



# **Safe Drinking Water Act Assessment Program**

## **Annual Report to the Massachusetts Legislature**

### **Calendar Year 2024**

### **31st Year of the Assessment Program**

## **Introduction**

Thirty-one years ago, the Massachusetts Legislature established the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) Assessment and a SDWA Assessment Advisory Committee to monitor the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection's (MassDEP) Assessment Program. The Advisory Committee is required to submit a yearly update to the legislature in the form of an Annual Report.

The following Annual Report for calendar year 2024 provides an overview of the Assessment Program and the Advisory Committee, and provides updates on several of MassDEP's Drinking Water Program (DWP) activities, including **Lead Programs; the Water Smart Program; Cybersecurity at Water Facilities; Per-and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS); Financial Assistance Programs; the Surface Water Protection Program, and DWP's new Communication Hub.**

## **The Safe Drinking Water Act Assessment Program**

The Safe Drinking Water Act Assessment (Assessment) is paid each year by the 6.5 million consumers of public water in Massachusetts and is collected by the more than 1,600 Public Water Systems (PWS) across the state. The average cost to each consumer is 34 cents per year. For the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 billing cycle, the Assessment Program is expected to generate over \$2 million in revenue.

The Assessment revenue helps MassDEP's Drinking Water Program manage and implement the federal SDWA. The SDWA is implemented by MassDEP, including all enforcement responsibilities, instead of by the federal government. Through the implementation of the SDWA MassDEP ensures the safe production of drinking water at PWS while implementing state-specific programs that save consumers millions of dollars. For example, the Water Quality Monitoring Program saved consumers \$4,712,914 in water quality monitoring costs for the last monitoring cycle (2020-2022).

MassDEP is pleased to report that according to EPA statistics compiled for the fourth quarter of 2024, 97.2% of Community PWS met all applicable health-based standards and 90.9% of the population served by Community PWS received drinking water that met all applicable health-based standards.

## **The Safe Drinking Water Act Assessment Advisory Committee**

In 1993, as part of the Assessment Program, the legislature formed a SDWA Assessment Advisory Committee to:

- Recommend an annual Assessment rate to MassDEP's Commissioner;
- Monitor the Assessment Program;
- Provide advice and recommendations on the Drinking Water Program's technical and compliance assistance and outreach programs to PWS and others;
- Produce an annual report to the legislature; and
- Conduct public meetings to discuss their work.

More information about the Committee is posted at <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/safe-drinking-water-act-assessment-advisory-committee-section-70-committee>.

## **Assessment Program Rate Structure for FY26**

Following the recommendation of the Advisory Committee, MassDEP has established the same rate structure for FY26 as for FY25.

- \$9.50 per million gallons of water used by PWS with meters;  
Minimum bill for metered PWS is \$50;
- Flat rate of \$50 for unmetered PWS serving up to 101;
- Flat rate of \$100 for unmetered PWS serving 101 through 200;
- Flat rate of \$250 for unmetered PWS serving 201 through 899; and
- Unmetered PWS serving 900 or more pay a rate based on an average water use.

## **Drinking Water Program (DWP) Highlights for 2024**

### **Lead and Copper Rule Revisions (LCRR)**

All community (COM) and non-transient non-community (NTNC) public water systems in Massachusetts that are required to comply with the Lead and Copper Rule (LCR) were required to develop a Service Line Inventory (SLI) by October 16, 2024. This inventory must include every service line that delivers water to water consumers within their system. The goal is to identify all lead service lines still in use, which were installed before the U.S. banned lead service lines. More information is posted at <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/lead-and-copper-rule-revisions>.

Massachusetts consumers can learn more about the LCRR and its requirements, such as the Service Line Inventory and how consumers will be notified if served by a service line that contains or may contain lead by visiting <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/consumers-frequently-asked-questions-about-the-lcrr-service-line-inventory>



Water-Smart offers eligible public and private schools and childcare facilities free and easy drinking water lead testing, along with access to results, and solutions for elevated levels of lead. After testing and consultation, participants will receive certification acknowledging that they have tested their drinking water and taken any needed actions. Participants will also receive the Water-Smart Seal of Approval to display at their school or facility. Water-Smart is funded through the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation (WIIN) Act Voluntary School and Child Care Lead Testing and Reduction Grant Program and the Massachusetts Clean Water Trust and receives technical support from UMass Amherst. More information, including a Story Map, is posted at <https://www.mass.gov/water-smart>.

