

# Massachusetts testing sewage for COVID-19 spread

Colin A. Young

State House News Service

If you live in Boston or any of more than three dozen other eastern Massachusetts communities, you could be sending vital data to public health officials with each flush of your toilet.

Through the end of the year, the sewage arriving at the Deer Island Treatment Plant will be tested three times a week for signs of the coronavirus, meant to serve as an early warning system for spikes in COVID-19 activity in communities that account for more than 40 percent of the state's cases.

The Massachusetts Water Resources Authority board last week approved a six-month, \$200,000 contract with Biobot Analytics, a startup founded by MIT graduates and faculty, to collect and test samples of wastewater arriving at two different intakes at Deer Island and to conduct rapid analysis for signs of the virus that causes COVID-19.

"Analysis of wastewater for the genetic signal (viral RNA) of the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes COVID-19 is proving to be a cost effective approach to providing population level screening for outbreaks of COVID-19," MWRA Executive Director Fred Laskey wrote to the board in a memo.

Biobot Analytics was the first company to demonstrate in the United States that it is possible to gauge levels of coronavirus activity by screening raw sewage. The company looked at samples provided by the MWRA and determined that signs of the virus "were significantly higher than expected based on clinically confirmed cases in Massachusetts as of March 25."

Laskey said Biobot eventually provided pro bono services to more than 400 treatment facilities in 43 states, and requested additional wastewater samples from MWRA. Those samples, he said, were used to establish a baseline for the communities that send wastewater to Deer Island from January through May.

“This data series tracks well with and precedes the reports of new clinically established cases by about seven days,” Laskey wrote.

In other words, signs that more people are becoming infected with COVID-19 and that the virus is spreading more show up in wastewater about a week before testing sites and hospitals start seeing increases in sick patients.

The partnership between MWRA and Biobot that began in early March has continued, and the authority said in a presentation to board members last week that raw data from Deer Island collected the week of June 15 “shows continued downward trend” in the prevalence of the coronavirus.

Authority officials noted that those samples were collected after Phase 2 of the state’s reopening began and after some of the large demonstrations that were held in Boston and other communities.

“This pilot program will take this approach a step further by continuing the regular analyses of the wastewater and trending of the signal from the MWRA service area for the remainder of calendar 2020,” Laskey wrote. “MWRA will likely use the lessons learned from this pilot program to establish a long-term program through a competitive bid process for 2021 and beyond for as long as COVID-19 continues to be a public health threat. We will also use the results to evaluate a longer term program that could inform additional public health initiatives or concerns.”

---

# **Mosquito ground spraying for Dartmouth, Westport, Somerset, and Taunton**

The Bristol County Mosquito Control Project will be doing more ground spraying concerning mosquitoes.

The following cities and towns are expected to be treated on Monday, June 29, between 2:00 a.m. and sunrise.

Dartmouth, Easton, Somerset, Taunton, and Westport

These spray applications will be limited to the general areas listed below, subject to weather and spray operator's discretion. For more information, residents may call the BCMCP office during business hours from 8 AM until 2 PM at 508-823-5253.

Scroll through the list to see if your street is on it.

2020-Adulticide-Daily-Schedule 6-29

---

## **Family seeks public's help in finding 15-year New Bedford**

# old girl

"Her name is Jalyssa Pina and she could be anywhere from New Bedford to Carver area. She is a runaway.

If anyone sees my child please contact me or the New Bedford Police Department. A missing person report has been filed. Please share."-Jamie Nunes.

---

## **Massachusetts DOT Registry of Motor Vehicles program initiatives receive AAMVA awards**

Awards recognize RMV's fraud prevention and detection efforts, Alternate Residency Affidavit Program, and educational road test videos

The Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) is announcing that it has been selected to receive awards from the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators (AAMVA) for its efforts in implementing new fraud and prevention initiatives, developing an Alternate Residency Affidavit Program, and creating four new educational videos that can be used to prepare for road tests.

"The Registry continues to develop new resources and tools that can be used by our staff and our customers to help prepare and safely complete RMV services and transactions, and these AAMVA awards exemplify these efforts, said Acting

Registrar of the Registry of Motor Vehicles Jamey Tesler. "I would like to thank the members of the RMV staff and our state partners who worked with us on these initiatives which will help support and protect customers across the Commonwealth."

"I am proud of the superb work done by Trooper Thompson and our entire State Police unit that works closely with the RMV to protect the agency and its customers from criminal fraud," said Colonel Christopher Mason, Superintendent of the Massachusetts State Police. "License fraud is a serious matter and we are committed to working with the RMV to identify and stop it."

The AAMVA award categories, RMV initiatives and descriptions are as follows:

#### **Regional & International Award for Security Fraud Prevention and Detection, Motor Vehicle Agency**

- The Registry worked with its Massachusetts State Police partners to develop custom queries that identified the excessive use of certain IP and email addresses within the RMV's system to spot and stop suspected fraudulent activity in the online duplicate license transaction process.

