



Thursday February 15, 2024  
Remote Connection Via Zoom  
10:00 AM

## ADVISORY BOARD MEETING SUMMARY

### A. Roll call attendance

A commencing roll call was voted as follows:

Name	Community	Vote
Michael Rademacher	Arlington	Here (remote)
David Manugian	Bedford	Here (remote)
John P. Sullivan, Jr.	Boston	Here (remote)
Jay Hersey	Brookline	Here (remote)
John G. Sanchez	Burlington	Here
Yem Lip	Malden	Here (remote)
Amy McHugh	Marblehead	Here (remote)
Elena Proakis Ellis	Melrose	Here (remote)
Chase Berkeley	Milton	Here (remote)
John Terry	Needham	Here (remote)
Thomas Fitzgerald	Newton	Here (remote)

Name	Community	Vote
Paul Della Barba	Quincy	Here (remote)
Chris Cole	Reading	Here (remote)
Brendan O'Regan	Saugus	Here (remote)
Richard Raiche	Somerville	Here (remote)
Sam Stivers	Southborough	Here (remote)
John P. DeAmicis	Stoneham	Here (remote)
Patrick Fasanello	Walpole	Here (remote)
Joseph Lobao	Wilmington	Here (remote)
J.R. Greene	Quabbin and Ware Watershed	Here (remote)
Maurice Handel	MAPC	Here (remote)

### B. Executive Director's Update, by Matthew Romero

The Advisory Board welcomed Christine Bennett, the new Research and Policy Analyst, on January 22, 2024. In legislative news, Governor Maura Healey did not include debt service assistance in the FY25 budget. Following this Advisory Board meeting there was a Water Infrastructure Alliance meeting where forthcoming legislation will be discussed. The Advisory Board has also moved the budget hearing to March as the Board of Directors will have not yet transmitted the proposed CEB to the Advisory Board.

### C. Presentation – Watershed Management Annual Update – John Scannell, Division of Water Supply Protection Director

Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) activities are guided by a 5-year Watershed Protection Plan that is required by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). The most recent plan was put forth in July 2023 as the previous 5-year plan ended. This plan provides information for DEP on how the watershed is protected, including plans such as land acquisition, wildlife management, aquatic invasive species, public access management, among others. DCR has a current staff of 148, with a full staff of 151 FTEs.

DCR has been working for several years to find ways to reduce the amount of salt entering watershed





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streams and ultimately the reservoir, particularly in Wachusett where there are elevated chloride levels within the reservoir. Steps have been taken on getting the message out to get people to reduce their use of salt, working both with municipalities as well as informing the public directly. Recently, DCR put out videos, one in particular “Make your own salt brine” which were posted on social media, picked up by the Boston Globe, and the Governor asked questions about using it at her home. The videos seem to be helping the cause and getting coverage out there. Concentrated effort on DCR educational programs to include additional messaging on the dangers of salt use and promote behavioral changes that would reduce use, for instance the “Salt Smarter, Not Harder!” poster for kiosks and online.

This fiscal year was the 4th year of a grant program within Wachusett watershed towns, which is seed money to continue work with local DPWs to get them to change their practices on snow removal. MWRA has paid for some routine Bay State roads training to local DPWs which has been well received. This grant program allows them to use seed money for new equipment that will help them to better remove snow with less use of salt. Total grant distribution of \$199,000 in 12 grants to date.

Each of the 4 watersheds has a Public Access Management Plan which identifies what recreational activities are allowed and not allowed on watershed lands, where people can do them, and threats from those activities. Plans are updated every ten years. The Ware River Plan Update is finally complete, which began in summer 2018, was reinitiated in fall 2022, and finalized in fall 2023. The Wachusett Plan Update was completed in spring 2023.

Historically the Ware River Watershed has allowed more levels of recreational activity, which DCR did not find appropriate. The updated plan includes changes to what is allowed. Watersheds are no longer open 24/7, it is now “dawn to dusk.” Trails were consolidated to eliminate redundant trails and make trails multi-use which gives DCR more ability to control what’s going on and more importantly control the condition of those trails. Only two group horse ride permits are issued annually with lots of conditions on the permit, as DEP did not want large group horse permits. Eighteen miles of forest road open to vehicle access has been reduced to eight. Issues around Comet Pond swimming, with open water swimming or distance swimming. DCR clarified that it would continue to be allowed but only from the State Park Beach on Comet Pond. DEP was pushing to eliminate activity on Long Pond, which DCR agreed and settled on reducing number of motorboat permits allowed on pond annually to fifty.

