that information/documentation provided to MassDEP in response to the letters would be shared with the Trust.

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

## 8. Miscellaneous Updates

- **Fishing** - Dan Clark provided an update on fishing at Quabbin. He explained that the season started on schedule and is back to normal with boat rentals. So far, 768 regular and seasonal passes have been sold. Season pass sales and boater identification cards are now exclusively online, continuing a trend to make the program more efficient and effective. Dan explained that DWSP now requires boaters to bring their own life jackets. He reviewed launch activity for the year so far and noted that it has been a busy season with nice weather throughout the spring.

In response to a question from Joe Favaloro, Dan Clark explained that boat launch staff check all life jackets for appropriateness, prior to allowing boaters on the water. It was also noted that the intent of boats on the water at Quabbin is for fishing. In response to Trustee Laskey, Dan Clark confirmed that all safety precautions and decontamination measures related to invasive species are still in place.

- **Quabbin Park Cemetery** – Dan Clark provided an update on Quabbin Park Cemetery.
  - In the spring, MWRA performed lead abatement on the cemetery garage and office building. DWSP subsequently repainted the buildings and addressed structural issues that were found. The next phase of work is scheduled for FY22 and involves roofing, exterior & window work, and final painting.
  - Over the past several years, DWSP has removed several damaged and hazardous trees from the cemetery. Staff recently performed an assessment of the remaining trees and are now planning for the future with legacy tree planting, maintenance, and trimming. Dan also noted that there are some unauthorized plantings throughout the cemetery. Staff will develop a plan to address these existing plantings and prevent future plantings. Staff are also developing plans for new greenery at the cemetery entrance.
  - A new online GISViewer for Quabbin Park Cemetery is now live and can be used by the public to explore and find information about the cemetery.

Trustee Laskey noted that he has received positive feedback regarding these improvements to the cemetery and requested that staff keep up the good work. In response to questions from Trustee Taverna, Dan explained that a DWSP seasonal staff person is assigned to the cemetery and that all regular maintenance is performed by DWSP staff, while tree work is contracted out.

- **Hunting** – Ken McKenzie provided a summary of the 2020 watershed deer harvest analysis. Ken explained that New Salem and Harwich at Quabbin were open for the two-week shotgun season for the first time in 2020, rather than only the traditional two-day hunts. The Reservoir Zone was open for all of deer season, including archery season, rather than only shotgun season. In 2020, DWSP instated deer

harvest reporting requirements, in an effort to obtain information on harvested deer during the new, longer hunting season. He noted that while the longer hunts present challenges related to collecting data, they are much more efficient and require much less staff time.

- Hunting zones in 2020
  - Quabbin - New Salam, Hardwick, and Pelham were open for two-week shotgun season.
  - Wachusett - The Reservoir Zone was open for all of deer season. Other areas were also open for all of deer season, as usual.
  - Sudbury Reservoir - All areas were open for deer season, as usual.
- Deer harvested in 2020 (numbers presented in a range based on available data)
  - At Quabbin, 14-16 deer were harvested in Hardwick, 8-12 deer were harvested in New Salam and 14 deer were harvested in Petersham.
  - At Wachusett, 33-50 deer were harvested in the Reservoir Zone and 8-110 deer were harvested from other watershed lands.
  - At Sudbury, 28-54 deer were harvested.
- Pellet surveys were performed this year to estimate deer density in various areas.
  - At Wachusett, the density in newly hunted areas is 13-15 deer per square mile. This is a reduction from previous years and is now on par with historically hunted areas.
  - At Sudbury, deer density has declined from 70 to 20 deer per square mile.
  - At Quabbin Park, density is still very high. Ken also noted that Moose density is high at Quabbin, with approximately 4-6 moose per square mile (Maine and New Hampshire have approximately 1-3 moose per square mile). He explained moose are not considered a game animal and would require an act of legislation to be hunted. DWSP foresters are working to mitigate the high moose density with the use of slash walls around newly harvested areas and other measures.

Trustee Taverna requested that the Trust consider meeting in-person or in a hybrid format in the future. There was discussion and Trustees expressed willingness to meet in-person in the future.

Trustee Rao made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded. Carolyn Francisco Murphy called the roll and the Trust unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:48 am.