#### **Regional & International Award for Security Fraud Prevention and Detection, Law Enforcement Individual**

- Massachusetts State Police Trooper James M. Thompson, a member of the State Police Fraud Identification Unit, was recognized for his investigation tracking and identifying online duplicate license fraud over the course of 2019. The investigation conducted with federal and local law enforcement partners, culminated in a roadside arrest of a suspect pulling licenses from residential mailboxes.

#### **Regional Recognition Award, Community Service**

- The Alternate Residency Affidavit Program helps individuals

without permanent housing get the RMV's residency requirement to become eligible for a Massachusetts identification card. The RMV works with organizations across the Commonwealth that are providing housing services through an established registration process to help the ID card applicant meet the residential street address requirement.

### **Category & Division Award, Public Affairs and Consumer Education**

- "Preparing for Massachusetts RMV Road Test" educational videos – The Registry's Road Test Program worked collaboratively with the Digital Services team from the Executive Office of Technology Services and Security to create educational videos to help individuals prepare for road tests. The four videos seek to relieve applicants' anxiety when preparing to take a road test and are as follows: 1) Getting Ready at the Service Center; 2) Driving the Car; 3) Maneuvers; and 4) Getting the Grade Back at the Service Center. The videos are available at <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLzBxrvXzs-5HnqKlx5HIwAyNKvstdK2pR>.

AAMVA is a nonprofit organization developing model programs in motor vehicle administration, law enforcement and highway safety. The association also serves as an information clearinghouse in these areas and acts as the international spokesman for these interests. In addition, their programs encourage uniformity and reciprocity among states and provinces.

AAMVA's awards program fosters a tradition of excellence in the motor vehicle and law enforcement community by honoring individuals, teams, and organizations that have committed their time and resources to safety initiatives, outstanding customer service, and public affairs and consumer educational programs throughout North America.

---

# Massachusetts State Police investigate crash on Route 290 in Worcester that kills one

Friday at about 7:45 p.m., Troopers from State Police-Holden responded to a crash involving a Jeep on the ramp from Route 290 Eastbound to Route 190 Northbound in Worcester that resulted in the death of the 50-year-old male operator from Worcester.

Preliminary investigation indicates the man was operating a 2014 Jeep Wrangler on Route 290 Eastbound and was taking the Route 190 NB/Burncoat Street ramp onto Route 190 Northbound. For reasons still under investigation the Jeep left the ramp from Route 190 Northbound over the sidewall of the left lane side of the overpass and came to rest on the travel lanes of Route 290 Eastbound. The operator was determined to be deceased on scene, as a result of injuries sustained in the crash. An 18-year old female passenger suffered minor injuries.

A second vehicle may have been involved in the crash. The Barracks is looking for any information or dash cam video that members of the public may have. The Holden Barracks can be contacted at 508-829-8410, Trooper Carroll is the investigating officer.

The name of the victim will not be released at this time.

Route 290 Eastbound was closed for approximately three hours.

The crash remains under investigation by Troop C of the Massachusetts State Police along with the Collision Analysis Reconstruction Section, and Crime Scene Services Section. Troopers were assisted on scene by Worcester PD and FD, MassDOT, and the Medical Examiner's Office.

---

## **Wareham Police respond to incidents involving man firing on police with rifle, man making suicidal and homicidal statements**

On Friday, June 26, at 1:35 p.m. Wareham Police Officers Aaron Pacheco and Christopher Corner were dispatched to County Road Recycling on County Road for the report of a male trespasser. Upon arrival, they searched the area, however were unable to locate him.

While speaking with the complainants the officers heard three consecutive gunshots and realized that they were all being fired upon. The officers immediately headed in the direction of the gunshots and observed a male on Reed Road carrying a rifle.

Officer Pacheco stepped from his cruiser and ordered the male to put the rifle on the ground, but he refused. Officer Pacheco then drew his firearm, commanding the man to put the rifle down. Again the man refused and began walking away toward a camper with the rifle in hand.





Officer Pacheco moved toward the male with his firearm pointed at him, backed up by Officer Corner. Finally, the male put the weapon down just inside the open door of the camper. The officers placed the man in custody and secured the weapon. After a brief search of the area, the officers located a 500 round box of .22 caliber rifle ammunition

Gregory W. Schroth (40), of 8 Reed Road West Wareham, was arrested and charged with 4 counts of assault with intent to murder, possession of a firearm without an FID card, possession of ammunition without an FID card, and discharging a firearm within 500' of a dwelling. He is being held at Wareham Police Headquarters on \$50,000 bail, pending arraignment with the Wareham District Court on Monday. There were no injuries in this incident.

Chief John Walcek said, "We had a very serious situation where two civilians and two police officers were in grave danger. The positive outcome of this incident is the result of a disciplined and professional response by two of Wareham's finest officers." He added, "Aaron and Chris did an outstanding job and I am very proud of them."

---

In a separate matter earlier this week the Wareham Police

Department took a call from a Boston area police department. They had received information about a male who was staying in Wareham, making suicidal and homicidal statements, requesting that the Wareham Police check on his wellbeing.

