

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

September 13, 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
Rebecca Weidman, Director, Environmental and Regulatory 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 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, Wachusett Environmental Quality
Brian Keevan, Environmental Resource Analyst
Yuelin Lee, DCR Quabbin/Ware Region

MWRA Advisory Board

Joseph Favaloro, Executive Director
Matthew Romero, Deputy Executive Director

WSCAC

Lexi Dewey, Executive Director

Other

Kurt Gaertner, Assistant Secretary for Environmental Policy, EEA
Brian MacPherson

The meeting was convened at 10:00am.

Trustee Laskey introduced himself and called the September 13, 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 Baker's 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.

transition

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 June 2, 2021 WSPT meeting minutes. Carolyn Francisco-Murphy called the roll and the minutes were unanimously approved by the Trust.
2. **FY21 End of Year Report** – John Scannell provided the following DWSP highlights from FY21.
 - **Land Acquisition** - DWSP purchased two parcels in FY21, for a total of 37.1 acres at a cost of \$517,500. The first parcel is one acre located on Route 12 near the Wachusett Reservoir and is an important purchase as it is commercially zoned. The second parcel is 36.1 acres located in the northern portion of the Wachusett watershed and was slated for residential development. John Scannell reviewed the total amount of land controlled by DWSP and otherwise protected in the watersheds. He noted that some purchases are Watershed Preservation Restrictions (WPRs), which are monitored regularly. Land purchased with Forest Legacy funding requires annual monitoring, while other WPRs are monitored biannually. In total, 68 WPRs were monitored in FY21. John noted that DWSP's WPR Coordinator is currently working to finalize WPR enforcement materials. In FY21, a WPR Handwork was distributed to landowners.
 - **Forest Management** – Staff continued to sell and manage forestry lots across the watershed in FY21. In total, staff prepared and sold 21 lots across the watersheds. Staff also prepared FY22 forestry information, which was recently presented to the public. Work continues on the long-term paired watershed study. The Continuous Forest Inventory (CFI), which is performed every ten years at Quabbin, was completed. In alignment with EOEEA, DWSP has been working to evaluate and identify large grass lawns at administrative areas, which could be converted to meadows.
 - **Wildlife Management**
 - Gull control programs at both watersheds continued successfully in FY21.
 - DWSP continued to control the resident population of geese at both Quabbin and Wachusett reservoirs.
 - DWSP continued work with MassDOT to monitor gulls using drones on the reservoirs. John Scannell explained that this is especially helpful at Quabbin, where it is difficult to see roosting gulls from shore.
 - DWSP continued to remove beavers from the Pathogen Control Zones at both reservoirs and intakes as necessary.
 - Deer Hunting continued to be successful in both watersheds. In FY21, the Wachusett Hunt was expanded to add bow season in reservoir zone and the Quabbin Hunt was expanded to include shotgun hunting in New Salem, Pelham and Hardwick.

- **Public Access Management** – John Scannell explained that public access continues to be extremely busy since the pandemic, with high number of visitors in the watersheds. Unfortunately, this has resulted in more rule violations than usual and FY21 was been much higher than normal. This has been challenging for Rangers, but they continue to keep control of all four watersheds.
- **Boat Launch Areas** – In 2020, boats were not rented and fishing season was delayed due to the pandemic. In 2021, the fishing season opened as usual in April and boat rentals commenced. Boat inspection and decontamination programs did not change as a result of the pandemic, assuring that all private boats on reservoir were clean upon entering water. Staff continued to improve the use of iPads, which allow better tracking of the number of boats on the reservoir.
- **Watershed security** – DWSP Rangers continued to have an active presence working with MWRA to ensure that facilities remain secure.
- **Infrastructure**
 - DWSP staff continued to inspect all dams and dikes monthly.
 - At Wachusett, all stormwater BMPs are inspected at least twice per year.
 - Phase 1 reports were complete for Framingham Reservoir 1 and 2 dams.

Trustee Laskey asked if there has been water quality improvement as a result of the large stormwater detention basins that were installed in prior years. John Scannell explained that DWSP has been monitoring water quality in the basins and will follow up with more details.

