

WASTEWATER
ADVISORY COMMITTEE
TO THE MASSACHUSETTS WATER
RESOURCES AUTHORITY



Annual Report 2024-2025

What is the Wastewater Advisory Committee?

The MWRA Board of Directors created WAC in 1990 to offer independent recommendations on wastewater policies and programs. WAC's mission is to be an independent public forum for holistic discussion of wastewater issues. Membership is designed to reflect the knowledge and interest of major affected constituencies: engineering and construction, environmental advocacy, planning, academic research, and business.



2025 Membership

Craig Allen, Craig A. Allen, FCAS
George Atallah, GA Engineering & Consulting
Wayne Chouinard, Town of Belmont DPW
Adriana Cillo, Boston Water & Sewer
Christine Bennett, MWRA Advisory Board
Taber Keally, Neponset River Watershed Association
Karen Lachmayr, Harvard University
Martin Pillsbury, Metropolitan Area Planning Council
Jonathan Smith, Somerville DPW
Felina Silver, LWV
Zhenyu Tian, Northeastern University
Alfredo Vargas, City of Newton, DPW
Kannan Vembu, (Chair) AquaEnviroBio Solutions LLC----->
Dan Winograd, (Vice-Chair) Woodard & Curran.



Executive Director:

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WAC's Contractual Duties:

1. Provide independent advice to the MWRA Board and staff on wastewater programs and policies directly related to the MWRA
2. Review & comment to the Authority on wastewater reports and proposed documents; offer independent advice on current and proposed wastewater program and policy directions to further MWRA objectives
3. Reflect the knowledge and interest of major affected constituencies, including
 - a. Engineering
 - b. Construction
 - c. Business/industry
 - d. Planning
 - e. Academic research
 - f. Environmental advocacy
4. Advise MWRA on wastewater planning
5. Increase citizen participation and education by providing MWRA with assistance in outreach. Review programs and explain plans & policies to citizens



Photo credit Isaiah Johnson

6. Attend Authority working groups related to wastewater programs and policy, including the MWRA Advisory Board and Water Supply Citizens Advisory Committee
7. Propose to the Authority ways to continue effective and efficient long-term public involvement in wastewater programs

FY 2025 Highlights

WAC's director submitted newly-edited language for a new wipes bill that closely mirrors California's wipes law, which California's sewer organization (CASA) hammered out with the wipes industry. This bill includes extensive public outreach and education. She edited various fact sheets for accuracy, recruited legislative co-sponsors, coordinated testimony and letters supporting the bill, and spoke at the ACEC (American Council of Engineering Companies of Massachusetts) lobby day. The federal WIPPEs Act is still alive on Capitol Hill, and WAC is watching that closely. Meanwhile, a court settlement may set a United States standard for dispersibility for all wipes meant for flushing.

WAC also submitted comments opposing language in the Housing Bond Bill that included WAC in a duplicative administrative review body for the Interbasin Transfer Act, and sent EPA a comment letter on its draft risk assessment for PFAS in land-applied biosolids.

WAC membership has changed—Stephen Greene, who has been involved with WAC since before its inception in 1990, retired this June. James Ferrara of National Grid stepped down in the spring. New members starting in June are Jonathan Smith, P.E., of Somerville DPW, Felina Silver of the Brookline League of Women Voters, and Professor Zhenyu Tian of Northeastern University—meeting WAC's requirement for representatives of the engineering profession, the community, and academia.

Our liaison from MWRA of over a decade, Wendy Leo, retired in January. David Wu is ably filling her shoes.



Meetings: In addition to the above topics, WAC discussed: progress on combined sewers and planning for climate change, MWRA infrastructure adaptations for higher flood levels, TRAC and PFAS, the impact on NPDES permits of the *San Francisco v. EPA case*, MWRA budgets, and WAC toured the Alewife Brook Pumping Station and the outfalls upstream on the Alewife. In cooperation with WSCAC and the Advisory Board, WAC held two of its meetings jointly with the other committees.

Leadership

WAC was led this Fiscal Year by Kannan Vembu of AquaEnviroBio Solutions, a WAC member since 2013. Dan Winograd of Woodard Curran served as Vice Chair.

The committee rotates leadership regularly.

Focus for 2025-26

If there is a second draft Deer Island permit, WAC will focus on comments for that. The committee will prepare to comment on the CSO Long Term Control plan, and include public education and outreach. WAC will continue to focus on the future of biosolids recycling and how to do so most beneficially, how climate change may impact the system, and continued maintenance of the system.

WAC remains interested in cost management and the environment—in particular efficiency, reliability, and renewable energy production in MWRA facilities.

Other areas of interest

- Putting wastewater's most important environmental impacts in perspective.
- TRAC
- Residual Designation (EPA focus on stormwater pollution) and its impacts on MWRA
- Artificial Intelligence & its impact on MWRA operations

