



# MWRA WATER QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

**Q. Why is the Town applying to join the MWRA water system?**

A. Weymouth's water supply is limited, with Great Pond and groundwater wells being the current sources. The town is permitted to use 5 million gallons of water a day (MGD). We currently use, on average, 86% of our capacity, with peak use at over 91% in 2020 due to the pandemic. Since the 1960s, the Town has faced intermittent water shortages and water bans. The 2020 pandemic gave cause for concern with a spike in water use as many residents stayed home.

Connection to the MWRA water system has been considered since the inception of the former South Weymouth Naval Air Station (SWNAS) redevelopment over two decades ago. It has been well known that a permanent water solution would be needed. Since a new Master Developer was chosen by the Southfield Redevelopment Authority (SRA), a consultant was hired to re-evaluate the Town's water needs. The study showed Weymouth's town wide water demand could surpass the Town's withdrawal limit within 6 years, including SWNAS redevelopment needs.

Knowing we need to find a new, permanent water supply for Weymouth's future and environmental benefit, the timing could not be better than now. The MWRA has waived their entry fee for the first 20MGD through 2027. This would be a savings of \$39.1 million (for 7.5MG). In addition, Weymouth Representative and House Speaker Ron Mariano announced his plan to support and expansion of MWRA water service to Weymouth in an upcoming Housing Bond Bill. With construction costs estimated to be between \$90 and \$120 million, these cost reliefs will directly benefit rate payers.

**Q. Are there other options for new sources of water?**

A. Studies have concluded that the only viable option to address the long-term water needs of Weymouth and the proper development of Southfield is a MWRA connection.

**Q. What is the status of the Town's application process? How long could it take?**

A. The SRA, the Southfield Master Developer and the Town split the cost (\$361,500) of hiring Environmental Partners Group, LLC to provide engineering services related to Weymouth's application to the MWRA. We have prepared our first filing (an Expanded Environmental Notification Form (EENF) to the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act Office (MEPA) as part of the application process, which is several months ahead of our original schedule. After more filings, reviews and public input, we plan to have a decision by the MWRA in the first quarter of next year. The construction of the pipeline could potentially be completed between 2030 and 2032.

**Q. Does Town Council need to approve the Town's entrance into the MWRA?**

A. Yes. A requirement of the MWRA application is Town Council approval. Mayor Hedlund filed a measure seeking Council support of the Town's application. We are hoping for a vote at their May 6, 2024 meeting.

**Q. Is it true that Weymouth has a high percentage of Unaccounted-For-Water (UAW)? If true, wouldn't fixing UAW solve Weymouth's need for water?**

A. It is true. Weymouth's UAW percentage was 22.5% in 2023, down from 24.8% the year before. The MassDEP standard is 10%. This is a factor that the MWRA will consider as part of our application. We will need to explain the cause and our ongoing efforts to address it. We are working to address UAW continuously with leak detection and repairs, new meters, and replacing old infrastructure. Solving UAW will not result in a proportional increase in available water, nor be enough to meet future demands.

**Q. Will water rates increase if we join the MWRA?**

A. MWRA water rates are currently higher than Weymouth's current water rates, but near future Weymouth rates are expected to see meaningful increases as the cost of treatment rises. Recent MWRA rate increases have been less than town rate increases. Town rates could be impacted further by federal and state mandated health and environmental requirements, of which MWRA would likely not face. The MWRA entry fee waiver and support from the State will minimize any rate increase. In addition, the new Master Developers at Southfield will still be expected to pay their fair share of the cost to bring MWRA water to Weymouth. Lastly, there could be a revenue opportunity for Weymouth should the MWRA Weymouth connection expand to other South Shore Communities. A study has shown there is a need and we continue to meet with interested communities. We are committed to finding the solution that has the least impact to ratepayers.

**Q. Is the recent increase in new construction in town the reason Weymouth has water concerns and needs MWRA water?**

A. No. We track water use from recent redevelopment and the impact to water use has been minimal, around 1% of total town water use. New housing units average 1.3 bedrooms and plumbing fixtures are much more conservation-friendly now. Weymouth has had water concerns for decades. Emergency water level conditions date back as far as 1964, with a state consent decree issued by the MassDEP in 1999, forcing the town to develop a solution and put a freeze on new connections. Applying for MWRA water is the first serious effort to address future water needs with a long-term solution.

COVID was the biggest contributor to the spike in water use. Water use continues to be less than the COVID year 2020. In addition to water use being less in 2021, 2022 and 2023, monthly water use has been down from the previous year for ten straight months (June 2023 – March 2024).

**Q. Is Weymouth on the verge of running out of available water?**

A. No, we're not. Weymouth is still at least 600,000 gallons a day below our allowable use under the state Water Management Act. Including SWNAS redevelopment needs, our consultants have projected water demand would likely surpass the Town's withdrawal limit within 6 years, Without SWNAS redevelopment, projections for surpassing water limits are within 15 years.



MWRA water is nationally recognized for quality and taste and has no PFAS or contamination concerns. The MWRA has excellent water quality due to its well protected watershed and large reservoirs. In any given year, up to 100 MGD (million gallons per day) of additional water supply is available to be withdrawn from MWRA's reservoirs while operating within their safe yield of approximately 300 MGD.

The MWRA has waived their usual entry fee for the next 5 years for the communities first to be accepted, a potential savings of up to \$39.1 million. There is also additional funding assistance expected through the State. House Speaker Mariano is a key supporter of an MWRA expansion to Weymouth and the South Shore. Many other non-MWRA communities in the region also face challenges with water supply - the timing for joining the MWRA has never been more opportune.

Having the MWRA as a new water source would have major environmental benefits for Weymouth, including to no longer using Whitman's Pond as a water source and improvements, and maybe even an expansion of our Herring Run. It could also potentially allow us to utilize Great Pond as a passive recreational resource. It would mean healthier ponds, rivers and wetlands in town.

**Questions? Contact [mwrawater@weymouth.ma.us](mailto:mwrawater@weymouth.ma.us) for assistance.**