

North Shore Water Resilience Task Force

2023 Annual Report

About the North Shore Water Resilience Task Force

The North Shore Water Resilience Task Force (the Task Force) was first established as an information sharing body in response to drought conditions that existed in the Ipswich watershed. In 2021 the conveners of the Task Force, the legislators for the region led by Senator Tarr, began a series of conversations with potential task force member communities to gauge their interest in collaboration to identify and pursue cooperative solutions to the region's ongoing water resources challenges and to understand any concerns about such a process. Based on these conversations, the Task Force was refocused, beginning with the development of a charter, signed in 2022, that outlined the structure and expectations of the Task Force and led to the significant work that has been underway since.

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Section 1: Introduction

The North Shore Water Resilience Task Force (the Task Force) is guided by the mission in the group's charter signed in 2022 to "identify and advance long-term solutions to improve water supply resilience and ecosystem health in the Ipswich River Watershed."

The Task Force is comprised of the 18 communities of Andover, Beverly, Boxford, Burlington, Danvers, Hamilton, Ipswich, Lynn, Lynnfield, Middleton, North Andover, North Reading, Peabody, Reading, Salem, Topsfield, Wenham and Wilmington. It also includes the Ipswich River Watershed Association and the Lynn Water and Sewer Commission, Lynnfield Center Water District, and the Salem and Beverly Water Supply Board. Additional state and regional stakeholders also participate as partners adding value to the work of the Task Force.

The Task Force is convened by legislators of the region, including Co-founder and Chair Senator Bruce Tarr. The group is facilitated by Martin Pillsbury and Leah Robins, staff at the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) and Sara Cohen, from the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR).

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The Task Force's scope can best be summarized by the list of initial topics of focus for consensus building outlined in the charter:

- *Can the region improve water resource resilience and long-term supply security/sufficiency through a more robust interconnection network? Can an Integrated Water Resources Planning approach be a part of the solution?*
- *What is the feasibility and desirability of bringing additional water to Ipswich-reliant communities from adjacent watersheds?*
- *What is the feasibility and desirability of developing a reservoir in Topsfield?*
- *What is the feasibility and desirability of bringing in more MWRA water as part of the solution?*
- *What is the feasibility and desirability of desalination in the region?*
- *Is there a role for a new or resurrected regional water authority or sub-authority for the region?*
- *Is there interest in, and potential benefit from, more consistent messaging and water conservation throughout the region? Is there interest in, and potential benefit from, more consistent targets for residential per capita use and unaccounted-for water in the region? Can information-sharing among stakeholders help promote the most effective rate structures and water conservation programming?*
- *How can the region most productively spend earmarked money available for task force efforts in fiscal year 2022?*
- *Can the region pursue other short-term and longer-term financial resources for the region, such as funds through Chapter 259 of the Acts of 2014, bonding, or other state or federal funds?*
- *How should the task force draw from experience to make a regional collaboration as likely as possible to succeed?*
- *Can/should the task force develop a joint narrative of the region's status and desired future?*
- *What are the appropriate metrics of sustainability for the Ipswich River Watershed?*

The full text of the charter can be found in appendix A.

Section 2: Task Force Activities

From January 2023 to August 2023 the full Task Force membership convened 5 times to advance the group's mission.

January 31, 2023. During the first meeting of the year, the group met in person at Essex North Shore Agricultural and Technical School. The group considered and voted to approve two recommendations by its Earmark Subcommittee to initiate contracted studies using funds procured by the legislative delegation to advance the Task Force efforts. The studies would begin collecting information necessary for the Task Force to evaluate its options.

The group also asked to receive presentations on two studies completed with other sources of funding in the prior 12 months that directly relate to the Task Force's Deliberations.

March 28, 2023. In March, the group heard from Peter Calderazzo of Dewberry on the results of a Water Management Act Grant Study led by the town of Hamilton and the Ipswich River Watershed Association titled *Regional Evaluation to Improve Water Supply Resiliency within the Lower Ipswich*

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River Watershed. Consideration of interconnections among the region’s water supply systems was a key focus of this study and is one of the charter-identified focus areas for the Task Force.

