

# WESTFORD WATER DEPARTMENT

# Resource

ISSUE 18 Fall 2025

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## Water Commissioners

Hugh C. Maguire, Chair  
Titus Palmer, Vice Chair  
Chauncey Chu, Secretary  
Tim Hall, Alternate

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Dave Crocker, Operations Manager  
Gulshan Kumar, Business Manager  
Douglas Yargeau, Env. Compliance Manager

## Newsletter Editors

Susan Silvia, Records Supervisor  
Marielys Velez, GIS Coordinator

## Hours of Operation

7am to 4:30pm Mon-Thurs; 7am to 11am Fri

## How to Reach Us

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Business Mgr	(978) 399-2453
Env. Compliance Mgr	(978) 399-2454
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Billing, Dianne Tyman	(978) 399-2451
Collections, Susan Silvia	(978) 399-2475

Website: [westfordma.gov/water](http://westfordma.gov/water)

## After Hours

In the event of a water emergency outside of the work day, call the Police Department at (978) 399-2345. The police dispatcher will contact our on-call personnel for response.

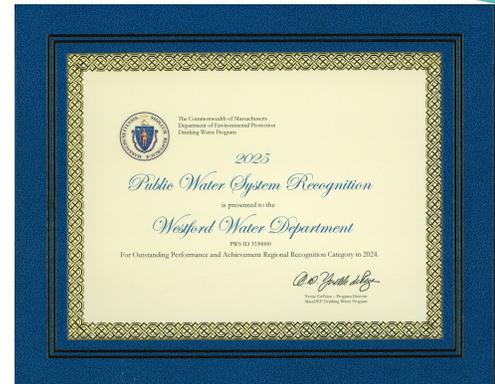
## Outstanding Public Water Performance Awards

By Marielys Velez, GIS Coordinator

We are proud to share that the **Westford Water Department** has been recognized with **two 2025 Public Water System Awards** from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP).

- **Medium & Large Community Systems Award:** honoring systems that provide outstanding service, maintain full compliance, and demonstrate strong management practices.
- **Regional Recognition Award:** highlighting systems that go above and beyond, making proactive improvements and showing exceptional commitment to customers.

In addition to the MassDEP Awards, the Westford Water Department was also honored by the Massachusetts State Senate for our dedication and commitment in addressing PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) challenges.



Left to Right: Bonnie Heiple, Commissioner, MassDEP; Mark Warren, Westford Water Superintendent; Hugh Maguire, Westford Water Commissioner; Chauncey Chu, Westford Water Commissioner; Melissa Dwinell, Section Chief, NERO, MassDEP

This recognition reflects our ongoing work to test, monitor, and invest in solutions that ensure safe drinking water for our community. Tackling PFAS is a complex and costly issue faced by communities across the Commonwealth, and this award shows that Westford is leading the way with proactive measures and strong management.

These awards reflect our dedication to water quality and reliable service, made possible through the support and partnership of Westford residents. Your trust enables us to continue investing in improvements and upholding the highest standards.

Thank you for helping us achieve this recognition — we remain committed to providing safe, clean water for our community every day.

# Expected Changes to Outdoor Water Use Restrictions

By Mark Warren, Water Superintendent

The Westford Water Department is in the process of renewing our Water Management Act (WMA) withdrawal permit. This permit is issued by MassDEP. It governs how much water we are allowed to pump daily from our groundwater sources, and the conditions under which this withdrawal must occur.

Once MassDEP reviews the Department's completed renewal application it will issue a draft permit to the Town of Westford for review and comment followed by a 30-day public comment period. We will post this information on our website once it becomes available.

## A Little Background...

In 2012, the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (MassEPA) released the Sustainable Water Management Initiative (SWMI) – a water allocation program designed to satisfy water needs while recognizing ecological issues such as low streamflow. The SWMI framework was incorporated into the WMA regulations (310 CMR 36.00) in 2014. These regulations govern how much water public water suppliers, such as the Westford Water Department, may withdraw from the ground on a daily basis.



Photo Credit: Mark Warren, *Stony Brook near Stepinski Meter House during Summer.*

## ESSENTIAL WATER USE



Westford's public water sources are all located within subbasins of the Merrimack River watershed that are considered by MassDEP as significantly impacted by groundwater withdrawals. Accordingly, we fully expect that our withdrawal permit will include conditions to protect the watershed.

## What Outdoor Water Use Restrictions can Customers Expect?

Since Westford's public water supply sources are located in stressed subbasins, we expect our renewed permit will include stricter limits on outdoor water use. **These restrictions may limit non-essential outdoor water usage to 2-days per week, with a further reduction to 1-day per week** if recorded flows at a Concord River streamflow gauge fall below a set trigger level for a specified number of days.