### Cybersecurity Program

PWS may be targets for cyber-attacks that can disrupt public water supply operations and supply. For cyber-related communication to PWS, the DWP uses the following tools:

- Routine Communication is provided to PWS on cybersecurity topics through the biweekly “In The Main” electronic newsletter. There is a special section on cybersecurity. More info here: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/in-the-main#cybersecurity,-emergency-preparedness,-and-you!>
- Time-sensitive communications about emerging cybersecurity issues (e.g., national alerts) are shared separately and on the same day of receipt of the communication via the MassDEP/DWP Director email account.
- Direct emails for SDWA required notices including sanitary surveys, emergency response and cyber inspection requirements.
- A cybersecurity resource hub to support PWS navigating cybersecurity challenges. The purpose of this hub is to provide resources for public water systems to improve cybersecurity defenses, mitigate cyber-attack risks, and enhance overall resiliency and compliance: MassDEP Cybersecurity StoryMap
- MassDEP provides education materials and multiple training opportunities for PWS. MassDEP hosts free webinars on topics such as basic cybersecurity, ransomware, and incident response.
- Informational posters on various topics that are intended to be printed and posted at PWS for continuous staff training. For example, Emergency Response for Public Water

Systems is available here: Click here: <https://www.mass.gov/lists/emergency-response-for-public-water-systems>.

- Self-paced online cybersecurity class for water and wastewater operators (offers one training contact hour) <https://classes.wateroperator.org/courses/cybersecurity>
- Collaboration with other organizations for training, including the MassCyberCenter and Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA).
- Technical assistance through several resources, including Technical Assistance Providers (TAPS) and outside agencies (e.g., USEPA, CISA). TAPS are provided using USEPA State Revolving Fund funding and our contracting partner, UMass Amherst: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/public-water-system-capacity-development>

## Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)

### Public Water Suppliers (PWS)

- Currently there are 1,608 active PWS in the state of which 1,418 were required to test for PFAS (have their own water source).
- 175 PWS (approx. 12%), including Community PWS, Non-transient Non-community (NTNC) PWS, and Transient Non-community (TNC) PWS, detected PFAS6 above the Maximum Contaminant Level of 20 ppt in one or more of their sources. TNCs are not subject to the MCL but may require an individual health risk assessment depending on the level of PFAS.
- 74 new water treatment facilities (WTFs) or additions to existing WTFs have been constructed and activated by PWS since 2020 (temporary and permanent systems).
- 6 small PWS were connected to a municipal water system and declassified as PWS.
- PWS PFAS testing results are available to the public on the web in the [EEA data portal](#). Search under the chemical name: “PFAS6” or to see all the PFAS chemicals, search under the contaminant group “PFAS”.

### Federal PFAS MCLs

- On May 13, 2025, EPA announced changes to the National Primary Drinking Water Regulations (NPDWR) and the Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs) for PFAS. EPA announced it will keep the MCLs of 4 parts per trillion (ppt) for PFOA and PFOS that were established in April 2024; however, EPA intends to rescind the regulations for PFHxS, PFNA, HFPO-DA (commonly known as GenX), and the Hazard Index mixture of these three compounds plus PFBS. EPA will provide additional time for MCL compliance, including a proposal to extend the compliance date from 2029 to 2031. EPA plans to issue a proposed rule this fall and finalize this rule in the Spring of 2026.
- The vast majority of PFAS testing results in Massachusetts that have exceeded an EPA MCL did so because the level of PFOS and/or PFOA exceeded 4 ppt. MassDEP does not expect EPA’s rule proposal to significantly change the number of Public Water Suppliers

that will need to address PFAS by taking action such as installing treatment or using an alternate source of drinking water.

- States are required to establish regulations that are no less stringent than the federal standards within 2 years of the promulgation of the federal rule.
- Massachusetts will hold public hearings once EPA issues the new rule. In addition, PWS should be preparing now to be in compliance with the MCLs when they take effect.
- The Massachusetts Drinking Water Regulations require that PWS have the technical, managerial, and financial capacity to operate and maintain the system in compliance with 310 CMR 22.00, and each National Primary Drinking Water Regulation in effect at the time and in the foreseeable future.

More information about DWP's PFAS Program is posted at <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/per-and-polyfluoroalkyl-substances-pfas-in-drinking-water#laboratories,-testing-and-sample-collection-for-drinking-water->.