April 11, 2023. In April, the group heard from Becky Weidman of the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) who shared the results of the recently completed MWRA feasibility analysis of service to the North Shore. Consideration of the feasibility and desirability of bringing in more MWRA water to the region is another topic of focus listed in the charter.

June 28, 2023. In June, the Task Force held a discussion on water conservation, yet another topic of focus listed in the charter. Anne Carroll, Director of DCR Office of Water Resources, Erin Bonney Casey on behalf of Greenscapes North Shore, Rachael Belisle-Toler, Water Resource Manager for the Town of Ipswich and Sharon Clement, Program Engineer in the Town of Danvers presented on available resources related to water conservation and case study examples of municipal water conservation programs.

August 2, 2023. In this Task Force meeting, the group established two additional subcommittees to further advance topics in the charter in the remaining months of the year.

The first, a “Joint Narrative Subcommittee” was formed to develop consensus around the foundational facts underpinning the region’s water security and resilience needs and articulate these in narrative form. The concept of developing a joint narrative had been identified as a potential action for the Task Force in the charter. The need for such action came to the fore when the Earmark Subcommittee members reviewed a draft memo by Dewberry under its contract on behalf of the Task Force. The Earmark subcommittee members recognized they lacked consensus on some key points of information and acknowledged the importance of developing consensus on a set of foundational facts to guide the Task Force decision-making. They determined that such a consensus process was outside the scope of the work they were delegated to take on by the Task Force and recommended a subcommittee be set up expressly for this purpose.

The second, a “Conservation and Demand Management Subcommittee” was authorized to address the question identified in the charter *“Is there interest in, and potential benefit from, more consistent messaging and water conservation throughout the region? Is there interest in, and potential benefit from, more consistent targets for residential per capita use and unaccounted-for water in the region? Can information-sharing among stakeholders help promote the most effective rate structures and water conservation programming?”*

Section 3: Task Force Subcommittees

In addition to the full task force meetings, two subcommittees established by the Task Force carried out work in 2023 and a third will begin work in 2024. These groups include Task Force members and state and regional stakeholders and are facilitated by the Task Force facilitation team.

3.1 Earmark Subcommittee

Members:

- Wayne Castonguay, Ipswich River Watershed Association Executive Director

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- Jim Engel, Town of Ipswich
- Kevin Harutunian, Topsfield Town Administrator
- Peter Phippen, Merrimack Valley Planning Commission Coastal Restoration Coordinator
- Alan Taubert, Salem and Beverly Water Supply Board Executive Director
- Brad Perron, Salem and Beverly Water Supply Board Deputy Director
- Technical Advisor to the group on the hydrologic impact analysis project: Viki Zoltay, Hydrologist at DCR

The subcommittee had been established during the spring of 2022 and met 11 times in 2023. During these sessions the group finalized the scopes, reviewed proposals, selected vendors, and provided oversight on deliverables for three studies on behalf of the Task Force funded with legislative earmarks. As of the filing of this report these studies are still in progress :

- **Assessment of the Water Security and Resilience Needs and Opportunities in the Ipswich River Watershed.** The aim of this study is to summarize in a technical report the critical needs for improved water security and resilience among all communities relying on the Ipswich River basin for water supply; assess the feasibility and challenges of increased water sharing among lower basin communities; and assess the feasibility and challenges of adding new storage capacity in the lower basin through development of a previously scoped reservoir project in Topsfield on land owned by the Salem Beverly Water Supply Board. This study expands on a previously completed analysis for the town of Hamilton and the Ipswich River Watershed Association funded under a MassDEP Water Management Act grant.
- **Modeling of the Relative Impacts on River Flow of the Water Supply Alternatives Identified in an Assessment of the Water Security and Resilience Needs and Opportunities in the Ipswich River Watershed.** This study analyzes the potential improvements to streamflow that could result from alternative water supply scenarios in the Ipswich River Watershed.
- **North Shore Water Infrastructure Status Report.** This report will summarize the water supply infrastructure projects that are planned or under consideration by Task Force members and potential water supply partners with a focus on the timeline for these projects and critical decision-making junctures. Data will be gathered through direct communication with communities and water suppliers. The intention is to help the Task Force understand the regional implications of various individual infrastructure decisions.

