

MWRA ADVISORY BOARD

WATER SUPPLY UPDATE

JULY 1988

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A monthly report of news and information about water management and conservation in the MWRA area. Provided as a service to cities and towns by the Advisory Board.

- *Report Says Filtration Likely to be Required Here
- *Water-Saving Devices to be Tested in 12,000 Homes
- *Water Charges to Increase by 35.5%
- *Conference Promotes Industrial Water Conservation
- *Awards Ceremony Kicks Off MWRA "Quabbin Club"
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FILTRATION LIKELY TO BE REQUIRED; DIRECTORS CRITICIZE CONGRESS

After hearing a preliminary report from staff and consultants on how new federal rules on water filtration are likely to affect the MWRA, members of the MWRA Board of Directors criticized the federal government for enacting overly stringent safe drinking water laws, and for not providing any funds to help public water agencies comply.

The preliminary report, jointly prepared by John Shawcross, Director of the Water Engineering department, and Ken Miller, water quality expert and project manager from CH2M-Hill consultants, informed the Board of Directors that the MWRA water system would probably not qualify for an exemption from the surface water treatment rule, which requires that all surface waters be filtered prior to distribution for drinking. As a result, the Authority would likely need to construct water filtration facilities sometime in the early 1990's, at an estimated cost in the range of \$400 million to \$600 million.

According to Paul Levy, staff and consultants reached this judgement after an extensive analysis of EPA's proposed regulations. Those regulations identify a list of criteria to be used in determining whether a water system could be allowed to remain unfiltered. The MWRA water system meets most, but not all, of the necessary criteria, according to the report. When asked whether the EPA was being unreasonable in its regulations, Mr. Levy told the Board that the EPA was not being unreasonable, in the sense that it was merely carrying out the orders of Congress as dictated in the 1986 amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA). He noted that if the MWRA had disagreements with the regulations, it might be more appropriate to focus on modifying the law passed by Congress rather than arguing with the EPA.

Board members responded to the report by voicing criticism at Congress for passing a law which may be very costly to MWRA ratepayers, but which may not produce substantial benefits in terms of better quality water. "If we go ahead with filtration,

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we should do it because it's a sensible and prudent investment for our water system, not simply because it's required by the law," said Jonathan Souweine. He added, "I think the ratepayers will support spending a half billion dollars only if they feel they're getting a half-billion-dollar better water system in return. I haven't yet seen an explanation of why filtration is a good idea for our system...I wonder whether Congress is requiring us to do something a prudent person wouldn't do."

Charlie Lyons commented that the federal government ought to back up its mandates with sufficient money: "I think it's high time we ask those folks in Washington that if they want to start these sort of programs, they ought to fund them. It's a very simple process, one which this state has been using for years."

John Carroll stressed the need for the Board to take the process into its own hands and to not allow outside events and players to dictate the MWRA's decisions: "What I don't want to see happen is to have this Board be essentially a rubber stamp. This Board should in the near future engage in a real discussion about what position to take, whether we should resist or modify this law in some fashion, or whether we shouldn't."

WATER-SAVING DEVICE RETROFIT PROJECT TO START IN AUGUST

To determine the practicality and effectiveness of a full-scale program to retrofit area homes with low-flow showerheads, faucet aerators, and toilet tank devices, the MWRA is initiating a limited pilot project in 4 communities beginning next month. The four participating communities are Milton, Brookline, Boston, and Waltham. Approximately 12,000 homes are expected to be included in this pilot project.

The project will study two alternative approaches for distributing and installing the devices in homes. One approach will be direct installation, which will involve trained personnel going door-to-door and offering to install devices at no cost to the homeowner or occupant. The other approach will be customer pick-up, which will involve making the devices conveniently available to residents at various sites within a neighborhood. Both approaches will be supported by an intensive media and public information effort in each of the 4 communities.

The results of this project will provide information on: 1) the most effective ways to get the devices into people's homes, 2) whether people are satisfied with the performance of the devices, and 3) how much water can actually be saved through the installation of water-saving devices.

