

The Town of Danvers
The Town of Hamilton
Lynnfield Center Water District
The Town of Middleton
The Town of Topsfield
The Town of Wenham

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Planning for the future of water supply in the Ipswich River Basin

DANVERS, MA - Last summer we experienced one of the worst droughts since the 1960s and there was heightened awareness regarding water management, especially in the Ipswich River Basin where the communities of Danvers, Hamilton, Lynnfield Center Water District, Middleton, Topsfield and Wenham withdraw water.

As good environmental stewards, our communities know we must plan ahead and be looking toward the future sustainability of our water resources in the Basin. Even before the drought hit, we were in the planning stages for evaluation of our current water supplies to see what opportunities there might be to better manage water and identify potential solutions to improve the resiliency for groundwater suppliers in the basin. We submitted a planning grant proposal to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' Department of Environmental Protection and received funding through their Sustainable Water Management grant program to do this evaluation.

Our engineering consultant working on this project, Kleinfelder, recently completed the project report and we want to draw your attention to some of the key findings in the report:

- While Basin population has increased, total water withdrawals have remained steady since the late 1980s. This indicates that the Basin water users have made significant gains in demand reduction and are using water efficiently.
- Despite claims by watershed advocates that there were large increases in water consumption last summer over previous averages, our communities used an average of 5% less water in 2016 than we did in 2015.
- Groundwater withdrawals by Ipswich River Basin communities represent only a fraction (1%) of the annual precipitation the basin receives. The majority of

precipitation falling in the basin evaporates naturally or is used by trees or other plants and therefore is not available to recharge groundwater or baseflow for our streams.

- Future expansion of groundwater supplies in the basin will be difficult; therefore, responsible expansion of regional supplies and of surface water options should be explored and supported.

The communities in the Ipswich River Basin want and need to plan for safe and reliable water supply for today and into the future. We want to continue to be good stewards of the environment. Public water systems in the Commonwealth are in the business of providing essential service 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Drinking water is the most basic human need and our water systems do an admirable job making sure the water is safe to drink and meets all regulatory requirements, all while ensuring that there is enough water available to fight fires and protect public safety.

Despite all of the conservation measures that the water suppliers in the Ipswich River basin have implemented, the Ipswich River still experiences periods of low or no flow. Unfortunately, the Ipswich River Basin is hydraulically challenged, meaning that very little water makes it into the ground to recharge our streams or groundwater supplies. Climatic conditions are beyond our control and could worsen in the future. Water demand throughout the Commonwealth has dropped significantly over the past three decades as communities have adopted water conservation efforts. We have to be mindful, however, that conservation is only going to get us so far.

Our analysis shows that it appears it will be very difficult for our communities to develop new water supply sources individually. To meet the objective of supporting growth in an environmentally sustainable manner, alternative water supply options need to be considered in a comprehensive, coordinated and strategic manner. We are fortunate to have identified a number of potential regional solutions that we can explore such as expansion of surface water reservoirs or connection to the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority. We are hopeful the Baker Administration, MassDEP and our local legislative delegation will engage with us to implement some of the recommendations cited in the report so that we can continue to provide the high quality service that our residents and businesses expect.

To view a full copy of the report, please visit: www.danversma.gov

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