



NEWS & NOTES

A PUBLICATION OF THE MWRA ADVISORY BOARD
AUGUST 2009

THE OTHER SIDE OF HARBOR MONITORING

In response to a series of articles on harbor monitoring in the Boston Globe, the MWRA Advisory Board submitted an Op-Ed piece for publication. An excerpt of the Op-Ed piece is included below. Visit the MWRA Advisory Board website to read the entire Op-Ed.

The MWRA's treated discharge is a proverbial drop in a very, very large bucket (the Atlantic Ocean). As part of a contingency plan, which was incorporated in the Authority's five-year National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit, the MWRA was required to implement a monitoring plan to test the impacts of the treated discharge on Massachusetts Bay. After almost 17 years of extensive monitoring and \$60 million spent, the data shows that both the outfall and the plant are performing as well or better than predicted with no adverse impacts. The outfall monitoring data consistently shows this, questioning the need to continue this effort. Should the MWRA and its ratepayers continue to monitor what has already been conclusively proven? Should the burden fall solely on the ratepayers when other entities are interested in gaining information through a continued harbor monitoring program?

The MWRA Advisory Board suggests that the state and/or other interested parties should pick up the costs to continue monitoring for environmental interests. Is \$3 million dollars per year for monitoring the best use of limited MWRA dollars? It is \$3 million dollars that is not available for maintenance on a wastewater plant that is nearing 12 years of service (and other infrastructure needs). It is \$3 million dollars not available to complete the massive Combined Sewer Overflow projects, which will keep urban beaches and waterways cleaner than ever before. It also means \$3 million dollars not available to combat the spread of invasive species in the Quabbin Reservoir.

Communities and their ratepayers in the MWRA service area have paid billions of dollars to allow the MWRA to clean up Boston Harbor. At a minimum, they deserve the right to know that the Authority strives to get the maximum bang for every ratepayer dollar spent. There is no bang left in monitoring.

ADVISORY BOARD VISITS MWRA WASTEWATER FACILITIES



Members of the MWRA Advisory Board and guests visited three MWRA wastewater facilities on the Annual Field Trip this month: Deer Island, Nut Island Headworks, and the Biosolids Processing Center in the Fore River Shipyard. At Deer Island, members toured ongoing major maintenance improvement projects, including the installation of the wind turbines, solar panels, and the replacement of stainless steel chains in the clarifiers. Members also took a tour of the pellet plant in Quincy.

ADVISORY BOARD DEVELOPS WHITE PAPER

The MWRA Advisory Board developed a draft White Paper to address the concerns regarding the threat of Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS), with a particular focus on the invasive zebra mussel on the Quabbin Reservoir. The White Paper is a helpful tool to underline the importance of protecting the water supply. Visit the MWRA Advisory Board website to read an advanced copy of the draft (which will be discussed at the full Advisory Board meeting in September):

http://www.mwraadvisoryboard.com/Research_Articles/AB_White_Paper_Invasives.pdf

UPCOMING MEETINGS

SEPTEMBER 11: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE / 8:30 AM – BOSTON
SEPTEMBER 16: MWRA BOARD OF DIRECTORS / 1 PM – CHARLESTOWN
SEPTEMBER 17: MWRA ADVISORY BOARD / 11:30 AM – WELLESLEY

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