Funded through the Authority's capital budget, this project is expected to cost approximately \$800,000, which is substantially less than the \$2.6 million cost previously estimated in the budget. This large cost reduction came about because the Authority had expected to pay over \$2 million for installation services, when in fact the actual installation contract amounted to only \$425,000. For more information contact Claudia Smith, Assistant Program Manager, at 242-6000.

ADVISORY BOARD MOVING TO NEW OFFICE ON AUGUST 1

Joe Favalaro, the Advisory Board's new administrator, has announced that the Advisory Board will soon be moving to a new, larger office across the hall from the current location. The new office will have much-needed space for storage and a larger conference room. Beginning August 1st, the Advisory Board's office number will be Suite 915, at the same building address.

MWRA APPROVES OPERATING BUDGET; WATER CHARGES UP 35.5%

On June 22, 1988, the MWRA Board of Directors approved a \$146.3 million spending plan for fiscal year 1989. To fund this budget, \$137.8 million will be collected through community charges, while \$8.5 million will be received from other income sources. The adopted budget is \$8.8 million less than the one proposed in February, due in large part to a number of cost-saving recommendations from the Advisory Board.

Water charges to communities will increase by an average of 35.5%, and sewer charges will increase by an average of 38.5%. This year, communities are being asked to pay their bills in four installments, with the first payment due on September 15.

The price per million gallons charged to contract communities and special users is also expected to increase by approximately 31.4%, effective July 1, 1988. This rate increase will be voted on at the Board of Directors meeting in July.

CONFERENCE PROMOTES CONSERVATION IN BUSINESSES AND INSTITUTIONS

"Water conservation is good business" was the message presented at the MWRA's first conference for large water users, held at Gillette Blade and Razor on June 15. Over 40 representatives from area universities, hospitals, corporations, and businesses attended the half-day event which included presentations from MWRA staff and a panel discussion involving several firms who have successfully implemented water conservation programs.

Each participant also received an informational packet which included four brochures on: The importance of water conservation, Demand management strategies, Employee awareness, and Case studies of successful demand management programs. For copies of these materials, or for more information, contact Charles Allen, Project Manager for non-domestic water conservation, at the MWRA.

AWARDS PRESENTED TO CHARTER MEMBERS OF "QUABBIN CLUB"

Following the industrial water conservation conference at Gillette, Paul Levy presented awards to the charter members of the MWRA "Quabbin Club," a group formed to honor individuals and organizations who set a leading example for water conservation within their communities. Recipients included:

