



NEWS & NOTES

A PUBLICATION OF THE MWRA ADVISORY BOARD
MARCH 2008

AN OPPORTUNITY TO INVEST IN THE FORGOTTEN INFRASTRUCTURE

A recent article in the *Boston Globe* (*Coming up Dry on Bottles* by David Abel) called attention to an issue of increasing importance: the need to update the state's aging Bottle Bill. The Advisory Board submitted an Op-Ed piece to the *Boston Globe* in response to the article. Read on for an excerpt from the Advisory Board's reaction:

There is an opportunity for the Commonwealth to not only update the Bottle Bill but also provide funding for what has become the forgotten infrastructure: water and sewer projects. Funding for local water and sewer infrastructure projects has dwindled significantly in recent years. Both the Federal and the State Revolving Loan Fund programs, which offer low interest loans to Massachusetts communities to finance drinking water and wastewater projects, have not provided enough money. In 2008, the State SRF provided approximately a quarter of the funding for the cumulative needs of Massachusetts. Simply put, the water and sewer infrastructure requirements of the Commonwealth outpace the availability of dollars. Additionally, the Clean Water Act and Safe Drinking Water Act mandate costly investments to the region's water and sewer systems to ensure compliance; these investments come with an expensive price tag.

When the original Bottle Bill was written 27 years ago, bottled water was not on the radar. Today, Americans spend billions of dollars a year on bottled water. This comes with huge environmental costs considering the packaging, transporting, and refrigeration of the bottles, of which nearly 80% are not recycled. In addition to the environmental impact, reduced usage of public water causes challenges in communities. When people switch from drinking municipal water to bottled water, public water usage decreases and rates increase, leaving less money for investments in water and sewer infrastructure and higher costs for ratepayers. This has a real effect on cash strapped cities and towns. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts should seize this opportunity to update the Bottle Bill in order to re-invest in the public water and sewer infrastructure. The money from the new bottle deposits should go into a dedicated fund to be used by entities that maintain and replace water and sewer infrastructure. This updated bottle bill would create a win-win situation for communities, for ratepayers, and for the environment. The best place for the new deposit receipts is back in the ground and in the pipes where the public water and sewer infrastructure lies.

2007 LEGISLATORS OF THE YEAR

The Advisory Board presented its 2007 Legislators of the Year Award to Senator Anthony Petrucci (East Boston) and Representative Rachel Kaprielian (Watertown) this month. Senator Petrucci is Vice-Chair of the MWRA Caucus and Representative Kaprielian is the Floor Division Leader (First Division). Both Legislators have been strong advocates for ratepayer relief. Last year while serving in the House, then-Representative Petrucci, along with Chairman Ron Mariano, was instrumental in increasing Debt Service Assistance to \$23 million in the final Budget. Representative Kaprielian has provided leadership as co-sponsor on Advisory Board legislation. The Advisory Board is pleased to present these awards to deserving Legislators who are committed to ratepayer advocacy.



Advisory Board Chairwoman Katherine Dunphy (center) presents the Legislator of the Year award to Senator Anthony Petrucci (L) and Representative Rachel Kaprielian (R).

NORUMBEGA STORAGE TANK INSPECTED

The MWRA is conducting a routine maintenance and inspection of the Norumbega Covered Storage Tanks in Weston. Communities downstream may feel reduced pressure on Monday, April 7 and Thursday, April 17 as a result of the inspection procedure. If your community should experience a major fire or a water main break on these days, please notify the MWRA Operations Control Center: 617.305.5950.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

APRIL 8: MWRA CEB HEARING / 6PM – BOSTON CITY HALL

APRIL 11: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE / 8:30 AM – BOSTON

APRIL 16: MWRA BOARD OF DIRECTORS / 10 AM – CHARLESTOWN

APRIL 17: OPERATIONS COMMITTEE & ADVISORY BOARD MEETINGS*
10:30 & 11:30 AM - WELLESLEY

*ADVISORY BOARD CEB HEARING HELD PRIOR TO AB MTG

If you have any questions regarding topics raised in this newsletter or any other MWRA issue, please contact:
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