



**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**  
**Office Of The Senate Minority Leader**  
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**Ipswich River Watershed Stakeholders Sign Major Agreement**  
**Unprecedented Charter Sets Stage for Resource Protection And Water**  
**Supply Resilience**

**HATHORNE MA** - Following nearly two years of intensive conversations and against the backdrop of this year's ongoing drought, stakeholders affected by the Ipswich River Watershed have signed a landmark charter agreement that sets the stage for the development and implementation of regional strategies to protect the health of the watershed and ensure the adequacy and sustainability of drinking water supplies in the communities depending on it. The charter establishes the structure of the North Shore Water Resiliency Task Force, convened by the region's legislative delegation, and chaired by state Senator Bruce Tarr (R- Gloucester). The group, comprised of some 20 municipalities, public water suppliers, and environmental organizations is unified for the first time in a collaborative process geared toward finding a path forward to protect the water that 350,000 people and countless species of wildlife depend on.

"The Watershed represents the lifeblood for our region. The issues of drought and water supply cannot be effectively addressed without a regional approach and I believe that our stakeholders have the ability to come together in an unprecedented way that can lead the Commonwealth," **said Senate Minority Leader Bruce Tarr**. "We are now holding a framework for the future that empowers us to work on one of the most vexing problems that our communities face - access to clean water."

The Task Force's overarching goal is to develop consensus on one or more initiatives to increase the health of the river and strengthen water supply sustainability, and, if consensus can be found, to take action on its components. The operations of the group are facilitated by a 3-person team

consisting of Sara Cohen from the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, and Martin Pillsbury and Leah Robins from the Metropolitan Area Planning Commission (MAPC).

“We could not be more pleased and proud of everyone who came together to achieve this incredible milestone. After working for more than 30 years to solve the problem of water depletion in the Ipswich River and the communities that depend on it, the Charter agreement and the coalition that came together to support it offers up some real hope that we can finally solve this problem once and for all through working together,” **said Wayne Castonguay, Executive Director of Ipswich River Watershed Association.** “I would like to thank Senator Tarr for convening the group, it’s incredibly talented facilitators and all the members of the Task Force for their hard work and commitment.”

Signatories to the agreement include the towns of Andover, Boxford, Burlington, Danvers, Hamilton, Ipswich, Lynnfield/ Lynnfield Center Water District (invited), Middleton, North Andover, North Reading, Reading, Topsfield, Wenham, and Wilmington and the cities of Beverly, Lynn/ Lynn Water and Sewer Commission, Peabody, Salem, the Salem and Beverly Water Supply Board and The Ipswich River Watershed Association.

“With the signing of this historic charter, municipalities and organizations from across the North Shore have agreed to work in tandem to protect invaluable water resources, including the vital Ipswich River” **said Senator Joan B. Lovely (D-Salem).** “I would like to thank Senate Minority Leader Bruce Tarr for his leadership and my fellow Task Force members for their partnership and collaboration. By addressing this issue now, we can prevent it from becoming even more dire in the future.”

“This groundbreaking charter agreement will further advance and strengthen the ongoing efforts by multiple stakeholders to protect the Ipswich River Watershed for both current and future generations,” **said House Minority Leader Bradley H. Jones, Jr. (R-North Reading).** “This is the type of coordinated regional approach that is needed to help ensure a healthy watershed ecosystem and to maintain a sustainable source of drinking water for the participating communities moving forward.”

The legislative convenors of the organization include Senators Tarr and 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.

"I am grateful for the opportunity to support the work of this important task force, led by Senator Tarr, that serves to help North Shore communities, including Peabody, identify and pursue a more reliable and sustainable water supply for our residents," **said Representative Thomas P.**

**Walsh (D-Peabody).** "I was happy to join Peabody Public Services Director Bob Labossiere at the recent charter signing and I look forward to continuing our progress on this important, regional issue of protecting the endangered Ipswich River."

"I thank Senator Tarr for convening Ipswich River watershed communities, including Peabody, Middleton, Danvers, Topsfield and Wenham, to have the necessary, if contentious, discussion we must have to ensure water supply for us all," **said Rep. Sally Kerans, (D-Danvers).**

Throughout the creation and development of the task force, the convenors have been clear that their role is not to make decisions for the stakeholders, but to create the opportunity for the stakeholders to reach an agreement on actions that they can take together that would not be feasible on an individual basis. Examples range from increasing water capture and storage facilities to more extensive water sharing to regional conservation efforts to additional imports from other sources. Importantly, the task force benefits from the active support and engagement of U.S. Representative Seth Moulton and U.S. Senator Ed Markey.

"The Task Force is demonstrating an extensive regional effort that works collaboratively to both address and find solutions to the most pressing, complex environmental issues that directly impact our communities," **said Lynn Mayor Jared Nicholson.** "In light of the ongoing drought, we appreciate all the work that is being done to preserve our water supply."

The Town of North Andover is proud to collaborate with our neighbors to work toward protecting our most valuable asset, our water. I applaud our legislation partners for joining us in this charge," **said Melissa Rodrigues, North Andover Town Manager.**

The structure of the task force also draws on the expertise and insight of other individuals and organizations to support its work, including state agencies, environmental advocacy groups, neighboring communities, and others, who are named in the charter but not signatory members. This category of participants will clearly be a major resource for the members in identifying, analyzing, and confronting the challenges of meeting its dual priorities of resource protection and water supply sustainability.

"I want to thank all the stakeholders from across communities for coming together and making this task force into a reality," **said Senator Brendan Crighton (D-Lynn).** "It will play a vital role in tackling the critically important issues facing the region's water supply."

The signing of the charter agreement comes even as the legislature and Governor Charlie Baker have already approved funding for preliminary studies to be undertaken by the task force on specific issues through budgetary amendments offered by Tarr and supported by the legislative delegation. Members are currently at work designing the first of these studies, armed with \$100,000 in funding secured in the Fiscal Year 2022 state budget and carried forward. The contract for that study will be administered by MAPC on behalf of the task force. A second appropriation of \$150,000 will support future study efforts as the group's work progresses. These studies will build on those recently completed by the Town of Hamilton and the Ipswich River Watershed Association, the Town of Danvers, and the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority.

“The Salem and Beverly Water Supply Board greatly looks forward to engaging in this monumental effort and the discovery of all its consensus-based outcomes in regard to water supply resiliency and sustainability for the communities of the Northshore and the Ipswich River water basin,” said **Alan Taubert, Executive Director of the Salem Beverly Water Supply Board.**

“Many North Shore communities are struggling to meet current water needs for residential and commercial users. This will continue if each community operates with only its own interests in mind. An approach where we act for our common good offers the best opportunity for a prosperous future,” said **Andy Sheehan, Middleton Town Administrator.** “The regional effort happening among Ipswich River communities, watershed advocates, and legislative partners provides a unique opportunity to find a solution by which we can all benefit and thrive far into the future.”

**Jane Kinsella, Director of Public Works for Reading said,** “Preserving the resiliency of the Ipswich River through this inter-municipal collaborative effort is an honor and a privilege for the Reading community, as a way of ensuring sustainability and prolonged vitality of the watershed for current and future generations to come.”

“The Town of Ipswich has worked with Senator Tarr and other key stakeholders to address water resilience in the region since the severe drought in 2016, which hit Ipswich particularly hard,” said **Vicki Halmen, Ipswich Water & Wastewater Director,** “We are excited that this task force has been formed and look forward to working with all members to achieve our common goals.”

“The time is now for us to address the very obvious inequities of our watershed, and how we plan on keeping it healthy and accessible to all communities future forward. The benefit of this agreement to my communities is priceless and this agreement is a long time coming. I thank Senator Tarr for convening this group, and great thanks the towns and community members who have made this happen. We can make positive changes for the health and wellness of our watershed by working together,” said **Representative Jamie Belsito, (D-Topsfield).**

**Christopher Cronin, Director of Public Works Town of Andover said,** “Andover is proud to be a partner of this important Charter along with our other members. The North Shore Water Resilience Task Force will lay the ground work for sustainable water planning for years to come,”

Senator Tarr, founder and co-chair of the North Shore Water Resiliency Task Force addressed members of Governor Baker’s Administration and the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority Advisory Board recently to provide an update and input on the November MWRA study, Expanding Water Service, which examined several North of Boston communities that currently draw water from the strained Ipswich River Basin.

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