MEDIA RELEASE
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IPSWICH RIVER WATER WITHDRAWAL APPEALS SETTLED

The Towns of Danvers and Middleton join with the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) and the Ipswich River Watershed Association in announcing the settlement of the appeals of the Towns’ water withdrawal permit. The appeals have been pending since 2003. A final decision approving the settlement was issued today by the Commissioner of the MassDEP.

The settlement provides greater environmental protection for the Ipswich River and ensures that the Towns will be able to meet their needs for a safe and sustainable water supply, while accommodating new development. The settlement includes new conditions applied to their water withdrawal permit, which offers the Towns greater flexibility in managing their supplies, while requiring strict water conservation and demand mitigation measures that are needed to avoid damage to the Ipswich River. The permit takes effect immediately.

Among the permit conditions:

- Danvers and Middleton may pump up to 3.72 million gallons a day from their reservoirs and wells, but must shut off the wells, rely upon water stored in the reservoirs, and restrict outdoor water use during low-flow periods.
- Private wells in Middleton are subject to the same restrictions as apply to public water supply customers.
- The Towns will implement an innovative “water usage mitigation program” to offset water demand from new or expanded development.
Performance standards apply to residential water use, unmetered water, and summer use; but MassDEP will consider the Towns’ progress towards meeting those standards before taking any enforcement action.

Wayne Marquis, the Danvers Town Manager and Ira Singer, Middleton’s Town Administrator both viewed the settlement as being in the best interest of the Towns.

“As Middleton is far from being a built-out community, we were most concerned about providing sufficient water to meet the normal growth and development needs during the remaining years of the permit. We are hopeful the Settlement Agreement accomplishes that without creating additional stress on the Ipswich River or any part of the river’s watershed basin within Middleton,” according to Singer.

“Among its many important provisions, this agreement contains two key elements for Danvers; first, is an expansion of the Town’s long-standing commitment to water conservation, and second, an assurance that the Town will be afforded the water supply it requires to meet the needs of its residents in the years ahead,” said Danvers Town Manager Wayne Marquis.

Kerry Mackin, Executive Director of the Ipswich River Watershed Association, said, “The settlement is a win-win situation, providing greater protection to the Ipswich River while helping ensure that as the Towns grow, their water supplies will be adequate and sustainable.” Margaret Van Deusen of the Charles River Watershed Association, who represented IRWA, Essex County Greenbelt Association and the citizens who intervened in this case, said that the Towns’ proposal to implement the mitigation plan was crucial to the settlement. “Their willingness to offset new water demand was the key,” she said.

“This settlement strikes the right balance between competing uses of the water – it protects the environment, while allowing continued economic growth in the Commonwealth,” Commissioner Robert W. Golledge Jr. said. “The agreement provides each community with the ability to deliver a clean and reliable source of drinking water, while ensuring that the water will be used wisely to protect and possibly restore one of the state’s most severely stressed rivers.”

More information is available on the Towns’ websites at www.townofmiddleton.org, www.danvers-ma.org, on MassDEP’s website at mass.gov/dep, and on IRWA’s website at www.ipswichriver.org. You may also call the Town of Danvers at 978-777-0001; the Town of Middleton at 978-777-3617, the MassDEP at 617-292-5500, or the Ipswich River Watershed Association at 978-887-2313.

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