Sergeant Daniel Henderson contacted the male by phone, at which time the male indicated he would shoot the sergeant in the face if confronted. Sgt. Henderson accompanied by Officers Justin Silveira and Scott Cowan responded to the location where the male was staying and took him into custody after a brief struggle. The male was brought to Tobey Hospital for an evaluation and no weapons were located.

---

## **Family seeks public's help finding missing New Bedford father**

"Guys I need your help. Please help me find my father. I haven't heard from my dad. He picked up and left the New Bedford area with no call saying where he was staying.

He was seen 4 days ago. If you guys can help me find him and share I would love that. If you see him or you know where he is tell him to call me 774-520-5699. He has a lot of health issues and I'm worried about him."-Ariel Rose.

---

# Massachusetts State Police charge mother with leaving 1-year old child in vehicle in Milton

Today, at about 11 a.m., Trooper William McSweeney assigned to State Police Milton found a one-year-old child alone inside a truck illegally parked at Houghton Pond in Milton. Trooper McSweeney was working a dedicated patrol at Houghton Pond when he observed a white Chevrolet pickup truck parked in the fire lane. The vehicle appeared unoccupied and the engine running.

Trooper McSweeney approached the vehicle and observed the child sitting in a car seat on the front passenger seat. As he opened the driver's door he immediately felt an excessive amount of heat, due to the heater set on high, inside the driver's side compartment. The child was conscious and alert and began to cry.

Milton Fire and EMS responded to medically evaluate the child, who was later transported to Boston Children's Hospital for observation.

Troopers learned that the vehicle was left unoccupied for approximately twenty-five minutes while the mother, a 24-year-old from Boston was setting up for the child's birthday party. Her name will not be released until she appears in court. She was issued a summons ordering her to appear in Quincy District Court on the charge of Reckless Endangerment to a Child.

---

# Apparent Murder-Suicide under investigation in Somerset

Massachusetts State Police detectives assigned to the district attorney's office, homicide unit prosecutors and Somerset Police are actively investigating what is believed to be a murder-suicide, which occurred this morning in the Town of Somerset.

At around 8:05 am today, Somerset Police received a 911 call from a relative of the female victim stating that she had found two individuals deceased inside the deceased couple's home at 160 Thelma Avenue.

When police arrived on scene, they located Amber Pereira, 30, and Joshua Pereira, 31, both deceased in the home. Both were victims of gunshot wounds. A firearm was discovered underneath Mr. Pereira.

A preliminary investigation into the matter has revealed that Mr. Pereira had recently moved out of the home after the couple had separated. At some time prior to 8 am today, Mr. Pereira drove to the Thelma Avenue home. Witnesses heard multiple gunshots coming from inside the home shortly after his arrival. The state medical examiner's office will conduct autopsies to officially determine cause and manner of death.

It does not appear that any other individuals were in the home or were involved in the incident. The matter remains under investigation, and no further information can be released at this time.

---

# **New Bedford's Buttonwood Park Zoo to host StoryWalk(R) for July and August**

For the first time ever, Buttonwood Park Zoo is hosting a StoryWalk® on its 7-acre campus, in collaboration with the New Bedford Birth – 3rd Partnership.

The StoryWalk® Project was created by Anne Ferguson of Montpelier, VT and developed in collaboration with the Kellogg-Hubbard Library. Storywalk® is a registered service mark owned by Ms. Ferguson. A StoryWalk® involves posting all the pages from a popular children's book along a walking path. According to the Kellogg-Hubbard Library, it is an "innovative and delightful way for children – and adults! – to enjoy reading and the outdoors at the same time."

For the month of July, guests to the Zoo will be able to peruse the pages of the beloved children's book "Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?" by Bill Martin Jr and Eric Carle as they stroll the newly opened pathway around the Asian elephant habitat. In August, the StoryWalk® will be "Planting a Rainbow" by Lois Ehlert.

Thanks to a collaboration with the New Bedford Birth – 3rd Partnership, the StoryWalk® will also be available in 3 other languages, Portuguese, K'iche and Spanish. BPZ00 will host a Facebook Live walk through, featuring "Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?" in all four languages on our Facebook Page on Monday, June 29, 2020 at 11:00 am.

"StoryWalks® are a great way to get families outside being active, and at the same time, enjoy the gift of reading", says BPZ00's Curator of Education, Carrie Hawthorne. "Children are naturally drawn to the Zoo and animals, and this collaboration is a great way for us to promote and encourage literacy for

the New Bedford community.”

In addition to the StoryWalk®, BPZ00 is also now offering scavenger hunts for all ages! Created by Lindsay Marzulla, a BPZ00 Education intern as part of her Master’s Degree in Anthrozoology, these scavenger hunts are designed to engage and encourage BPZ00 guests to learn about conservation efforts locally and globally. Two versions of the scavenger hunts are available at [bpzoo.org/whats-new/scavenger-hunts/](http://bpzoo.org/whats-new/scavenger-hunts/).

Buttonwood Park Zoo located at 425 Hawthorn Street in New Bedford and is open from 9:00 am until 5:00 pm Wednesday – Sunday. Entry is done through pre-purchased timed ticketing and are only available through pre-purchase at [bpzoo.org/visit-overview/](http://bpzoo.org/visit-overview/).