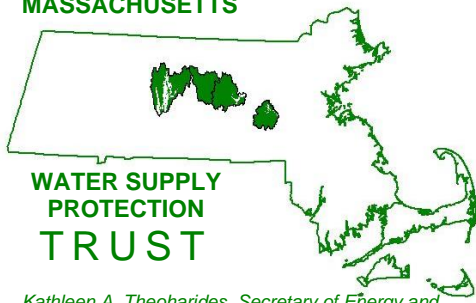


MASSACHUSETTS



*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 8, 2020
Meeting Conducted Virtually via Zoom

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

Dave Coppes, Chief Operating Officer
Carolyn Francisco Murphy, General Counsel
Beth Card, Director of Regulatory and Environmental Affairs
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 Conye, Budget Manager
Val Moran, Deputy Director, Wastewater
John Gregoire, Program Manager, Reservoir Operations

DCR

John Scannell, Director, Division of Water Supply Protection
Dan Clark, 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

MWRA Advisory Board

Joseph Favaloro, Executive Director
Travis Ahern, Director of Finance and Policy

WSCAC

Lexi Dewey, Executive Director

The meeting was convened at 10:00 am.

Trustee Laskey noted that pursuant to Governor Bakers March 20, 2020 Order for Suspending Certain Provisions of the Opening Meeting Law, this meeting is being conducted via remote participation.

MWRA General Counsel Carolyn Francisco Murphy called the roll for attendance. Trustees Laskey, Trustee Heyes, Trustee Meehan, Trustee Rao and Trustee Taverna were all present, reaching a quorum.

Trustee Laskey read the required language, noting that while no in-person attendance of members of the public was permitted, the meeting could be listened to while in progress by following instructions on the agenda. He noted that the meeting was being recorded and that all votes would be taken by roll call vote.

1. **Welcome and Introductions** – Trustee Laskey welcomed members of the Trust and other attendees. He also addressed housekeeping matters to keep the virtual meeting running smoothly.
2. **Approval of the Minutes** – Approval of the December 4, 2019 (which was rescheduled and took place on January 13, 2020) Meeting Minutes. A motion was made by Trustee Taverna and seconded by General Meehan. The roll was called by Carolyn Francisco-Murphy and the minutes were unanimously approved by the Trust.
3. **Covid19 Response** – John Scannell and Trustee Laskey
John Scannell explained that most DCR staff were working remotely except for maintenance staff and rangers, who have been on a reduced and alternating schedule. He noted that reduced staffing had been challenging and it was unknown when DWSP will return to full schedule. Despite challenges presented by social distancing protocols, fieldwork is being completed. DWSP hired some seasonal staff at fishing and boat launch areas, which are both open. John noted that it has been challenging and he hopes to get back to full staffing schedule soon. However, all necessary work related to the waiver is getting accomplished.

Trustee Laskey explained that MWRA was in a similar situation, with many employees teleworking and field crews on reduced and alternating schedules. Trustee Laskey noted that, most importantly, MWRA has been able to maintain and meet all water quality regulatory requirements. He also noted that MWRA and DWSP have been working closely throughout this time.

Other Trustees commended DWSP and MWRA for their response to the pandemic so far. Both John and Trustee Laskey noted that their organizations were facing uncertainty related to when and how fast to bring staff back to the office.

4. FY20 Spending Update – John Scannell

John Scannell provided an update on FY20 spending and noted that DWSP has been continually sharing info with MWRA financial staff.

- John explained that spending is down for a variety of reasons.
 - o Personnel has been at 135 FTEs for a couple of months. John noted that Cliff Reed recently retired from the Quabbin Visitors Center. Personnel will likely be underspent by \$1.5 million by the end of the fiscal year.
 - o Energy costs are down since fewer vehicles are being driven and heating has been at a minimum for last few months.
- DWSP is working on projects including paving in Fishing Area 2 and others in the cemetery.
- Purchases of vehicles will be complete so lines KK and NN will be mostly spent.
- There are a few places that will be underspent.

Joe Favaloro asked if the Secretary of Administration and Finance had responded to the Trust's January 13, 2020 correspondence regarding DWSP personnel issues, before Covid19 hit between January and March. He explained that he wanted to make sure the problem was not ignored and that it will be resolved. Mr. Favaloro noted that he understands the focus may be elsewhere due to Covid19, but worried it was not on the radar. Trustee Laskey noted that he would follow up with A&F on the matter.