3.2 Joint Narrative Subcommittee

Members:

- Sarah Bower, Mass Rivers Alliance Technical Program Director
- Erin Bonney Casey, Ipswich River Watershed Association Resiliency Program Director
- Joseph Domelowicz, Town of Hamilton Town Manager
- Representative Kristin Kassner, 2nd Essex District
- David Lane, Danvers Director of Public Works
- Jennifer Pederson, Massachusetts Water Works Association Executive Director
- Viki Zoltay, Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation Hydrologist

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The Joint Narrative Subcommittee was established during the August 2, 2023 meeting of the Task Force. The group met 11 times in 2023. The group developed a draft joint narrative on the water resilience challenges and opportunities in the region, for presentation to the Task Force in 2024.

3.3 Conservation and Demand Management Subcommittee

Established during the 8/22/2023 meeting, the group will begin their work in 2024.

Section 4: Funds

The Task Force has received a total of \$400,000 in funds through MA legislative earmarks (\$100,000 in FY2022; \$150,000 in FY2023; and \$150,000 in FY2024). A portion of these funds has been allocated to the following studies (studies are described in more detail in Section 3):

Assessment of the Water Security and Resilience Needs and Opportunities in the Ipswich River Watershed: **Dewberry Engineers – \$100,000**

Modeling of the Relative Impacts on River Flow of the Water Supply Alternatives Identified in an Assessment of the Water Security and Resilience Needs and Opportunities in the Ipswich River Watershed: **Horsley Witten Group/Weston & Sampson – \$50,000**

North Shore Water Infrastructure Status Report: **Dewberry Engineers – \$25,000**

Out of the total allocated amount, \$70,261 has been invoiced through the end of 2023, all for work that occurred during 2023.

The remainder of the earmarked funds have not yet been allocated.

Section 5: Looking Ahead to 2024

In the coming year, the Task Force will be focused on the completion of studies it has funded and the review of these and several related external studies as a foundation for deliberating options for improving regional water supply resilience and ecosystem health and for seeking consensus on moving forward collaboratively towards the most promising solutions. The Task Force subcommittee on Conservation and Demand Management will also advance the discussion of the potential role of water conservation and demand management as an element of improving regional resilience.

Appendix A: Task Force Charter Agreement

The full text of the North Shore Resilience Task Force (Task Force) charter, signed September 28, 2022, is provided below:

Mission

The North Shore Water Resilience Task Force aims to identify and advance long-term solutions to improve water supply resilience and ecosystem health in the Ipswich River Watershed. We will do this by:

- Working to understand one another's important challenges and goals;
- Engaging meaningfully and in good faith in discussions determined by the group as key to regional success;
- Working to reach a common understanding of the best potential solutions to achieve water supply resilience and ecosystem health; and
- Seeking full consensus on actions to support the most promising solutions.

Members

The task force defines membership as communities and organizations whose missions will be directly impacted by the outcome of the discussions to be taken up by the task force and whose agreement defines consensus. These members are identified as follows:

City of Beverly	Town of Hamilton
City of Lynn / Lynn Water and Sewer	Town of Ipswich
City of Peabody	Town of Lynnfield/Lynnfield Center Water District
City of Salem	Town of Middleton
Ipswich River Watershed Association	Town of North Andover
Salem and Beverly Water Supply Board	Town of North Reading
Town of Andover	Town of Reading
Town of Boxford	Town of Topsfield
Town of Burlington	Town of Wenham
Town of Danvers	Town of Wilmington