### Story Maps

DWP creates and maintains Story Maps online to transparently portray program information for better understanding and use by PWS, consumers, media, researchers and others. Story Maps provide a multi-media interactive experience. DWP has made the following Story Maps to date.

#### **PFAS**

This story map consists of seven tabs that present interactive maps, dashboards and photographs that describe the efforts by MassDEP and the PWS to address PFAS contamination.

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/per-and-polyfluoroalkyl-substances-pfas-in-drinking-water#pfas-detected-in-drinking-water-supplies-in-massachusetts->

#### **Manganese**

This map displays the most recent manganese finished water results from active sources from public water systems throughout Massachusetts.

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/manganese-in-drinking-water#manganese-in-public-drinking-water-sources-in-massachusetts->

#### **Water Smart Program**

The MassDEP Water Smart Program offers free testing and technical assistance for public schools and public/private childcare facilities.

<https://www.mass.gov/water-smart>

#### **Lead and Copper Rule Revisions (LCCR)**

The LCCR Story Map shows submitted Service Line Inventories of each PWS.  
[Massachusetts Service Line Inventories Hub Site](https://www.mass.gov/service-line-inventories)

**Cybersecurity - Cybersecurity Resource Hub for Mass. Public Water Systems**  
**Cybersecurity Resource Hub for MA Public Water Systems (PWS) (arcgis.com)**

**Capacity Development - Financial Assistance Programs**

Information about MassDEP DWP's financial assistance programs for PWS and other eligible entities is available at <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/water-resources-grants-financial-assistance#drinking-water-supply-protection-grant-program->.

Examples of programs include the following.

- Assistance Program for Lead in School Drinking Water
- Cyber Improvements Grant
- Drinking Water Supply Protection Grant Program
- Emerging Contaminants in Small and Disadvantaged Communities Grant
- PFAS Grants and Loans
- State Revolving Funds Program

**DWP's Surface Water Protection Program Turns 30**

There are currently 76 Public Water Systems (PWS) in Massachusetts operating at least one active reservoir and many with multiple active reservoirs. These PWS, which include the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA), serve a total population of 5.4 million. The MWRA serves 2.6 million. The remaining 75 PWS serve 2.8 million.

In the mid-1990s, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection's (MassDEP) Drinking Water Program (DWP) was given a mandate by the Massachusetts legislature to improve source water protection at public drinking water reservoirs.

A staff person was hired in the spring of 1995 to develop and implement a plan for improvements and oversee its implementation. An internal advisory committee, composed of MassDEP staff, and an external advisory committee, composed of public water suppliers, water works associations, public health organizations, watershed groups and other state programs, were formed.

In spring 2025 this program achieved 30 years of protecting surface water supplies. More information is posted at <https://www.mass.gov/lists/groundwater-wellhead-protection-and-surface-water-supplies#surface-water-supplies->.

**DWP New One-Stop Communication Hub**

DWP has a new one-stop communication hub for emails and phone calls from PWS, consumers and others. The hub is monitored throughout the day for quick follow up by program staff. In 2024 thousands of emails and hundreds of telephone calls were successfully addressed on the hub. Contact MassDEP's Drinking Water Program communication hub at [program.director-dwp@mass.gov](mailto:program.director-dwp@mass.gov).

### DWP Drinking Water Day Awards

For 38 years, MassDEP has recognized and awarded exemplary systems that have reached meritorious service for their work during the previous calendar year. In 2024, during National Drinking Water Week, MassDEP presented 37 excellence-in-compliance awards and 13 nominated awards during 2024 for calendar year 2023. Awardees demonstrated excellent water service to the public, no violations or non-compliance issues, and efforts that support overall public water supply services. See <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/2024-public-water-system-awards>

### **Members of the Safe Drinking Water Act Assessment Advisory Committee 2024**

The following list provides the name, organization represented, affiliation, and year of appointment for the members of the Safe Drinking Water Act Assessment Advisory Committee.

