



THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS  
WATER RESOURCES COMMISSION  
100 CAMBRIDGE STREET, BOSTON MA 02114

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**Meeting Minutes for November 9, 2017**

100 Cambridge Street, Boston, MA, 1:00 p.m.

**Members in Attendance:**

Vandana Rao, Chair	Designee, Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA)
Jonathan Yeo/ Anne Carroll	Designee, Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)
Becky Weidman	Designee, Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP)
Hotze Wijnja	Designee, Department of Agricultural Resources (DAR)
Michelle Craddock	Designee, Department of Fish and Game (DFG)
Kenneth Weismantel	Public Member
Marcella Molina	Public Member
Vincent Ragucci	Public Member
Bob Zimmerman	Public Member

**Members Absent**

Todd Callaghan	Designee, Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management (CZM)
Linda Balzotti	Designee, Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)
Thomas Cambareri	Public Member

**Others in Attendance:**

Jennifer Sulla	EEA
Sara Cohen	DCR
Marilyn McCrory	DCR
Erin Graham	DCR
Michele Drury	DCR
Viki Zoltay	DCR
Jennifer Pederson	MWWA
Peter Weiskel	USGS
Matt Ely	USGS
Kate Bentsen	DFG/DER
Greg Kahoun	Dover Water Resources Study Committee
Liz Walk	Representative Dykema's Office
Julia Blatt	Mass Rivers Alliance
Gabby Queenan	Mass Rivers Alliance
Carol Chirico	Dover Water Resources Study Committee

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Rao called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

She welcomed new commission members Vincent Ragucci and Marcella Molina and asked them to tell a little about themselves. Ragucci is a North Reading resident, who is currently employed

by Energy New England, representing Public Power. He worked for MWRA for 10 years, and has also worked for two global engineering firms as head of government affairs in the US and Canada. Molina is a South Shore native, currently residing in Boston. She is counsel for Benchmark Senior Living.

Rao stated that the WRC had five public members who bring diverse viewpoints to the commission. She also publicly thanked prior commissioners Ray Jack and Paul Matthews for their past commitment of time and energy to the Commission.

**Agenda Item #1: Executive Director's Report**

The Interbasin Transfer regulations will be coming to the Commission in December. There will also be a presentation on the draft final regulations and the response to comments received. A vote will be requested in January. The Drought Management Task force meeting that was to be held earlier today was cancelled because conditions have improved.

**Agenda Item #2: Hydrologic Conditions Report**

Zoltay stated that October had been the warmest on record for Worcester and the second warmest for Boston. In September and early October there was very little precipitation – only about 20% of normal. State agencies were monitoring an emerging drought. But in the last week and half of October there were two back-to-back storms that brought rain and flooding. In that short period of time, Boston got over 100% of its normal rainfall and Worcester got about 200% of its normal rainfall for October.

Zoltay referred to the Hydrologic Conditions report. Streamflow responded to the October precipitation events. Ground water recovery is still spotty across the state. If any region has more than 50% of its wells below normal, the region is designated as below normal for groundwater for that month. This was the situation with the Southeast region. However, it does not trigger a drought level until three consecutive months of below normal conditions are observed. Temperatures are predicted to be above normal. This will help with recharge by keeping the ground from freezing and could improve the ground water situation as spring approaches. Reservoirs have all returned to normal. Precipitation is projected to have equal chances of being above or below normal.

Zimmerman asked if the state is looking at climate change models for the near term. He is concerned that sea level rise is not predicted to happen for another 50 or so years, but the impacts of climate change are being felt now, through the occurrence of more extended droughts and more severe floods. This could have severe economic impacts on Boston and Massachusetts as a whole. He is concerned that the state is doing nothing and suggested that the WRC should take a more active role. Rao pointed out that the state has been very actively engaged in climate change issues; she agreed that climate change is occurring now. Massachusetts is investing in developing down-scaled predictions of climate change and the impacts on the hydrology. Using this information, specific impacts of climate change to the state and its communities can be assessed and planned for. She welcomed ideas on how the WRC could address this. Yeo added that the environmental agencies were working with research institutions to assure we are using the latest data. Other EEA agencies are working on hazard mitigation with respect to climate change. He suggested that we invite these agencies to discuss their work at a future meeting. Rao said the state is trying to develop ways to assist

municipalities to address this problem. Zimmerman said he sees this on the energy side but not on the water side or with green infrastructure. He emphasized that this needed to be addressed now! Rao suggested that they talk more about what the WRC can and should be doing to address this issue. Cohen asked about messaging for this issue by the WRC. Yeo responded that it would come out of EEA.