The Governor put a pause on forestry so the Commonwealth could look at making sure what DCR does for forestry is aligning with the Commonwealth’s climate goals. They appointed a committee to look at forestry guidelines. They issued their report, “Forests as Climate Solutions,” late in December and EEA and the agencies are now developing the response to the recommendations. DCR is reviewing paused projects for inconsistency and expects to be moving forward with previously contracted cuts in spring 2024.

Two new public-facing applications, the Hunter app and the Public Access app, have been released, as well as new EQA tools for staff. The Hunter app includes a hunting map where hunters can find information they need to know what species and when and where they can hunt. It’s important to have hunters on DCR property, related to keeping deer herds in check which can be an impact to the forest. Hunters can provide feedback through the app which is helpful to DCR in working on improvements to the hunting programs. This app has been up since late spring of 2023 and has gotten a lot of positive feedback. The Public Access app allows people who are fishing, hiking, or other activities to know where they’re allowed to go and, what activities are permitted.



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Executive Director



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DCR does a detailed look at a portion of each of the three watersheds each year, called an Environmental Quality Assessment. These allow DCR to take a smaller subsection of the watershed and look more closely at possible pollution sources. An app has been developed that DCR can be used with iPads that allows staff in the field to collect information to do all their analysis and produce these reports annually. Each of the watersheds are divided into five zones, with one report produced every five years that gives a much more detailed view of that section of the watershed.

Last May 2023, staff discovered the invasive plant Swollen Bladderwort in Pottapaug Pond. Launching of private boats was halted in June over concerns about its potential to spread. An MWRA contractor managed by John Gregoire came on board and did 2 days of hand harvesting. Since spring is the best time to identify and pull plants, an MWRA contractor will return in spring 2024.

Deer hunting helps control deer herds and keep them at a level that will not severely impact forest regeneration. The herd in Quabbin Park is estimated at 50 deer-per-square mile with a desired number under twenty-per-square mile. Proposed in 2019, but halted due to legislative inquiry, a 2-day deer hunt in Quabbin Park took place in December 2023. Seventy-two hunters took part, and 37 deer were taken (32 female). This hunt will be annual until the number of deer drops to a reasonable level.

John Sanchez asked about levels of chlorine in reservoirs. John Scannell did not have numbers on top of mind but said that it is not something that is impacting the quality of water overall, but if it continued to rise could become an issue.

Lou Taverna asked about the rangers' inability to issue citations and whether this was resolved. John Scannell said that they have had rangers since the mid-1990s, with their responsibility being compliance by education, and if needed State and/or local police coming into the situation. Back in 2015, DCR was given the ability to issue citations. With the changes in the policing laws a few years ago, that ability for rangers to issue citations went away. DCR is still focusing its compliance efforts on education, but there has been no further movement to change the ability to issue citations. John Scannell stated that it was a nice tool in the toolbox but was not the strength of the program necessarily.

Paul Lauenstein asked about the desired deer population density and how much of a dent the deer harvest made on getting close to that goal. John Scannell stated that the more important point of the deer hunt was that 32 out of 37 were females, which means there will be less reproduction. What DCR does is count deer pellets, which estimates the estimated number of deer in a herd. DCR will go out after the snow is gone and do a yearly pellet count.

Bruce Spencer asked if there will be anything done differently in the forestry program when the spring comes as opposed to how things were done in the past. John Scannell said that at this point there does not seem to be significant change happening, but the review with the Secretary's office is not complete, so more to come.

Matt Romero asked what the timing will be going through the Secretary's office with any impacts afterward. John Scannell said there is hope the report will be completed by the end of March 2024. DCR is reviewing forestry lots that are on hold to gather whether they are compliant or not so that contracts to cut lots can be out for sale this upcoming spring.

Mike Retzky asked if invasives within forest areas, such as bittersweet, were affecting preservation of the



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forest. John Scannell said that bittersweet is everywhere, and that DCR is working to update an older plan for dealing with invasives in the forest. Although there are invasives, DCR does not think it is making a significant impact. Some hand cutting is being done, but this was pushed off a bit as the forestry committee came into play. A terrestrial invasive plan is hoped to be put forth this spring.

