



THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
WATER RESOURCES COMMISSION
100 CAMBRIDGE STREET, BOSTON MA 02114

Draft Meeting Minutes for May 10, 2018

100 Cambridge Street, Boston, MA, 1:00 p.m.

Minutes approved December 13, 2018

Members in Attendance:

Vandana Rao	Director of Water Policy, Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA)
Phillip DeMartino	Designee, Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)
Anne Carroll	Designee, Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)
Doug Fine	Designee, Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP)
Hotze Wijnja	Designee, Department of Agricultural Resources (DAR)
Michelle Craddock	Designee, Department of Fish and Game (DFG)
Thomas Cambareri	Public Member
Marcela Molina	Public Member
Vincent Ragucci	Public Member
Kenneth Weismantel	Public Member
Bob Zimmerman	Public Member

Members Absent:

Todd Callaghan	Designee, Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management (CZM)
----------------	---

Others in Attendance:

Marilyn McCrory	DCR
Richard Verdi	USGS
Gabby Queenan	Massachusetts Rivers Alliance
Vanessa Curran	DCR
Viki Zoltay	DCR
Michele Drury	DCR
Duane LeVangie	MassDEP
Jennifer Sulla	EEA
Peter Weiskel	USGS
Carolyn Dykema	Legislature
Liz Walk	Office of Rep. Carolyn Dykema
Erin Graham	DCR
Jen Pederson	Massachusetts Water Works Association
Beth Card	Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA)
Andrea Downs	MWRA Wastewater Advisory Committee
Kate Bentsen	DFG/Div. of Ecological Restoration
Sara Cohen	DCR

Rao called the meeting to order at 1:05 PM.

Agenda Item #1: Executive Director's Report

Rao asked for introductions. Philip DeMartino will be filling in for Linda Balzotti while she is out. Philip works in the Sustainable Communities office of DHCD.

1:10 Doug Fine arrives.

Rao reported the passing of Bruce Hansen, former geologist with the Office of Water Resources. In addition to working for the state, he had worked for USGS for 40 years. Rao expressed condolences to the family.

1:12 Bob Zimmerman arrives.

MassDEP has put out a model bylaw for water restrictions. It can be found on MassDEP's website. This week is National Drinking Water Week. The governor made a state declaration. Doug Fine commented on Drinking Water awards day and the suppliers that consistently are on the list for recognition. Representative Dykema commented on the importance of the water suppliers' work.

Agenda Item #2: Discussion and Vote on the Revised Water Conservation Standards

Rao gave an overview of the latest draft. The Commission received the redline version this past week along with the comments that had been received. The comments ranged from requests for changes in specific words, to general support of the document, requests for more stringent standards, and requests for more leniency. There were broad-brush comments, those asking for more organization and clarity, and others pointing out redundancies.

Some comments did not get incorporated for several reasons such as: the comments were in conflict with the consensus of the working group; the proposed change was too strict and not widely achievable as yet; or the proposed change was too lenient. Overall, there was support for the process, agreement that because of drought and climate change that the standards will prepare us better for the future, and the revised standards document helps us to move forward.

Rao looked at each chapter in the redline version to highlight the changes made in the latest draft and took questions on the changes. There were some clarifications suggested that are to be incorporated into the final version of the standards.

Rao then asked for other comments from the Commissioners on elements not covered in the redline/strikeout.

Weismantel read a prepared statement which highlighted concerns from water suppliers around Water Management Act permits and unaccounted-for-water. He questioned how the conservation standards were applied just to Water Management Act permits and not to all communities. He supposed that if the standards were applied to all communities there would be more comment letters and better conservation practices across the state. He had concern about the 10% unaccounted-for-water (uaw) and the 65 residential-gallons-per-capita-day (rgpcd) standards. Overall he thinks the document is a good resource, but he questioned the 10% uaw and 65 rgpcd standards.

Rao gave some history and background about the Water Resources Commission's authority and how important the Water Conservation Standards are, especially with respect to the Interbasin Transfer Act. She highlighted the state's success in meeting the 65 rgpcd standard and the practicality of the standards.

Doug Fine said that MassDEP thinks these are the right standards and spoke to Weismantel's points and how as part of the Water Management Act, it is important that permittees only take the water that they need and are using it as efficiently as possible. The unaccounted-for-water

standards have been implemented with a MassDEP “functional equivalence approach,” which allows communities who cannot meet the numeric standard to show compliance through a suite of best management practices. MassDEP also affords communities time, guidance, and grants.

Zimmerman talked about leaking pipes, irrigation systems, septic systems and subwatersheds. He thinks there is some aspirational aspect of 10% uaw, but overall most systems have moved in the right direction. He agreed with Weismantel that the standards should apply to everyone. According to Zimmerman, there is five inches of subsidence in the Central Valley of California every year and, if this continues, the agricultural industry will be worth nothing. He lauded the standards as visionary and urged everyone to get behind them.

Cambareri said he was pleased with what the workgroup and staff have done on the standards and thought the update was worthwhile. The standards will help the state move forward.

Craddock thought it was a tremendous document. She would like to see how the Commission and state agencies could incentivize the recommendations.

Rao opened up the meeting to the audience.

Pederson reiterated that the Water Conservation Standards are standards that can be used in permits. She asked about unintended consequences of water conservation on water quality.

Rao responded that MassDEP was consulted and they did not think it was an issue in the last drought. In addition, Carroll said that the issue is still on the staff’s radar.