- The Stillwater Farmhouse was de-leaded and painted.
- Abatement work was complete at the Kush property and Grove Street garage. Demolition is expected in FY22.
- Improved security measures including a keyless entry system were installed at the Quabbin Administration Building.
- A contract was awarded for repairs to the Quabbin Cemetery Office building, following up on MWRA's abatement work.
- Upgrades were made to the Quabbin tower electrical system to reduce impacts on equipment from humidity.
- The Wachusett Gate 28 parking area was reconfigured and stormwater facilities were installed, which direct stormwater to a rain garden.
- **Watershed Protection Act** – Staff continued to implement the Watershed Protection Act (WsPA). John Scannell explained that the planner who implemented the WSPA at Wachusett retired in April and that Joel Zimmerman covered the work until a new planner was recently hired.
- **Education and Outreach** – The Quabbin Visitor's Center was closed for most of FY21, but reopened to the public four days a week, near the end of the fiscal year. While the center was closed, staff produced various videos, including a new orientation video, and worked with schools to provide teacher resources.
- **Water Quality & Hydrologic Monitoring** –
 - Staff continued to routinely sample reservoirs and tributaries as usual. The Quabbin Aquatic Biologist retired last summer and staff from Wachusett assisted during fall and winter. A new Aquatic Biologist at Quabbin began in January.
 - DWSP continued to monitor streamflow at 10 USGS gages as well as additional monitoring in watershed streams to identify flows and evaluate pollutant loading. Staff at Wachusett will soon use new technology to obtain continuous streamflow readings.

- Staff regularly monitored groundwater and snowpack across watersheds to improve understanding of hydrology.
- DWSP continued long-term contract work with UMass Civil Engineering to maintain the Wachusett model. They are also working on the salt issue in reservoirs and assisting in developing revised sampling plans for the watersheds.
- Staff continued efforts to address the issue of excess salt application in the watershed and impacts to water quality by performing water quality testing, staff training, and offering training to local DPWs. John Scannell explained that DWSP has made small changes to its practices that have had a tangible impact. Last year, DWSP also began a matching grant program for Watershed communities, to help them take steps to improve their practices. Over \$58,000 was awarded to three communities; Holden, West Boylston and Princeton. Princeton plans to use the money for a new salt storage shed, but was unable to execute the contract in FY21, so the funding will be rolled over to FY22. Holden and West Boylston used their funding for truck temperature sensors, which identify when the road is too cold for salt to be effective. DWSP also continues to collect salt usage data from the communities and MassDOT.

Trustee Rao asked if weather conditions and mild winters with less snow result in less salt usage and spending. John Scannell explained that communities who are making efforts to reduce salt usage typically see a reduction in usage and that DWSP hopes this trend continues. He acknowledged that it can be difficult to determine whether usage reductions are a result of mild weather conditions. He also noted that Sterling made efforts to reduce salt usage a few years ago and saw usage reduction in the first year.

Trustee Meehan asked why only some funds were committed on service/contracts/grants. John explained that \$100,000 was available to communities for salt grants, however only about \$58,000 was committed (including \$28,000 for Princeton, which will be rolled to FY22). The FY22 budget includes another \$100,000 and DWSP hopes additional watershed communities will apply.

- **Watershed Monitoring and Assessment** – John Scannell explained that despite remote working, staff continued fieldwork and monitoring for water quality threats across the watersheds. DWSP continues to perform a detailed Environmental Quality Assessment (EQA) in one subbasin in each watershed, every year. In 2021, the Quinapoxet EQA was completed at Wachusett and East Branch Ware River EQA was completed at Quabbin.
- **Aquatic Invasives** – Continued to be a significant, but successful issue for DWSP.
 - MWRA continued its contract for removal of invasive plants in both the Stillwater and Quinapoxet Basins at Wachusett, which has resulted in an overall reduction in plant volumes over the years.
 - DWSP Aquatic Biologists continue to manage invasives removal contracts in certain ponds in close proximity to the Wachusett Reservoir, to avoid any potential impacts to the reservoir.
 - Boat decontamination at Quabbin continued uninterrupted throughout the pandemic.
 - DWSP staff assisted with annual MWRA macrophyte survey at Quabbin.
 - Staff also continue to inspect and maintain fragment barriers at Boat Launch Areas 2 & 3.
- **Wastewater Management** – Wachusett Civil Engineering staff continue to work with MWRA to provide oversight, management, and support of the Rutland-Holden trunk sewers. In FY22, the agencies addressed a meter issue at the Rutland municipal boundary.
- **Stormwater Management** – Staff continued maintenance of direct discharge facilities at Wachusett. Staff also continued to perform regular inspections of active construction sites, primarily at Wachusett and the Ware River, to ensure compliance with regulations and to avoid resource impacts.

- **Emergency Response** – DWSP performed boom training with MWRA throughout the year and continued annual Boat Launch Area spill training.
- **Support**
 - Staff continued to perform all office functions including payroll and human resources, despite working remotely.
 - Staff also continued developing applications that streamline workflows and facilitate accurate data collection through the use of ArcGIS online. Rangers began using iPads for daily reports.
 - DWSP finalized distribution of PILOTS, which totaled just over \$8.3 million for FY21.
- **FY21 Purchases**
 - New skid steerer and attachments
 - New logging truck for Quabbin
 - Other vehicles
- **FY21 Finances**
 - DWSP spent just under \$17.5 million, of the total FY21 \$19.8 million budget. Areas with the biggest deficits were the A and D subsidiaries, related to salary spending. Otherwise, mostly spent in contract and other purchases throughout the year.
 - FY21 revenue was just under \$900,000.