5. Approval of FY21 Work Plan and Budget – Trustee Rao made a motion to accept the budget for discussion, which was seconded by Trustee Taverna. The budget was accepted for discussion.

John Scannell reviewed highlights of the FY21 Work Plan and Budget. He noted that there were not many changes from what was previously presented and that DWSP plans to maintain the current effective program.

- Land Acquisition continues to target critical parcels as needed using the updated GIS model.
- Continue active Deer Management Plan across all three watersheds.
- Continue hunts across the watersheds.
- Continue Aquatic Invasives monitoring and removal in partnership with MWRA.
- Working on drone monitoring program with DOT for birds at Quabbin.
- Continue forestry operations. DWSP foresters are monitoring and marking new lots for next year.
- Aim to complete the Ware River Public Access Program in 2020.
- Continue 10-year CIF monitoring at Quabbin.
- Progress design of New Salem building, which is included in the MWRA FY21 CIP. Aiming to complete design early in the year.
- Continue to routinely monitor dams.
- Continue working with MWRA and DEP on Quabbin Administration Building water system issues.
- Continue to work on Salt Reduction Plan at Wachusett, research salt alternatives and work with DPWs. John noted that some reduction has occurred since last winter.
- Sudbury Public Access Plan has been delayed, not making many significant changes.

John explained that DWSP submitted a budget with 2% increase and that revisions to the major projects list had been distributed. John explained that work will continue on the cemetery and building upgrades. DWSP is aiming to complete work on the Cemetery Garage Roof by the end of FY20. MWRA is working on a contract for abatement in FY21, DWSP will then repair and paint the buildings. There is a study in process to determine scope of work for the slate roof of the main building. All of this cemetery work is captured in the FY21 annual projects list.

Trustee Taverna asked about the distribution of the approximately \$1 million budgeted for equipment expenditures (line KK) in the FY21 Work Plan. He noted that there was not much distribution in previous years and asked if this year would be similar. John noted that in the past year heavy equipment purchases had to be cut to save money due to stalled projects. For this reason, the FY21 budget includes the purchase of passenger vehicles as well as heavy equipment for both Quabbin and Wachusett. Wachusett is looking to purchase a new John Deere Skid Steerer as well as equipment to apply salt brine.

Trustee Taverna also asked about distribution for Line NN, which is budgeted at \$1.273 million. John noted that Line NN encompasses major projects and that everyday monies at Quabbin and Wachusett will remain the same.

Trustee Taverna asked about the \$100,000 designated for Quabbin Cemetery upgrades. He asked if funding was split between DCR and MWRA, and who is responsible for what portions of the upgrades. John Scannell explained that the next planned MWRA project is abatement of the main building and demolition of both the garage and well house. DCR will then repair the roof and paint the main building. John noted that the goal is

to have repairs to the cemetery office building and garage complete by the end of FY21. He also noted that MWRA completed work on the water system in the spring and it is now functional.

Trustee Taverna asked about the Quabbin Administration Building Water System Design. John Scannell explained that design is still in progress and that Tighe and Bond wrote a report investigating options. DWSP and MWRA staff met with DEP and discussed options including installation of a new well and direct connection to the reservoir. DWSP is currently installing a test well to evaluate water quality.

Trustee Taverna asked about the Brigham Pond Dam Study and the dam's relationship to the water supply system. John Scannell explained that Brigham Pond became ownership of DWSP when associated land was purchased for watershed protection in Hubberston. The dam is considered high hazard and failing. As owner, DWSP is under order from the Office of Dam Safety to address this. In the current fiscal year, \$60,000 was allocated to be paired with Office of Dam Safety funding for preliminary studies. Currently, the preferred alternative is dam removal. The pond is surrounded by residential houses and removal would have to go through a public process, which was put on hold in the spring due to Covid19. John explained that the planned FY21 funding will be used to take the next steps in design of dam removal. In response to a question from Trustee Taverna, John explained that the dam is on a tributary to the Ware River. Trustee Taverna also asked about plans that are due in 2020 including DWSP's Road Management Plan, Gravel Plan, and Water Quality Sampling Plan. John Scannell noted that the plans would be made available to the Trust when finalized.