(Hydrologic Conditions Report is available at: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/hydrologic-conditions-reports-0>)

**Agenda Item #3: Vote on the Minutes of August 2017**

V O T E	A motion was made by Yeo with a second by Weismantel to approve the meeting minutes for August 10, 2017.
	The vote to approve was unanimous of those present, with three abstentions.

**Agenda Item #4: Vote on the Water Resources Commission Annual Report FY2017**

Rao stated that the report had been presented at a previous meeting. The WRC is obligated to publish an annual report. Carroll reviewed the report. She stated that last year’s most time-consuming project had been the drought. The USGS well replacement grant was initiated in the last fiscal year, but the new wells are just beginning to be drilled now. Interbasin Transfer regulations were also moved forward. The only change proposed is that the Commissioner of Fish and Game was replaced at the end of the last fiscal year. The new Commissioner’s name will be added, with a note explaining this. Rao said staff would work with legislative staff to distribute the Annual Report to the legislature and suggested that others disseminate the report widely.

V O T E	A motion was made by Weismantel with a second by Zimmerman to approve the Water Resources Commission Annual Report for FY 2017, as amended.
	The vote was to approve was unanimous of those present.

(1:37 PM Yeo leaves, replaced by Carroll)

**Agenda Item #5: Introduction to the Water Resources Commission and the Interbasin Transfer Act**

Drury gave a brief overview of the history of the Water Resources Commission, which was formed in 1954 to advise the Governor on water policy issues. It had other duties in its early years, including cooperating with the Soil Conservation Service (now Natural Resources Conservation Service) to construct multiple use reservoirs under the Federal Public Law 566. This has since been taken over by DCR’s Dam Management Program. The WRC also had oversight over the Well Drillers Registration program. This has been moved to DEP. When the Commission was formed, it oversaw what evolved into DCR’s Office of Water Resources (OWR) to conduct research and advise on policy concerning water quantity. The Office of Water Resources still serves as WRC staff. DEP’s Water Pollution Control section was also once under the authority of

the Water Resources Commission, therefore the WRC still has the responsibility to approve some of DEP's water quality regulations.

Drury then gave an introduction to the Interbasin Transfer Act. She noted that the regulations have been revised and released by the administration and will be reviewed more thoroughly next month. This presentation deals with the things that have not changed: what triggers the Act, exemptions, the types of review, various levels of review, and the timelines for issuing commission decisions.

The Act became effective in 1984. It applies to all transfers of water or wastewater – not just public water supplies. The Act specifically designates the WRC as administrator. As staff to the WRC, OWR maintains the record, conducts reviews and makes recommendations to the Commission, but it is the WRC which administers the Act. The Act regulates on capacity and is an approval process, not a permit. A transfer has to cross a town line and basin line to be subject to the Act. Drury explained the other triggers and exemptions under the Act, as well as the types of transfers and the processes for each level of review.

Drury's presentation is available at [www.mass.gov/eea/wrc](http://www.mass.gov/eea/wrc).

Meeting was adjourned at 2:30.

**Documents or Exhibits Used at Meeting:**

1. WRC Meeting Minutes for August 10, 2017
2. WRC Annual Report FY17
3. Presentation by Michele Drury, DCR: IBT 101
4. Notice regarding Water Needs Forecasts being developed for the Parker River basin
5. Interbasin Transfer Act project status report, October 26, 2017

*Compiled by: MHD*

*Agendas and minutes are available on the web site of the Water Resources Commission at [www.mass.gov/eea/wrc](http://www.mass.gov/eea/wrc) under "MA Water Resources Commission Meetings." All other meeting documents are available by request to WRC staff at 251 Causeway Street, 8<sup>th</sup> floor, Boston, MA 02114.*