Queenan wanted to respond to an earlier statement that the environmental community was very pleased with the document. Queenan said there are still some issues in the document, such as rgpcd, that could be more stringent, but she recognizes that this is a compromise document. She also noted a question from a previous meeting regarding the use, on page 42, of the word “applicable” and private wells. The Commission decided to change the word to “possible.”

Rao invited motions to approve the Revised Water Conservation Standards.

V O T E	A motion was made by Zimmerman with a second by Ragucci to adopt the Standards as revised. The vote to approve was 10 for and one (Weismantel) against.
------------------	--

Rao spoke about some initiatives that staff will undertake including promoting and making the standards more accessible, updating the website, hearing what challenges there are in implementation, looking at ways to provide assistance, and updating the state plumbing code.

Pederson commented on the process and suggested that items be put on the agenda sooner as they can always be taken off.

Agenda Item #3: Presentation: Update and Status of the USGS/MA Cooperative Program Hydrologic Monitoring Network

Richard Verdi and Peter Weiskel of USGS gave a presentation about the Cooperative Program between USGS and Massachusetts. The presentation covered the USGS Streamgauge Network and data uses in addition to the USGS Groundwater Network. The subsets of the Groundwater Network were discussed, including the Climate Response Network and the Real-Time groundwater observation wells. Rao asked about cost per well to convert to real-time

monitoring. Verdi replied that the overall cost would go up with more wells, but there would be some efficiency for example in staff travel time, so the cost per well would go down. During FY18, 11 wells were converted to real time, and two are proposed for FY19. Real-time data is important especially during times of drought. Verdi would like at least one of the wells on Martha's Vineyard or Nantucket upgraded to real time. This would assist in implementation of the proposed revised state drought plan because the Islands have been separated into a different drought region from the Cape Cod drought region in the revised drought plan. The town of West Springfield is interested in developing its own drought management plan and Verdi has met with them to discuss monitoring streamflow and monitoring wells. Verdi also talked about the meteorological stations and tide gages. Verdi discussed and answered questions about the FY19 budget. Wijnja asked about soil moisture monitoring. USGS has installed a station in cooperation with Steve Mabee, the state geologist, in an area of high probability of landslides. This is the only station in Massachusetts that was installed according to Natural Resource Conservation Service standards. In addition, Verdi is working with other federal and state agencies looking at measuring soil moisture in the region. This is something that DAR and WRC have an interest in. Weiskel spoke about interpretive studies. He highlighted the revitalization of the cooperative water quality program with MassDEP. USGS is working with the state on a monitoring program of the Taunton and Mount Hope Bay, an aluminum monitoring program, and a program for estimating high groundwater levels in unmonitored sites. DCR was the recipient of funds from a national grant program to replace collapsed groundwater monitoring wells. Fine spoke about funding for the projects. Cambareri asked about the Mt. Hope Bay project and Weiskel and Fine gave more details.

Drury imparted some institutional knowledge regarding the cooperative program and why there is an annual update to the Water Resources Commission. In the past, there were questions about what the gage network was and why the state funds it. LeVangie spoke to the importance of the network. Zoltay, Weiskel, and Verdi spoke about the work behind the data, including the quality assurance and quality control. Cambareri spoke about how important the monitoring and data are for the Cape.

Agenda Item #4: Update: Hydrologic Conditions and Drought Status

Zoltay provided an update on the hydrologic conditions for April 2018. She reported that the second half of April was wet. All indices are normal. Streamflow gages were below normal until mid-April. Some scattered groundwater wells show below-normal levels, but wells in the eastern part of the state are above normal. Wells in the western half of the state are mostly normal, but some are below normal in the south-western area, although two in the same area are at a record high. Reservoirs are normal. There are no drought conditions in Massachusetts according to the US Drought Monitor. The drought outlook for May shows 50% chance for above-normal temperatures and equal chances for below-normal, normal, or above-normal precipitation. The three-month outlook projects over 50 percent probability for above-normal temperatures and a slight probability for above-normal precipitation. The Keetch-Byram Index and Crop Moisture Index were not a concern due to the second half of the month being so wet.

Agenda Item #4: Presentation: WRC FY19 Work Plan

Rao delayed the item until the June meeting.

Meeting adjourned, 3:10 p.m.

Documents or Exhibits Used at Meeting:

1. Draft FY19 WRC Work Plan
2. Correspondence: Letter dated April 18, 2018, to Beth McCann, DEP, from Vandana Rao, WRC, regarding the Water Management Act permit renewal for Aquaria Water LLC
3. Interbasin Transfer Act project status report, 23 April 2018
4. Revised Water Conservation Standards (redline), May 5, 2018, available at <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/proposed-revisions-to-the-water-conservation-standards>
5. Presentation “Update and Status of the USGS/MA Cooperative Hydrologic Monitoring Network” (available at https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2018/05/14/FY19Update%26StatusUSGS_HydroMonNetwork.pdf)
6. Hydrologic Conditions in Massachusetts, April 2018 (available at <https://www.mass.gov/water-data-tracking>)

Compiled by: EG

Agendas, minutes, and other documents are available on the web site of the Water Resources Commission at <https://www.mass.gov/water-resources-commission-meetings>. All other meeting documents are available by request to WRC staff at 251 Causeway Street, 8th floor, Boston, MA 02114.