Joe Favaloro noted that the MOU between MWRA and DCR very specifically lays out that water supply dams are the responsibility of the MWRA and that non-direct water supply dam are not the responsibility of MWRA. The MOU lays out 53 dams that are non-direct water supply, including Brigham Pond. Mr. Favaloro acknowledged that the Brigham Pond dam needs to be replaced, repaired or eliminated, but stated that it should not be responsibility of MWRA. He expressed concern that this would set a precedent and result in MWRA taking responsibility for the other 52 non-direct water supply dams. He urged the need to proceed cautiously on this matter stating that if the dam is not directly related to water supply, it is not MWRA's responsibility according to the MOU. John Scannell noted that the dam is owned by DCR because associated land was purchased for water supply protection.

Trustee Laskey noted that the dam existed before the watershed was created and also expressed doubt as to whether it was MWRA's responsibility. He noted that the matter had arisen in 2008 and that there had been concern from the MWRA Board of Directors. He remembered there being a consensus that the dam served no water supply purpose and was therefore responsibility of DCR. Trustee Laskey also noted that MWRA has a strong track record of being generous and wide-thinking, but that this matter seemed like a stretch. Particularly where DCR has other activities in the watersheds that are not MWRA responsibility.

John Scannell suggested considering a broader conversation with MWRA, DWSP and DCR. He noted that DWSP regularly conducts Phase 1 Inspections on other dams and the matter warrants a greater conversation.

Trustee Laskey acknowledged the larger movement to eliminate some dams for environmental reasons and agreed with John's suggestion to have a larger conversation. In response, Trustee Rao said she could bring the matter up and suggested DCR's Dam and Seawall Fund as a possible source of potential funding. Trustee Taverna noted that environmental investigations associated with dam removal can be costly.

Trustee Laskey noted that he wanted to go back to a comment he had made previously. He suggested that while 150 FTEs is the goal, it might be wise to consider whether 135 or 136 is the new normal and, if this is the case, how to manage with that number of employees. He expressed doubt as to whether DWSP would receive authorization to fill the remaining 15 positions. John Scannell raised concern about the acceptable number of employees being lowered and DWSP still not being able to fill positions when employees leave.

Trustee Meehan referenced the workforce study that had identified the need for 150 FTEs and stated that the number should not be lowered. He urged DWSP to continue to seek authorization to fill positions. Trustee Rao expressed concern that the acceptable level of vacancy could continue to increase if the number of FTEs is lowered. She suggested continuing to work towards filling positions as well as thinking about work that is not being accomplished and for how long that is acceptable. She also suggesting looking for other opportunities to accomplish certain tasks such as seasonal staff or contracts. Trustee Laskey noted that he was just thinking aloud about what is realistic and would continue to track the issue.

Joe Favaloro stated that DWSP should be given authorization to fill vacant positions. He noted that the Trust was created to provide oversight and suggested that DWSP is trying to get the work done with fewer resources. He noted that a meeting had been planned but that Covid19 had halted discussions and urged the need to continue to pursue the issue. Trustee Laskey noted that the Commissioner had indicated that a decision had been made that all DCR hiring was on hold, regardless of funding source. He reiterated that the Trust will continue to work on the issue, adding that it was worth the effort.

The Trustees voted to approve the FY21 Budget and Work Plan. Carolyn Francisco-Murphy called the roll and all members of the Trust voted in the affirmative, approving the FY21 Budget and Work Plan.

6. Hunting Report - Ken McKenzie

Ken MacKenzie gave a report of the year's hunts across the watersheds. A total of between 116-240 deer were harvested across five areas that were open for hunting. He noted that the numbers are indicated in a range, because for the first time not all deer harvested were checked at a DCR check station. DWSP did research to get the range as narrow as possible.

- Quabbin
 - o Traditional hunt in Petersham. 18 deer taken, 9 male and 9 female.
 - o Pelham was open to hunting for the entire two week shotgun period (normally only open 2 days)
 - 383 hunters participated (applied).
 - Heavy snow resulted in difficult access, hunters had to walk in from gates.
 - 9-12 deer harvested, which is about what is typically harvested during the 2-day period.
 - Success for first year, hope to build upon that.
- Wachusett
 - o Reservoir zone – Controlled hunt, was open from December 1-31st. 98 hunters participated. No DWSP check station, harvested deer were taken to Mass Wildlife District Field Office. Between 17-25 deer were taken. As expected, this was a drop from last year (76 deer taken), which was the first year the reservoir zone was hunted. Overall, the hunt was successful.
 - o The rest of the Wachusett watershed was open from mid-October to the end of December. Approximately 100 deer taken. DWSP aims to improve next year's data by having hunters self-report via an online portal.
- Sudbury
 - o 500 hunters applied. 68-80 deer were taken across 2000 acres in the Sudbury watershed, plus the area near Northborough. DWSP received positive reviews from neighbors regarding hunters.

Ken explained that overall it was a successful year, with approximately 200 deer taken across watersheds. Hunts went well in newly opened areas. Importantly, hunts continued to reduce deer around Wachusett Reservoir Zone.

Ken explained that the planned Quabbin Park hunt had been cancelled, but is proposed again for the

upcoming season. The proposal is being reviewed by the Commissioner and will then go to virtual public review. If the proposal is approved, the hunters that were accepted last year will be readmitted. In response to a question from Trustee Laskey, Ken noted that DWSP has conducted deer surveys for the past three years and found that the population is very high in Quabbin Park.

Ken explained that in addition to Pelham, DWSP plans to open Hardwick and New Salem for the two week shot gun period this season. He noted that the only controlled hunt planned at Quabbin this year is the Quabbin Park Hunt and that other areas will be open for a minimum two-week shotgun period. He also explained that hunting regulations are currently under review and if certain proposed changes are approved, some Quabbin areas could be open from the beginning of archery season through December 31.

Trustee Meehan asked whether there were any incidents with hunters in Pelham this year. Ken said he had nothing to report and noted that Rangers and Watershed maintenance staff did a great job of keeping access open despite heavy snowfall. A post hunt survey received some complaints related to snow depth and access from hunters, but mostly yielded helpful suggestions and comments.

Trustee Laskey asked if hunters still needed a permit to be on DCR land, despite taking the deer to a Mass Wildlife Station. Ken explained that a permit was required but that DWSP does not have enough staff to run a check station everyday during longer hunts. Hunters take deer to the Mass Wildlife station during the first week of shotgun season and can check in online any other day. Because of this, DWSP loses some descriptive information about the deer population including weight, age, etc., but still receives the number and sex of deer. Ken noted that if deer numbers were to skyrocket in the future, DWSP could return to the controlled hunt in certain areas and get more detailed information about deer populations.

In response to a question from Trustee Taverna, Ken explained that regulations currently only allow shotgun hunting at Quabbin. However, archery hunting has become increasingly popular and data indicates that more deer are harvested via archery than shotgun hunting. DWSP is hoping the regulations will be updated to allow for archery to take advantage of that of popularity.

Trustee Laskey asked if DWSP provides assistance to DCR for the Blue Hills hunt. Ken explained that initially he, Dan Clark, and Mass Wildlife were heavily involved in the Blue Hills hunt because of their experience, but have not been involved in recent years.

7. Miscellaneous

Ware River Watershed Public Access Plan Update– John Scannell and Dan Clark

John Scannell and Dan Clark explained that the Ware River Watershed Public Access Plan was put on hold for the new Commissioner to review. They are waiting on more feedback to develop an acceptable plan before going public again. DWSP hopes for the fall but is not certain what to expect. Trustee Laskey asked to be kept updated on developments on this matter.

Quabbin Park Cemetery Update – John Scannell

John noted that DWSP continues to work on hazardous tree issues and that some dead red pines near the entrance were removed this spring. He also noted that DWSP has contracts in place to remove hazardous trees at risk of falling from inside the cemetery this spring as well. DWSP will continue to have this item on the budget. John noted that at some point in the future, some trees may need to be replaced.

Trustee Laskey noted that a legacy of the watershed is planted sugar maples at the entrances to facilities. He explained that are dying off and MWRA has replaced them in Southborough. He noted that he would support spending money to replace trees appropriately. It was also noted that DWSP has been coordinating with DCR's historic landscape experts in an effort to maintain the cemetery's intended historic aesthetic.

John Scannell noted that although gravestones are privately owned, questions remain about responsibility when the family of the deceased is gone. John has had conversations with DCR legal staff and is working to answer these questions.