Trustee Taverna asked if the stormwater management controls installed at Wachusett have resulted in a noticeable improvement in water quality. John Scannell explained that DWSP has been monitoring water quality and that he would follow up with more information for the Trust.

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

3. **Certification of FY21 Costs and Expenditures** - Trustee Laskey explained that the Trust annually certifies DWSP's costs and expenditures. Typically, the Trustees each sign the certification form in-person at the meeting. However, given the remote meeting, Trustee Laskey offered that the Trustees could vote to authorize him, as Chair, to sign the certification on behalf of the Trust as a whole. He noted that he would circulate the certification to the other Trustees prior to submission.

Trustee Rao made a motion, which was seconded by Taverna seconded. The Trustees unanimously voted to approve Trustee Laskey, as Chair, to sign the annual certification on behalf of the Trust as a whole and to submit the certification upon review of the other Trustees.

4. **FY22 Work Plan and Budget Review** – John Scannell outlined a proposed amendment to the FY22 Budget related to major projects at Quabbin. He noted that there was no change to the total budget. He explained that \$445,000 in N Subsidiary of the FY22 Budget planned for a culvert replacement project at Gate 40 would not be spent during FY22, due to extended permitting for the project. He outlined a proposal to reallocate that funding to other items and to postpone the culvert replacement to a subsequent year. If approved, the funding would be used in FY22 for a variety of other items including hazardous tree removal at Quabbin, storage tank cleaning at the Quabbin Administration Building (\$25,000), design work for the New Salem Facility, dam spillway catwalk abatement & painting, and property boundary survey work at Quabbin (\$50,000). John Scannell explained that most of the projects are funded from the N subsidiary and therefore require no formal change. However, the property boundary survey work at Quabbin, comes from the J subsidiary. For this reason, the request is to reduce the N subsidiary by \$50,000 and increase the J subsidiary by \$50,000.

Trustee Laskey asked for motion to accept the proposed budget amendment for discussion, which was moved by Trustee Rao and Seconded by Trustee Taverna.

Trustee Laskey requested that the proposed amended be prepared in writing in the future. Trustee Taverna inquired about the timeline for completing design of the New Salem Facility. John Scannell explained that staff are working with a new contractor and hope to complete design work in FY22. It was noted that DCAMM is involved in the design process.

Trustee Laskey called the role and the proposal to amend the FY22 DWSP budget by reducing the N subsidiary by \$50,000 and increasing the J subsidiary by \$50,000, to be spent on property boundary survey work at Quabbin, was unanimously approved by the Trust.

5. **Ongoing Agency responses to COVID-19** – John Scannell explained that DWSP Offices are officially closed until at least November. Rangers and watershed maintenance staff continue to work fulltime in the field. Other staff work remotely, but continue to complete all fieldwork as necessary. The Quabbin Visitors Center recently reopened part time and the fishing areas are open.

Trustee Laskey explained that MWRA is easing back to a higher office presence. Field and maintenance staff as well as operators continue to work full time in the field. Office staff are now in person roughly 50 percent of the time. He noted that MWRA had a slight increase in cases over the past few weeks and continues to monitor wastewater at Deer Island.

In response to a question from Trustee Taverna, there was discussion regarding the future of in-person meetings. Trustee Laskey noted that MWRA Board of Directors meetings are being conducted in a hybrid format. He noted that fully in-person meetings would be unlikely until COVID19 numbers come down.

6. **DWSP Hiring Update** – John Scannell explained that DWSP is currently at 134 FTEs. He noted that four positions have recently been filled, a new Planner at Wachusett, a new Laborer at Wachusett, a new Maintenance Foreman at Quabbin and a new lead for the Environment Group at Wachusett. He explained that the last position was filled internally, by Jamie Carr, resulting in a new vacancy for the Regional Director position. The Assistant Regional Director is currently Acting Regional Director.

Joe Favaloro provided an update on recent legislative matters related to DWSP staffing. He explained that the MWRA Advisory Board has been working closely with legislative leadership including Senator Gobi to clarify the role of the Trust with additional language. He noted that despite opposition from the Administration, the Legislature has been strongly supportive of the proposed new language and that he expects the language to be included in the final House budget. He suggested that this will serve to strengthen the role of the Trust, allow the Trustee to do its job, and enable John Scannell to fill vacancies.

Trustee Rao requested a copy of the final language. Joe Favaloro noted that he would share the final language with Trust and that it was the same as what had previously been circulated. Trustee Laskey requested an item on this topic at the next WSPT meeting.