## What is Considered Essential or Non-essential Outdoor Uses of Water?

- **Essential outdoor uses:** includes things like maintenance of livestock, watering food gardens, by regulation, health or safety reasons, and to meet the core functions of a business
- **Non-essential outdoor uses** include irrigation of lawns, filling swimming pools, washing vehicles, or washing exterior buildings or parking surfaces

Currently, the Westford Water Department has three stages of non-essential outdoor water use restrictions:

- **Stage I** (Voluntary) odd/even with time restrictions
- **Stage II** (Mandatory) odd/even with time restrictions
- **Stage III** non-essential outdoor water usage prohibited

## Is It Certain Outdoor Water Restrictions Will Change?

Although we are reasonably confident, we cannot yet say with certainty, that the expected changes to outdoor water use restrictions will be included in our new withdrawal permit. Once we receive our draft permit, we will have a clearer understanding of what to expect for outdoor water use restrictions.

## NON-ESSENTIAL WATER USE





# DON'T *Leaf it Behind*

**Leaves in the street = pollution in our water.  
Keep leaves off pavement and out of storm drains.  
Mulch on grass. Compost the rest.**

## Westford Health Department PFAS Private Drinking Water Well Test



*Learn More, Scan Code*

By Rae Dick, Health Department Director

The Health Department strives to obtain representative PFAS samples from private drinking water wells throughout the community. Westford homeowners with private drinking water wells have a limited opportunity to apply for free **PFAS testing**. There are only a few slots left!

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), are a class of chemicals that are used to make products grease proof, water-proof, and stain resistant. The chemicals are considered “forever chemicals” that can cause many serious health problems. We can be exposed to PFAS through multiple sources including food, water, and fabrics.

The **Westford Select Board** has approved **American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)** funding to support this project. However, the number of slots available is limited. Please call the Health Department at **978-692-5509** for more information.



## Fall Hydrant Flushing



*Learn More, Scan Code*

By Mark Warren, Water Superintendent

The Westford Water Department will begin flushing water mains in October as part of our comprehensive maintenance program. **Flushing will be performed between the hours of 8:00 am and 3:00 pm, Monday through Friday.** Visit our website to stay up-to-date on which streets or neighborhoods are being flushed on a daily basis or by scanning the QR Code with your mobile phone's photo application!

The flushing program involves opening fire hydrants and valves to create increased water flows which dislodge and remove naturally occurring sediment in the water mains. Flushing is critical to maintain water quality and main carrying capacity.

We anticipate completion of the fall flushing program in November. As a result of the flushing process, residents in the immediate vicinity of the work may experience temporary discoloration of their water and/or low pressure. This discoloration is harmless, and does not affect the safety of the water. If you experience discolored water after flushing is completed for the day, run your **cold water** until clear (may take up to 20 minutes).

**Accordingly, we recommend you avoid doing laundry during flushing.**

Please call the Water Department at **978-692-5529** with any questions.



# Pinpointing Every Drop: Mapping Westford's Water

By Marielys Velez, GIS Coordinator

The Town of Westford has taken an important step toward improving the reliability and efficiency of our water system. Through the **Municipal Asset Mapping Project (MAP)**, the Water Department is creating a detailed, GPS-based map of our community's water infrastructure.

This summer, field crews began locating and mapping water system components such as water mains, valves, hydrants, and service connections. In most cases, they have been working in the public right-of-way along streets and sidewalks. Occasionally, they may need brief access to a small area of private property to visually confirm and record the location of a service valve. Crews are clearly identified and will make every effort to minimize any disruption. The work is quick—usually less than half an hour per location.

Accurate mapping of the water system provides many benefits to the Town and its residents, including:

- **Faster response times** – Knowing the exact location of our infrastructure means crews can respond more quickly during emergencies such as leaks, breaks, or fires.
- **Proactive maintenance** – Detailed records help identify older or at-risk service lines before problems arise, allowing for repairs or replacements on a planned schedule.
- **Better planning and budgeting** – Data-driven decision-making allows the Town to prioritize upgrades and manage funds responsibly.

The project uses **Geographic Information System (GIS) technology**, which combines mapping with detailed asset information. This “smart map” will serve as a living resource for the Water Department, updated as the system changes over time. For residents, this means improved service reliability, fewer interruptions, and better long-term stewardship of Westford's water infrastructure.

We appreciate residents' cooperation when field crews are in your neighborhood. If you have questions or want more information, you can reach out to Project Manager **Marielys Velez** at [mvelez@westfordma.gov](mailto:mvelez@westfordma.gov).



## SALT & DEICING Best Practices

Salt doesn't stop at the sidewalk. Overuse can pollute rivers, ponds, and drinking water. **Spread it smart.**



THINK BLUE  
MASSACHUSETTS



Shovel early and often.



Only salt slick spots.



Try eco-friendly alternatives.

# Stormwater Billing Update: Annual vs. Biannual Schedule

By Gulshan Kumar, Business Manager

Beginning with the current fiscal year 2026 which started on July 1, 2025, Stormwater billing *will change from a twice-a-year schedule to an annual billing cycle*. This change will streamline the billing for customers and simplify the town collections, making the overall process more efficient.