Trustee Meehan commended DWSP's accomplishments in the cemetery so far. He also noted that a separate line item for cemetery maintenance had been discussed at previous meetings and asked if it was still the intention to create one. John Scannell explained there is not a specific line item for the cemetery and that maintenance is performed by regular DWSP maintenance staff.

Dan Clarke explained that in the past, DWSP had a cemetery management program/database which had since been abandoned. DWSP is now working to develop a GIS spatial database for the cemetery that can be used both internally and by the public. It will include an interactive map containing all grave records. DWSP is in the process of obtaining information/data and rolling it into GIS.

Trustee Meehan asked about the status of pieces of headstones being stored in a cemetery building. Dan Clark explained that it will require investigation to determine whether the pieces are extra gravestones that were replaced or if they are missing pieces from gravestones.

Trustee Meehan requested an update on all cemetery issues, noting that he would like to keep up the momentum and know the plan for the future. John Scannell said DWSP would put together a report for the September WSPT meeting.

Trustee Meehan acknowledged the efforts by DWSP, MWRA and Friends of Quabbin to make the cemetery improvements and enhancements that have been accomplished so far and thanked everyone. Trustee Laskey thanked Trustee Meehan and Trustee Heyes for their advocacy on the issues.

John Scannell noted that there is an important ceremony in the cemetery every year on Memorial Day weekend, which could not happen this year due to Covid19. John commended Maria Baiter-Tucker, at the Quabbin Visitors Center, who worked with Friends of The Quabbin and local legislators to develop and record a virtual cemetery presentation, which was released on Memorial Day. John noted that folks were thrilled with Maria's efforts and the presentation was very well received. Trustee Laskey also commended her work.

Trustee Laskey also acknowledged MWRA Board Member Jennifer Wolowicz for her advocacy regarding the Quabbin Park Cemetery. He noted that the improvements have been a great collaborative effort and that there is still more to be done. He reiterated Trustee Meehan's request to receive a quarterly update on the cemetery.

Quabbin Boat Launch Areas – Dan Clarke

Dan provided a brief update explaining that that fishing/boat launch season was delayed this year due to Covid19. It opened on May 21, about a month late. The season has been limited to private boats and it is unclear if rentals will start this season. DWSP has developed a protocol of new procedures to make sure both staff and customers are safe. He explained that credit card payment had been rolled out at all three boat launch areas this season; though it has been a slow start since most customers are regulars with season passes, due to Covid19. DWSP had made approximately \$1,300 in credit card sales to date. If rentals begin this season, they expect credit card sales to increase significantly. However, Dan noted that this is a long-term investment meant to increase convenience and efficiency.

Trustee Meehan noted that during a visit to one of the boat launches, operations appeared to be professional, safe and respectful. He also noted that a newly paved access road at one launch seems to have improved traffic conditions in the area.

Dan noted that DWSP had received some complaints on behalf of renters; however it was determined that face-to-face instruction of first time renters would be too difficult while following social distancing protocols. John Scannell explained that there are conversations happening across DCR in hopes of developing protocols and working through challenges to allow boat rentals to be done safely.

Other Business

Trustee Taverna asked for an update on forestry operations. John Scannell explained that forestry operations are continuing and DWSP is monitoring. DWSP is about to complete a package for next year's forestry proposal. He noted that there will be no in person meetings, the proposal will be available for public comment electronically.

A few items that could affect DWSP's forestry operations were discussed. Dan Clark noted that a wood chip plant in Massachusetts recently changed owners and closed. It is unclear if they will reopen and this could affect the chip market, which can be significant component to DWSP forestry operations. Additionally, Trustee Heyes reported that a paper mill in Maine recently experienced a digester explosion and that 100 tractor trailers of pulp were turned back on the market as a result. He noted that this was affecting the pine and hardwood pulp markets and that the price of chips were below cost as a result.

Trustee Taverna asked for an update on Green Certification, which had been discussed in January. John reported that DWSP staff are putting information together and will have a presentation for September.

There was discussion and speculation regarding future Trust meetings, the ability to meet in-person, and the environmental and safety benefits of meeting virtually.

Trustee Heyes made a motion to adjourn which was seconded by Trustee Meehan. Carolyn Francisco-Murphy called the role and all members of the Trustee voted in the affirmative to adjourn the meeting.