- Neal Merritt, Chair, *Rural Water Systems*, Plymouth County Water Works Association, 2008 (resigned in August 2024 after 16 years of service on the Committee)
- Robert Prophett, *MassDEP Designee*, 2022 (elected Committee Chair in August 2024)
- David Condrey, Vice Chair, *Non-profit Association Representing Investor-owned Water Companies*, National Association of Water Companies, 2011
- Thomas Holder, a *New England Regional Water Works Association*, New England Water Works Association, 2013
- Blake Lukis, a *Massachusetts Statewide Water Works Non-Profit Association*, Massachusetts Water Works Association, 2015
- Sean Osborne, an *Organization Representing Industry*, OSD Environmental Services LLC, 2015
- Rebekah McDermott, a *Regional Water Works Assoc.*, Western Mass. Water Works Assoc., 2016
- Josie Ahlberg, *Massachusetts Municipal Association*, 2022
- James Starbard, an *Organization Representing Non-Community Water Suppliers*, Rural Community Assistance Program, 2019
- Martha Morgan, an *Environmental Agency*, Nashua River Watershed Association, 2022

(resigned in June 2024 due to retirement)

- Lesly Melendez, an Environmental Agency, Groundworks Lawrence, 2024

**In addition, non-voting alternates for the Committee include:**

- Jennifer Pederson, Executive Director, Massachusetts Water Works Association
- Kirsten King, Executive Director, New England Water Works Association

## APPENDIX A

**Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection  
ACCOMPLISHMENTS SUPPORTED BY THE  
SAFE DRINKING WATER ACT ASSESSMENT  
January 1 through December 31, 2024**

### Protected Public Health through Compliance Review

- Reviewing a new three-year (2023-2025) cycle of the Water Quality Monitoring Waiver Program.
- Public Water Systems (PWS) submitting a new or renewal waiver application (2023-2025): 222 at 581 sources of drinking water.  
Monitoring waiver applications submitted by compound:
  - Inorganics – 215 Renewals, 282 New Applications
  - Perchlorate – 319 Renewals, 207 New Applications
  - Synthetic Organics – 220 Renewals, 274 New Applications
  - Volatile Organics - 102 Renewals, 350 New Applications
  - Massachusetts PFAS Waivers were not offered this compliance period as EPA promulgated a new national PFAS rule with much lower Maximum Contaminant Levels.
- Achieved 30 years of the Surface Water Protection Program.
- Approved watershed protection programs for 29 reservoirs with disinfection log credit.
- Approved watershed protection programs for 7 reservoirs with filtration waivers at 4 public water systems.
- Conducted 12 wellhead protection reviews and compliance updates for new sources.
- Reviewed 2 proposed easements for compliance with Zone I regulations.
- Reviewed 2 proposed conservation restrictions to protect hundreds of acres of land for drinking water supplies.
- Updated 3 wellhead protection documents to assist PWS in protecting their wells.
- Reviewed more than 300 monitoring waiver applications for wellhead and surface water compliance criteria.
- Reviewed and ranked 6 Drinking Water Supply Protection Grant Program applications.
- Registered 12 new Public Water Systems (PWS).
- Registered 13 existing Public Water Systems (PWS) that were previously unregulated.

- Reviewed and/or approved 38 new large capacity public water sources.
- Worked on 78 new source approvals for public water sources.
- Reviewed and approved Cross Connection Control Plans for 2 non-community PWS.
- Issued 293 Cross Connection Surveyors/Testers Certificates.
- Reviewed and approved 6 new technologies for use with drinking water.
- Conducted 280 sanitary surveys which included technical and compliance assistance.
- Held regular coordination meetings with the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority and the U.S. EPA - conducted compliance reviews, evaluated water quality reports and trends.
- Conducted regular meetings of the Drinking Water Program Drinking Water Filtration/Treatment Committee.
- Conducted 94 Capacity Reviews for Drinking Water State Revolving Fund applicants.
- Assisted the Mass. Dept. of Public Health at water bottlers and ice makers' facilities.