Additional State and Regional Stakeholders

Other entities who are not task force members may still have important stakes in the deliberations and outcomes of the task force, and their input, perspective, and knowledge could add value to the work of the task force. Additionally, certain task force actions may require one or more of these entities to participate as partners and to be included actively in the consensus-building process. These entities include, but are not necessarily limited to:

MA Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs	Mass Audubon Society
MA Department of Environmental Protection	Essex County Green Belt
MA Department of Conservation and Recreation	Trout Unlimited
MA Department of Fish and Game	Trustees of Reservation
Massachusetts Water Resources Authority	Parker River Association
MassBays	Town of Essex
Massachusetts Rivers Alliance	Town of Manchester-by-the-Sea
Massachusetts Water Works Association	Town of Rockport
	City of Gloucester

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North Shore Chamber of Commerce
Merrimack Valley Chamber of Commerce
Merrimack Valley Planning Commission
Metropolitan Area Planning Council
Green Beverly

Salem Sound Coastwatch
Salem Alliance for the Environment
Middleton Stream Team
Northeast Seafood Coalition

As its understanding of the issues laid out in this document evolve, the task force will endeavor to ensure that the appropriate municipalities, agencies, organizations, and members of the public are involved at the appropriate level. This may involve amending the list of members and/or additional stakeholders.

Founding Conveners

The following legislators are founding conveners of the task force, supporting the actions and initiatives of the taskforce and providing direct logistic support.

Senator Bruce Tarr
Senator Brendan Crighton
Senator Diana DiZoglio
Senator Barry Finegold

Senator Cindy Friedman
Senator Jason Lewis
Senator Joan Lovely

Representative Jamie Zahlaway Belsito
Representative Dan Cahill
Representative Peter Capano
Representative Ann-Margaret Ferrante
Representative Ken Gordon
Representative Richard Haggerty
Representative Brad Jones
Representative Sally Kerans
Representative Christina Minicucci

Representative Lenny Mirra
Representative Frank Moran
Representative Tram Nguyen
Representative Jerry Parisella
Representative Dave Robertson
Representative Paul Tucker
Representative Tom Walsh
Representative Donald Wong

Facilitators

The conveners are invoking the services of the following facilitation team to assist the task force in accomplishing its goals:

Martin Pillsbury, Metropolitan Area Planning Council
Leah Robins, Metropolitan Area Planning Council
Sara Cohen, MA Department of Conservation and Recreation

Initial Topics of Focus for Consensus Building

- Can the region improve water resource resilience and long-term supply security/sufficiency through a more robust interconnection network? Can an Integrated Water Resources Planning approach be a part of the solution?
- What is the feasibility and desirability of bringing additional water to Ipswich-reliant communities from adjacent watersheds?
- What is the feasibility and desirability of developing a reservoir in Topsfield?
- What is the feasibility and desirability of bringing in more MWRA water as part of the solution?
- What is the feasibility and desirability of desalination in the region?
- Is there a role for a new or resurrected regional water authority or sub-authority for the region?
- Is there interest in, and potential benefit from, more consistent messaging and water conservation throughout the region? Is there interest in, and potential benefit from, more consistent targets for

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residential per capita use and unaccounted-for water in the region? Can information-sharing among stakeholders help promote the most effective rate structures and water conservation programming?

- How can the region most productively spend earmarked money available for task force efforts in fiscal year 2022?
- Can the region pursue other short-term and longer-term financial resources for the region, such as funds through Chapter 259 of the Acts of 2014, bonding, or other state or federal funds?
- How should the task force draw from experience to make a regional collaboration as likely as possible to succeed?
- Can/should the task force develop a joint narrative of the region's status and desired future?
- What are the appropriate metrics of sustainability for the Ipswich River Watershed?