John Sanchez stated that he thinks it is important for rangers to issue citations, and that if training and certification is required, it should go forth. A ranger having authority to issue citations rather than a nonbinding warning would seem to make a difference in people's minds. John Scannell said that is a bigger issue than just general training, as EEA's general counsel described it is the citation ability is a function of someone with police level training. John Scannell is unaware if EEA wants rangers to get over this hurdle and hasn't heard discussion over this. Matt Romero said he knew General Meehan has interest in continuing this conversation in next month's Water Supply Protection Trust (WSPT) meeting, and a request for more information on how to make this citation ability possible, what the hurdles are, how significant they may be, and what other options may be available to effect that change or not, such as what would need to happen to change the ability of the rangers themselves, or possibly what might need to happen to create a legislative carveout for the rangers to have that ability on watershed lands.

J.R. Greene brought up the point that it may be easier for rangers to get whatever citation issuing training is needed because they are not armed.

Fred Laskey said that there was a presentation at a WSPT meeting where part of the issue is that statutory change is required, so under the current law rangers are not allowed to give out citations, whether there is an effort to change the law is another question. There are also jurisdictional issues, such as MA Fisheries and Wildlife and State Police.

## **D. Operations Committee Updates – Michael Rademacher, Chair**

Michael Rademacher is hopeful the Board of Directors will vote favorably on the recommended additional phases for pipeline funding programs which were voted on at the last Advisory Board meeting.

## **E. Finance Committee Updates – Elena Proakis Ellis, Chair**

Elena Proakis Ellis noted that since the Board of Directors meeting is delayed the comments and recommendations on the budget and the preliminary assessments are also delayed. However, preliminary assessments should be out at the end of the month.

## **F. Approval of the meeting minutes for:**

- September 21, 2023
- November 16, 2023
- Executive Session minutes for November 16, 2023
- January 18, 2024

*A motion to approve the above minutes was put forth, moved by Rich Raiche, seconded by David Manugian, and added to the omnibus vote at the end of the meeting.*

## **G. New Business**



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Matthew Romero noted that since the passing of James Guidod the Water and Sewer Rate Survey is behind, but that work is being done for the 2023 version. MWRA community data will be the focus and released first, followed by the national system comparisons and non-MWRA communities later.

## H. Motion to adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by Maurice Handel, seconded by J.R. Greene, and added to the omnibus vote at the end of the meeting.

## I. Omnibus Roll Call Vote, followed by Adjournment

A roll call for:

- Approval of the September 21, 2023 minutes
- Approval of the November 16, 2023 minutes
- Approval of the Executive Session minutes for November 16, 2023
- Approval of the January 18, 2024 minutes
- Meeting adjournment

was voted as follows:

Name	Community	Vote
Michael Rademacher	Arlington	Yes (remote)
David Manugian	Bedford	Yes (remote)
John P. Sullivan, Jr.	Boston	Yes (remote)
Jay Hersey	Brookline	Yes (remote)
John G. Sanchez	Burlington	Yes
Yem Lip	Malden	(did not vote)
Amy McHugh	Marblehead	Yes (remote)
Elena Proakis Ellis	Melrose	Yes (remote)
Chase Berkeley	Milton	Yes (remote)
John Terry	Needham	Yes (remote)
Thomas Fitzgerald	Newton	Yes (remote)
Paul Della Barba	Quincy	Yes (remote)

Name	Community	Vote
Chris Cole	Reading	Yes (remote)
Brendan O'Regan	Saugus	Yes, conditional (remote)
Richard Raiche	Somerville	Yes (remote)
Sam Stivers	Southborough	Yes
John P. DeAmicis	Stoneham	
	Wakefield	Yes (remote)
Patrick Fasanello	Walpole	Yes (remote)
Joseph Lobao	Wilmington	Yes (remote)
J.R. Greene	Quabbin and Ware Watershed	Yes (remote)
Maurice Handel	MAPC	Yes (remote)

Respectfully submitted,

Rich Raiche, Secretary

These minutes reflect the discussion of the meeting. The Advisory Board maintains audio recordings of Executive Committee meetings that are available upon request.



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