### **Saved Money for Consumers with Compliance Assistance**

- Supported technical assistance to K-12 schools, early education and care facilities, Boards of Health, Plumbing Inspectors, PWS and the public on lead and copper in drinking water.
- Continued to implement the Wellhead Protection Program to provide compliance and technical assistance. Assisted 19 municipalities or PWS with wellhead protection issues.
- Field verified 9 watershed and/or tributary delineations for reservoirs and updated Geographic Information Systems (GIS) maps.
- Completed 68 hydrogeologic reviews for the MassDEP.
- Continued technical support of the bulk upload tool for laboratories to submit drinking water quality sampling results on-line.
- Provided compliance assistance for Statistical Reporting, Ground Water under the Influence, Consumer Confidence, Cross Connection, Certified Operator and Source Water Protection.
- Captured the 15<sup>th</sup> year of electronic Annual Statistical Reporting (e-ASR).
- Notified new community water systems of CCR requirements for 2024.
- Continued improving the e-ASR for the next reporting year.
- Provided more than 350 instances of Source Water Protection technical assistance.
- Helped PWS write watershed protection plans & local water supply bylaws.
- Continued sending biweekly Program Director emails to PWS with regulatory reminders, trainings, etc., and separate emails with timely info about the Lead & Copper Rule, Lead in School Drinking Water, Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) and grant opportunities.
- Maintained an on-line template for PWS to use for Consumer Confidence Report (CCR) compliance, updated support materials and emailed CCR reminder e-postcards.
- Notified new community water systems of CCR requirements for 2024.
- Reviewed 500z CCRs, provided Technical Assistance Reports and tracked CCR compliance.
- Posted sample schedules, Lead and Copper Approved Sampling Sites Plan, Certificates of Registration for all PWS, Service Line Inventories and water quality reports, i.e., CCRs, for Transient, Non-Community (TNC) and Non-Transient, Non-Community (NTNC) PWS.
- Continued to offer free training programs for small system operators using EPA funding.
- Continued the implementation of the Capacity Development Program which provides financial, managerial, and technical assistance to small PWS.

- Reviewed the technical, financial, and managerial operations of 167 community and non-transient non-community and 82 transient non-community PWS.
- Reviewed Underground Injection Control (UIC) registration applications.
- Assisted Boards of Health on private and public drinking water and geothermal wells issues.
- Responded to requests from PWS regarding the Unregulated Contaminant Monitoring Rule 5 (UCMR5) Program and provided compliance assistance.
- Submitted the Annual Operator Certification Report to the U.S. EPA.
- Submitted the Capacity Development Report to the U.S. EPA.
- Gave Boards of Health one-on-one assistance with well drilling requirements.
- Assisted well drillers at two-day New England Water Well Association Exposition.
- Identified 1,448 technical, financial, and managerial deficiencies during sanitary surveys.

### **Supported Public Water Suppliers with Technical Assistance and Training**

- Distributed fact sheets, guidance documents, and other technical assistance materials.
- Continued to improve web pages for access by PWS, town officials, the public and others.
- Provided materials for statewide Board of Health workshops as requested.
- Prepared and distributed outreach packet to all Boards of Health to support their role in protecting drinking water and to update them on drinking water issues.
- Delivered Drinking Water Program presentations to regional water works organizations.
- Worked with the Office of the State Geologist and United States Geological Survey (USGS) on geological studies relative to ground water.
- Presented 37 excellence in compliance awards and 13 nominated awards during 2024 for calendar year 2023.
- The Board of Certification of Operators of Drinking Water Supply Facilities approved 82 training courses. This is a short list of new topics.
  - Lead and Copper Rule Requirements
  - Community Fluoridation
  - Cybersecurity
  - Emergency Response
  - PFAS in Drinking Water
  -
- Provided assistance on improving cybersecurity hygiene of PWS
  - 81 PWS registered (and 42 completed to-date) for free EPA free cybersecurity assessments.
  - Collaborated with CISA Region 1 to provide free in-person cybersecurity assessments to 9 PWS
  - Conducted free cybersecurity trainings on basic cybersecurity, ransomware, and incident response
- Provided instructors for 6 NEWWA Backflow Tester and Cross Connection Survey classes.
- Provided 1 instructor for NEWWA Hydrogeology/Source Approval classes.
- Provided 1 instructor for the Mass. Health Officers' Association regional conferences.
- Provided technical assistance on CCCP to PWSs.
- Maintained online training videos for PWS at <https://goo.gl/Xhw4br>.

- Maintained a Drinking Water Program Training Calendar with information on courses and conferences from MassDEP and other sources. PWS and others can download the calendar and receive automatic updates.
- Provided expertise to MassDEP's Bureau of Waste Site Cleanup and Title 5 and Groundwater Discharge programs for consistency with Drinking Water Program regulations.
- Provided expertise to the USGS Climate Response Network.
- Collaborated with the USGS to measure monthly water level readings throughout the state.
- Provided speakers and operator training on Mass. drinking water topics at local and regional water works events and for the Massachusetts Rural Water Association.
- Continued to collaborate with the Mass. Department of Public Health (DPH) on the Lead Contamination Control Act, fluoridation and other topics.
- Provided technical assistance and instructors to the New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission's (NEIWPCC) Soil Evaluator Course.
- Continued to provide expertise to the National Science Foundation Drinking Water Technology Review Section.