7. Miscellaneous Updates

- **Quabbin Park Updates** – Dan Clark provided an update, explaining that the focus of FY22 is to finish the repairs on the cemetery office building roof, gutters and molding. Another focus is evaluating large, potentially hazardous trees that need trimming. In response to a question from Trustee Laskey, Dan explained that DWSP has recently been working on vegetation management and tree succession planning in the cemetery, with assistance from DCR Cultural Resources staff. Staff recently added additional

decorative plantings at the cemetery entrance. Staff are evaluating ways to prevent future unauthorized plantings in the cemetery.

Trustee Meehan requested a future update on broken/damaged headstones. Trustee Laskey suggested the possibility of obtaining grant or CPA funding to address this issue. There was discussion regarding preventing damage to intact headstones as well as trees that are considered appropriate for cemeteries.

- **Green Certification** – Trustee Laskey explained that he had an informative discussion with EOEEA Undersecretary Beth Card regarding Green Certification. EOEEA is in the process of re-visioning its land designation study, which was previously complete 10-15 years ago. He noted that EOEEA would prefer that the watersheds be considered as part of this revisioning process, rather than a separate green certificate process. Trustee Laskey noted that he had indicated that MWRA and DWSP would want to be involved in this initiative.

Trustee Rao noted that the Trust has heard a lot about Green Certification and how DWSP's current forestry practices are in alignment with the certification standards. She explained that EOEEA's Forest Lands Initiative evaluates forest lands across the Commonwealth, in an effort to find an approach to manage the lands in the face of climate change, considering both ongoing and future activities. The Secretary is looking to move forward with the forest revisioning process in the coming years, and watershed lands will be part of that broader approach. Trustee Rao introduced Kurt Gaertner who explained that the process involves a statewide 10-year review of landscape designations under the forestry effort and would include watershed lands. He noted that EOEEA would look to include MWRA and DWSP in the process. He noted that EOEEA is also finalizing the Resilient Lands Initiative, which is intended to be a guiding doctrine for land conservation and stewardship over the coming decade and will be influential in evaluating land designations.

Trustee Taverna asked if DWSP and MWRA would have a seat at the table. Trustee Laskey noted that MWRA and DWSP would look to participate and suggested that the agencies should be an integral component.

Lexi Dewey noted that she appreciated hearing about EOEEA's Land initiative and noted that WSCAC would like to be part of the discussion as well.

- **PFAS and the Watersheds** – Trustee Laskey noted that there is a major legislative commission on PFAS and that he wanted a better understanding of PFAS usage in the watersheds. He noted that there had been an incentive program for communities to stop using firefighting foam containing PFAS. Rebecca Weidman explained that there are no known current usages of AFFF firefighting foam (which can contain PFAS) in watershed communities. She also noted that the only airport in the watershed, Sterling Airport, is served by the Sterling Fire Department which also does not use AFFF firefighting foam. In response to a question from Trustee Laskey, Rebecca explained that there are examples of previous fires in the watersheds that have been treated with AFFF Foam, but that specific usages may not have been tracked.
- **Railroad** – Trustee Laskey explained that MWRA is currently in negotiations with the CSX, which is purchasing the Pan Am Railroad. He noted that the railroad is a source of stress, as the tracks pass over the Wachusett Reservoir. The purchase presents an opportunity to make significant safety improvements. Matt Horan explained that MWRA has had cooperative discussions with CSX and that the parties hope to come to an agreement in the coming months. Trustee Laskey noted that WSCAC has also been proactive on the topic. There was discussion among the Trustees about the anticipated agreement.

- Brian MacPherson, an abutter to Lake Cochituate in Natick, noted that the lake had been closed for two months over the summer due to water quality issues and asked for guidance to help reduce nutrient loading, improve water quality, and motivate action on the topic. Trustee Rao noted that DCR staff have been involved with Lake Cochituate and could provide more information. She explained that addressing the impacts of runoff from fertilizers on water quality of lakes and ponds requires a broad approach to land use and activities. She obtained Mr. MacPherson's contact information and will have DCR staff follow up with him.
- **State Police Marine Unit** - Trustee Meehan requested an update on the new State Police Marine Unit at Quabbin Reservoir. Dan Clark explained that the State Police Marine Unit recently took over patrolling Quabbin Reservoir, which has historically been the responsibility of the local C7 State Police Barracks. He noted that although there had been some initial uncertainty, the transition has been positive. The Marine Unit has been patrolling the reservoir daily, is focused on infrastructure security, and provides assistance at the Boat Launch Areas (BLAs). The unit has been very communicative and is willing to provide assistance to DWSP.

Trustee Meehan made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Trustee Heyes. Trustee Laskey called the roll and the Trust unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned.