

## The Future

### Advisory Board and Authority Plan for Future Without Court-Mandated Projects

*This document isn't meant to be a victory lap of the Advisory Board or the MWRA. Instead, it is reminder of how far the system has come, and the lens through which we view the challenges ahead. Often, Advisory Board recommendations can take years to develop before their effects are fully realized. New challenges, not foreseen at this time, will inevitably materialize. But below are the challenges we can see on the horizon right now, and how the Advisory Board plans to address them.*

In January 2018, the MWRA will commence a three-year performance assessment of the **Long-Term CSO Control Plan**, including post-construction monitoring. A report will be made by December 2020, with the EPA and MassDEP then making final decisions regarding water quality standards for the Charles River and Alewife Brook. It is important that the Advisory Board continue to highlight the impacts of the CSO control plan, because while this will mark the end of work associated with these court-mandated projects, the costs of these projects will be felt by ratepayers for years to come.

With the understanding that the Authority is approaching the end of court-mandated work, the Authority now enters a stage of “debt-management” due to the costs of these projects, slowly being paid down over time. The Advisory Board, therefore, no longer has a role in scaling back capital spending as aggressively as before, instead aiming its sights on how to combat the capital financing costs created by past capital spending (Note: there are still significant capital projects on the horizon, especially related to water redundancy initiatives, but these pale in comparison to previous capital spending levels). To this end, the Advisory Board has laid down a significant challenge as peak debt service years approach: **“Four No More.”** This means no more combined rate assessments increases above 4% from year to year, ever. One thing to keep in mind is that 4% is not a target, it is a ceiling.

But the Advisory Board is not simply setting a ceiling; there are specific ways in which the Advisory Board has continued to support the reduction of future rate increases. First, with the policy recommendation of **“defeasing” debt service**, and then with an agreement with the Authority to aim for **“sustainable and predictable”** rate assessments each year, both of which are policies that the Advisory Board expects to be carried into the future. Also, the Advisory Board continues to strive for revenue sources outside of rate assessments, evident in the Infrastructure Bill of 2014. The Advisory Board will work within the parameters of this bill to provide sources of funding for the “forgotten infrastructure.”

On the policy side, the Advisory Board will continue to fight unnecessarily stringent regulations such as **MassDEP's molybdenum limit** for fertilizer (10 mg/kg for pastureland), which forces the MWRA to ship its pellets out of state, increasing the carbon emissions related to placing the product. While this topic may not excite the majority of ratepayers, it's a prime example of poorly conceived regulations that make it harder for the MWRA to operate on a daily basis and undermine the ability of the MWRA to collaborate with other interested parties, such as Western Massachusetts farmers who would benefit from cheap and effective biosolids (fertilizer).

“The Future” signifies a shift away from the rat race of catching up with changing regulations, and instead leading the nation in efficiencies of water and wastewater systems to deliver the best possible service to communities and their ratepayers. The Advisory Board will continue to work with the Authority to ensure that all decisions are made in the best interest of current member communities and encourage non-member communities to join the system (on the water side only) to be able to take advantage of the great resources that the MWRA has developed over the past 30 years.