**Your total annual Stormwater bill amount will remain the same** – just billed in one installment instead of two.

Stormwater bills for this fiscal year will be sent out at the end of October 2025. To help with the transition to single billing, for the first year, all customers will have 90 days from the bill date to make the payment, *giving an extra 60-day grace period*. If you have any questions we are here to help. Please contact the Stormwater department at **978-399-2900** or via email at [stormwater@westfordma.gov](mailto:stormwater@westfordma.gov). Thank you for your attention and cooperation.



# From the Main to the Meter: Understanding Service Lines

By Mark Warren, Water Superintendent

Westford Water Department customers are connected to the water main in the street by a pipe referred to as a service line (see diagram below). The service line includes a corporation stop, curb stop near the property line, a shutoff valve, and meter.

## Who is responsible for paying for customer service line repairs?

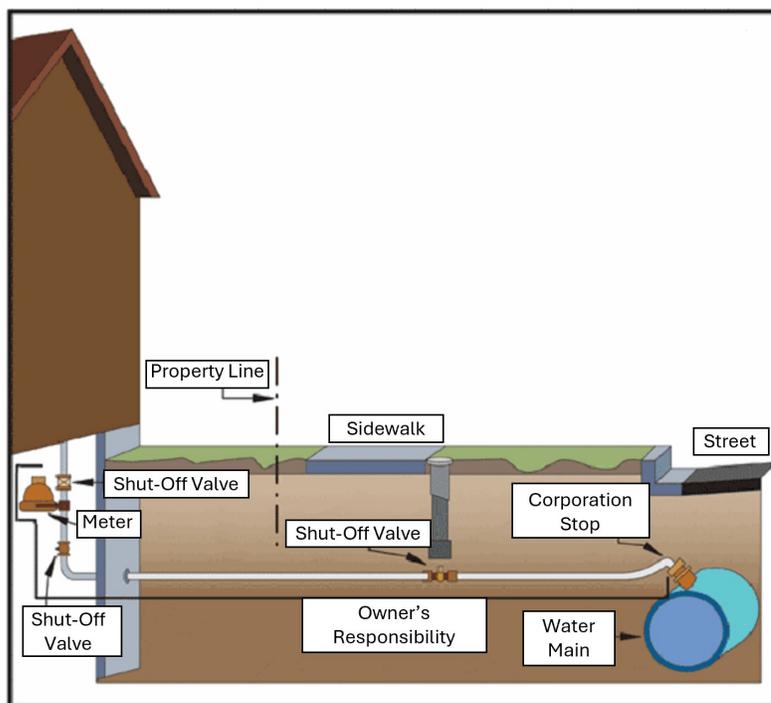
The customer is responsible for repairs or replacement of the entire service line, starting from the corporation stop through the water meter. Typical costs are around \$2,000, but can vary significantly depending on site conditions and the length of the service line. In some cases, your homeowner's insurance policy may cover part of the expense.

## Don't my taxes already pay for service line repairs or replacements?

No. The Water Department is an Enterprise Fund which means we are funded solely from customer charges and fees. We don't receive any funding from the tax levy.

## How do you know if you have a leak in the service line?

Underground leaks can be hard to detect, but typical signs include water puddling in the yard, discolored water, and a loss of pressure. If you suspect a leak in your service line contact the Water Department immediately. The Department will dispatch personnel to determine if there is a leak.



## Can I hire my own contractor or does the Water Department make repairs?

You have the option of hiring your own contractor, but the Water Department must be present for all repair work as inspector (at our current labor rates), and all materials must be approved by the Water Department. Alternatively, the Water Department can perform the work and invoice the customer accordingly.

Please be aware that leaks must be repaired as soon as possible. Even if a leak does not cause an immediate loss of pressure or service, it is likely to do so over time. In addition, delaying repairs may lead to property damage. Un-metered water from leaking service lines also drives up overall system costs, which ultimately increases expenses for all customers.

## Looking Ahead

Through our ongoing **Municipal Asset Mapping Project** (see page 4), we are identifying and documenting service lines across Town. This proactive work will help us and our customers better prepare for repair or replacement costs, and in some cases, allow service lines to be renewed before leaks or failures occur.

# Consumer Confidence Report

By Doug Yargeau, Environmental Compliance Manager

## How do I learn about my public water quality? Check out the most recent Consumer Confidence Report!

The Water Department provides our customers with a direct link to the current electronic copy of the **Consumer Confidence Report (CCR)** on the Water Department website. The CCR contains important information about the **source and quality of your drinking water**. It is well worth the time to review! Since electronic delivery has become our primary method for providing the annual CCR, it's important to note the following:



*Access the Report!*

- The Westford Water Department no longer mails out paper copies of the CCR unless requested.
- If you have previously requested a paper copy you will automatically receive one in the mail each year.
- For new requests or to cancel please contact Doug Yargeau at (978) 399 - 2454 or email at [dyargeau@westfordma.gov](mailto:dyargeau@westfordma.gov).

In addition, paper copies of the CCR will still be available at the Water Department, Town Hall, and other municipal and community buildings.



**Westford Water Department**  
**60 Forge Village Road**  
**Westford, MA 01886**  
**(978) 692 - 5529**

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