



THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

WATER RESOURCES COMMISSION

100 CAMBRIDGE STREET, BOSTON MA 02114

Meeting Minutes for March 8, 2007

Minutes approved April 12, 2007

Members in Attendance:

Kathleen Baskin	Designee, Executive Office of Environmental Affairs
Marilyn Contreas	Designee, Department of Housing and Community Development
Mike Gildesgame	Designee, Department of Conservation and Recreation
Mary Griffin	Designee, Department of Environmental Protection
Gerard Kennedy	Designee, Department of Agricultural Resources
Margaret Kearns	Designee, Department of Fish and Game
Joseph E. Pelczarski	Designee, Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management
Scott Horsley	Public Member
David Rich	Public Member

Others in Attendance:

Michele Drury	DCR
Linda Hutchins	DCR
Bruce Hansen	DCR
Erin Graham	DCR
Frank Hartig	DCR
Marilyn McCrory	DCR
Paul Lauenstein	WSCAC/Neponset River Watershed Assn.
Jennifer Pederson	Massachusetts Water Works Association
Vandana Rao	EOEA
Peter Weiskel	USGS

Agenda Item #1: Executive Director's Report

Baskin reminded attendees about two upcoming conferences: the "Promise and Challenge of Urban Rivers" on March 29 (sponsored by EPA and others) and the "Low-Impact Development Conference and Vendor Fair for the Real Estate Development Industry" on April 5 (sponsored by EOEA and others).

Hansen provided an update on the hydrologic conditions for February 2007:

- Statewide average precipitation for February was 72% of normal, with considerable variation between the western and Cape and Islands regions. Statewide average precipitation has been deficient by about 3 inches since December.

- This winter’s “snow drought” has left large areas of western Massachusetts, Vermont, and New Hampshire with snow depths 8 to 16 inches below normal.
- Groundwater levels were below normal (western, southeastern, and a small area of northeastern Massachusetts) and normal (central and northeastern Massachusetts).
- A new record low groundwater level for February was measured in the Winchester 14 well.
- Streamflows were generally below normal for the state and were within the lowest 25 percent of flows for February.
- Reservoir levels were normal to slightly above normal for this time of year.
- The National Drought Mitigation Center indicates normal conditions in Massachusetts and the entire northeast.

Baskin indicated that the EOEPA Press Office has been receiving inquiries about low precipitation and low amounts of snowpack. She commended Bruce Hansen for the great report he compiles every month and said it is useful not only to the Water Resources Commission but also in communicating important information about water resources to the public.

Baskin announced that the Reading agenda item (vote to accept interbasin transfer application as complete) would be moved to the April agenda because additional information is needed from the applicant. She also said that a staff presentation on the sewer offset policy – i.e., a policy on removing inflow as a way of mitigating a present increase in interbasin transfer – would be postponed to a future meeting.

Agenda Item #2: Vote on the Minutes of January 2007 and February 2007

Baskin invited separate motions to approve the meeting minutes for January and February 2007.

V	A motion was made by Gildesgame with a second by Contreas to approve the meeting
O	minutes for January 2007.
T	
E	The vote to approve was unanimous of those present.

V	A motion was made by Gildesgame with a second by Kennedy to approve the meeting
O	minutes for February 2007.
T	
E	The vote to approve was unanimous of those present.

Agenda Item #3: Presentation and Vote on Foxborough’s Witch Pond Wells Monitoring Plan

Baskin noted that the Foxborough wells were approved, with conditions, by the Water Resources Commission in September 2001. Hutchins distributed a handout that outlined the conditions that must be met, including implementation of monitoring plans, before the wells can be put into operation.

Hutchins noted that the Commission’s approval of Foxborough’s interbasin transfer included operation of two 50-foot-deep wells in a sand and gravel aquifer. She described site conditions,

including the presence of a rare Atlantic White Cedar swamp ecosystem and two rare and endangered species that depend on that ecosystem. She also displayed cross sections of Witch Pond swamp and described hydrologic features of the pond and the Bungay Brook watershed.

She reviewed the potential impacts of pumping on streamflows in Bungay Brook, Witch Pond, and the Atlantic White Cedar swamp. She explained that WRC staff established thresholds for withdrawals that would sustain water levels in the swamp, Witch Pond, and Bungay Brook and the habitat they provide. She also described the hydrologic and wetlands monitoring plans, which include one year of baseline monitoring before the town can begin using the wells, hydrologic monitoring after the wells are put into operation, wetlands monitoring, and annual reporting to the Water Resources Commission, DEP, and the DFG Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program. She noted that the thresholds set in the approval can be changed based on the monitoring results. She concluded that the proposed monitoring plan meets WRC conditions for approval under the Interbasin Transfer Act, and that WRC staff therefore recommend approval of the monitoring plan.

Following the presentation was some discussion of the monitoring points and the water levels in nearby Lake Mirimichi, monitoring of impacts on the cedar community in the Atlantic White Cedar swamp, the purpose of and need for the additional wells, and the interaction between pumping in Mansfield and Foxborough.

V	A motion was made by Rich with a second by Contreas to approve Foxborough's
O	March 2007 monitoring plan for the Witch Pond wells.
T	
E	The vote to approve was unanimous of those present.

Meeting adjourned

Attachments distributed:

- Current Water Conditions in Massachusetts, March 8, 2007
- Presentation by Linda Hutchins, Foxborough Witch Pond Wells Monitoring Plan
- Summary of Outstanding and Ongoing Conditions that must be met before Foxborough can put the Witch Pond Wells into Operation
- Detailed memo outlining Outstanding and Ongoing Conditions that must be met before Foxborough can put the Witch Pond Wells into Operation
- Memo dated 8 March 2007 from WRC Staff to WRC: Staff recommendation concerning the monitoring plans as part of Foxborough's compliance with the conditions of the WRC's September 13, 2001, approval of the Witch Pond wells interbasin transfer