Roles and Responsibilities

- **Members** will engage in discussion, information sharing, problem solving and consensus building to advance the mission of the task force. They will participate in good faith with the operations of the task force as described in the Member Agreements.
- **Additional State and Regional Stakeholders**, though not signatories to this charter, are anticipated to serve as advisors and supporters of the task force efforts at critical junctures, to potentially serve on subgroups of the task force, and to provide valuable perspective on various topics, as appropriate.
- **Conveners** will coordinate meeting space, scheduling, and logistics for task force operations and support the goals and initiatives of the task force through legislative action and other external support. They will also direct communication with the task force and outside stakeholders, including drafting press releases.
- **Facilitators** will help prepare for and moderate meetings, advise on structure and process to advance task force goals, assist in tracking and documenting decisions, and work to help parties resolve conflict. They will be available as a resource for all participants to share thoughts and concerns and are contacts for feedback on process, agenda items, and meeting summaries. To the greatest extent possible, they will work with conveners to provide agendas at least 7 days in advance of meetings and circulate meeting summaries and key decision outcomes to members within 7 days after meetings.

Measures of Success

- *Short-term (first 3 years):*
 - Funding allocated in the FY22 (continued into FY23) budget is used to advance consensus decision making by providing additional data and information.
 - Full consensus is reached on one or more actions to address regional water supply resilience and ecosystem health in the Ipswich River Watershed.
 - The consensus decisions are used to develop an implementation plan for action.
 - Sufficient funding is obtained for critical support of consensus action(s).
- *Medium-term (5-10 years)*
 - Consensus action(s) are implemented.
- *Long-term (10 years and beyond):*
 - Task force communities can reliably deliver water to meet the needs of their service communities day-to-day and in times of drought.
 - Task force communities are a state model for region-wide coordination on water use efficiency.
 - The Ipswich River and its tributaries and wetlands sustain sufficient water levels and stream flows to support healthy wetland ecosystems.

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Member Agreements

- Decisions will be made by full consensus, defined as unanimous support, of task force members or designated subgroup members. Items that achieve consensus will be prioritized for action. On items for which consensus cannot be reached, no action will be taken, however, such items can continue to be discussed and may be revisited with new efforts to reach consensus at any time.
- The task force may agree by consensus of all members to delegate some decisions to a subgroup of members and can include additional stakeholders in such subgroups as appropriate.
- Member communities/organizations will designate a representative and/or designee for decision-making purposes.
- Member participants will keep decision makers in their respective communities/organizations apprised of potential agreements of the task force, advocate for any options agreed to in principle by the task force, and transparently and in a timely manner bring back to the taskforce any concerns or roadblocks posed by such decision makers.
- Members will engage the public and additional stakeholders within their communities, as appropriate, to increase the likelihood of broad support for task force decisions.
- As a matter of spirit and to the extent possible, task force members agree to disagree about previous disputes, instead holding one another accountable for their current and future actions.
- The task force will issue press releases related to its efforts, which will be reviewed by and approved by members.
- Individuals speaking about task force matters to the press, social media, or other public outlets will clearly state their affiliation(s) and will not speak on behalf of, quote, or characterize the positions of any other task force members. Additionally, as a matter of spirit and to the extent possible, task force members will refrain from making statements that harm or disparage other members or the task force itself.
- To facilitate timely record keeping, if members have feedback on meeting summaries, they will make every effort to provide it within 5 days of receiving the document.
- Additional topics of focus for consensus building, not outlined in this charter, may be added by consensus.
- Provisions of the charter are intended to last for three years unless extended, modified or amended by consensus, provided more particular agreements may be developed as necessary for particular initiatives.

Appendix B: Legislative Delegation / Task Force Conveners (2023)

Senator Bruce Tarr (Chair)
Senator Brendan Crighton
Senator Barry Finegold
Senator Cindy Friedman
Senator Jason Lewis
Senator Joan Lovely
Rep. Daniel Cahill
Rep. Peter Capano
Rep. Manny Cruz
Rep. Ken Gordon
Rep. Richard Haggerty
Rep. Bradley Jones
Rep. Kristin Kassner
Rep. Sally Kerans
Rep. Frank Moran
Rep. Tram Nguyen
Rep. Jerry Parisella
Rep. Dave Robertson
Rep. Tom Walsh
Rep. Donald Wong