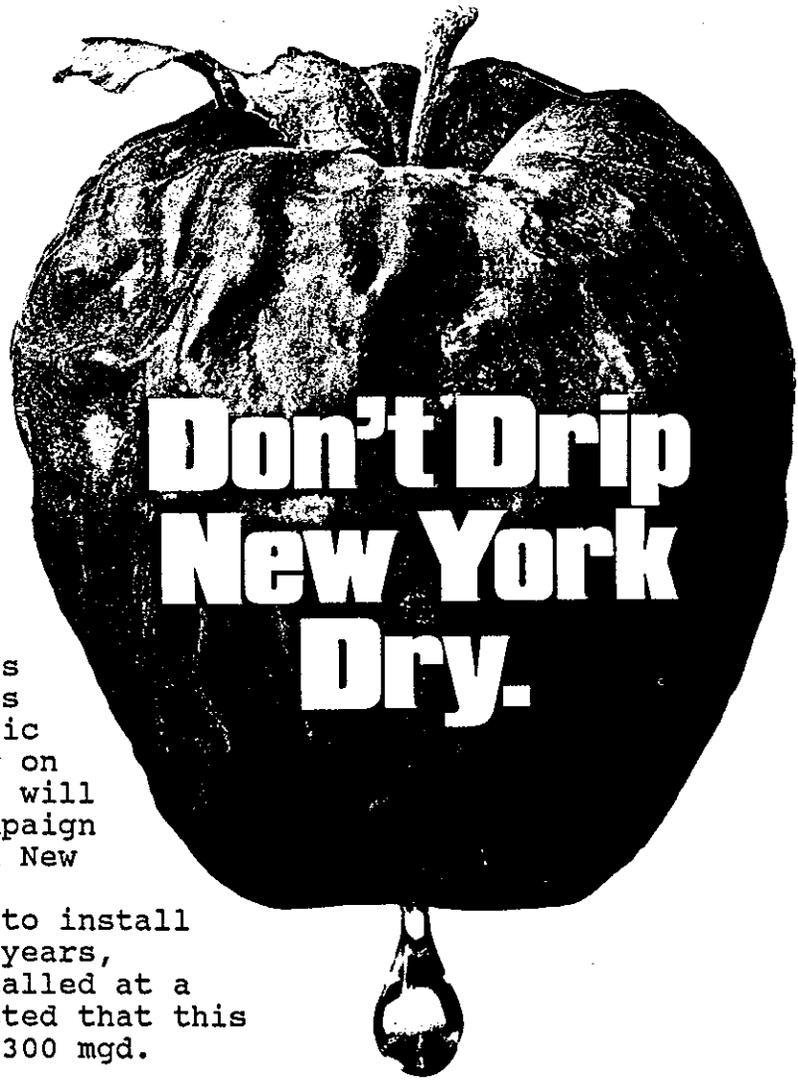
1. Massachusetts General Hospital - J. Robert Buchanan, M.D.
Cooling System Redesign in Research Area
2. Tent City Corporation - Ken Kruckemeyer
Installation of Low-flow Toilets
3. Gillette Corporation - Ronald J. Rossi
90% Water Savings Since 1972
4. Grava Chrysler-Plymouth - Peter M. Grava
Sponsor of Conservation Messages on Cable TV
5. Pollard Middle School - Margaret Collins
Special Educational Event on Water Resources
6. McCord-Winn-Textron - Frank Mangano
Closed Loop Cooling Installation

NEW YORK CITY LAUNCHES NON-DROUGHT WATER CONSERVATION PROGRAM

The New York metropolitan area uses 1,500 mgd of water, while the safe yield of its water supply is around 1,290 mgd. Concerns about rising water demand and potentially serious future droughts have led city officials to implement a permanent water conservation effort. This is the first time New York has launched a conservation campaign when there was no drought emergency. In introducing the program, Mayor Koch said: "Droughts come and go but conservation is here to stay. No one should take our water supply for granted. To guarantee we will have enough in the future, we all have to reduce what we use now."

The theme of the campaign is "Don't Drip New York Dry," and its symbol is a dried-out apple. Public service announcements will appear on radio and television, and posters will be put up on subway cars. The campaign was developed free of charge by a New York advertising firm.

The city is also beginning to install water meters. During the next 10 years, 630,000 water meters will be installed at a cost of \$290 million. It is expected that this will reduce water consumption by 300 mgd.



COMMUNITY NEWS BRIEFS

The Town of Wellesley's water supply connection to the MWRA system was opened on June 15 because the Town was experiencing low yields from its wells and falling levels in its storage tanks. This was the first time Wellesley exercised its option to receive MWRA water. As required by the terms of its contract with the Authority, the opening of the connection triggers Wellesley's membership into the system, and requires that the Town pay the MWRA a total of \$945,000 over the next ten years.

Residents in the Town of Wakefield have been affected by a "boil order" since the last week in June. The order was issued by DEQE after routine tests found high bacteria levels in the Town's distribution system. The cause of the problem has not been determined and it is uncertain when the boil order will be lifted, although the water has passed all recent tests conducted by DEQE.

The MWRA provided emergency water supplies to Sudbury via a hydrant connection through Framingham on June 16 and 17. DEQE had declared a state of emergency in the Sudbury Water District because two of its wells were out of service and high demand was rapidly drawing down supplies in its storage tanks.