

Quabbin Watershed Advisory Committee

April 4, 2011

7:30 PM

Location: DCR Administration Building, Belchertown, MA

Members Present: Tom Barnes, Tom Berube, Elisa Campbell, Dennis Duguay, Bill Elliot, Bill Lafley, Tom Lautzenheiser, Art Miner, Mason Phelps, Jane Pierce

DCR Staff Present: Steve Anderson, Justin Gonsor, Tom Kyker-Snowman, Bill Pula, Dave Small

Public Attending: Glen Ayers (Valley Free Radio), Mark Brighenti, Lexi Dewey (WSCAC), Molly Hale (Conservation Works), Ralph Lapinkas, Mike Mauri, Patrice Pare, Chris Polatea, J.R. Greene

Superintendent's Report

Meeting Start Time: 7:33 PM

Approval of Minutes of December 13, 2010

Minutes were unanimously approved for the December 13, 2010 meeting.

Update on Terrestrial Invasive Plant (TIP) Program at Quabbin

Tom Kyker-Snowman gave a presentation on the Terrestrial Invasive Plant (TIP) Program at Quabbin. He gave a brief review of the TIP problem and why it is of concern on a forested drinking water supply watershed, talked about the current status of these plants at Quabbin, gave the range of control options and DWSP objectives for control, and came up with a sample cost estimate for the given control options.

A member of the public questioned why chemical controls aren't currently used at Quabbin. Bill Pula responded that there is concern about using herbicides in a public water supply. There are chemicals being used in Quabbin, but not by DCR. National Grid uses herbicides on their right-of-way lands, and they have been given the legal right to do so by the Department of Agriculture, within certain restrictions. He doesn't see a direct link, at this point, between water quality vs.

TIP's in the watershed. Tom Lautzenheiser mentioned that by having TIP's you are potentially preventing native flora/fauna from thriving. He also didn't think it was practical to use a propane torch to control 290 acres of barberry that has been mapped. He thinks that we need to start dealing with TIP's aggressively and that some targeted herbicide applications may be needed. He thinks a process needs to be put in place, and criteria set, on when the use of herbicides is practical and a risk worth taking in the watershed. As an example, Mass Audubon has an internal process that is very conservative concerning the use of herbicides; several hurdles have to be cleared in order to be able to use them. Bill Pula said the decision to use herbicides is something we have grappling with at Quabbin. It is a tough situation because public perception and consumer confidence in the water is very important to us and could be compromised by using herbicides. Tom Kyker-Snowman mentioned that what makes the issue so tough to deal with is the many different variables/unknowns involved. One solution could be to implement a classic Adaptive Management Plan which is updated annually as new information becomes available. Bill Elliot thinks the MWRA should play a major role in the decision to use herbicides. If it is a technical decision, it needs to be extremely well supported. He also thought WSCAC should be engaged in the process fairly soon. Bill Pula mentioned that all invasive species are not created equal, and any Invasive Management Plan would have to be species specific. Tom Lautzenheiser stated that studies have shown increased nitrogen mineralization rates under barberry, which would directly affect the water supply. Also, many invasive species interfere with native forest regeneration. Someone from the public wanted to know if there are any studies out there about the effect of herbicides and their persistence in the environment, not done by the chemical companies themselves. Tom Kyker-Snowman said that there is more research on the effectiveness of the chemicals than on the damage they can do and their persistence after application. Glen Ayers asked about what kind of monitoring is done before and after disturbances. Tom Kyker-Snowman responded that the monitoring is done more informally than it probably should be. There is an annual review process of any proposed timber harvesting area; before any trees are marked our staff goes out and surveys the land by walking general transects. He mentioned that the monitoring/surveying process needs to be tightened up and could be more rigorous. Unfortunately, we are not an institution and don't get grant money for research. We do what we can with the staff we have and our given budget. Glen Ayers then asked if an invasive worm study has been done at Quabbin. He heard these invasive worms can be much worse and harder to deal

with than invasive plants. Tom Kyker-Snowman said he has conversations with people about them at various workshops; it is a serious problem that most people don't know about. He has talked with a Forest Service employee about possibly doing a study here in the future. If Tom Kyker-Snowman had the authority to do anything he wanted, he said that some herbicide use via cut-stump treatments would probably be reasonable. He is also skeptical of the safety evaluations the chemical companies themselves put out. Bill Pula said the most important factors to consider would be where the herbicide is applied, what it is applied to, and how it is applied.

Update on Science and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC)

Bill Pula stated that the final report would be available to the public by late Spring. There was a meeting in January at UMASS Amherst and a preliminary draft was circulated. All forestry activity has been suspended until the study is finished and goes through the public review process.

Landscape Maintenance at the Quabbin Park Cemetery

Dave Small gave a presentation on landscape maintenance at the Quabbin Park Cemetery. When the cemetery was originally developed, there was no landscape management plan created for it. The presentation focused on the May 26th, 2010 wind storm. The storm reportedly brought 50 mph sustained winds with 64 mph gusts. DCR Cultural Resource and Quabbin Staff assessed the damage done by the storm. A number of hazardous trees were also pruned or removed from the cemetery that would have been susceptible to wind damage in the future.

Elisa Campbell asked if the broken parts of the headstones are being safely stored. Dave Small said that after the storm, all damaged headstones were photographed, inventoried, and being stored in a safe place. For gravestones too fragmented to fix, the staff was advised to bury the gravestone right there on the grave site. Bill Pula mentioned that almost all the damaged gravestones were from re-interred graves at Quabbin Park, making them older and more susceptible to damage than the newer gravestones.

2011 Fishing Season

Bill Pula mentioned the fishing areas are planned to open as scheduled, on April 16th. The fees will stay the same as last season and the fishing areas will be open seven days a week. The Quabbin Boat Seal (QBS) program will also continue through this season. The first scheduled decontamination date had to be postponed due to a snow storm. Someone from the public talked to Bill Pula last week and suggested that we add an eastern Mass. location for the Cold Weather Quarantine (CWQ) program that goes into affect after the fishing areas close for the season. Bill Pula feels this would be fairly easy to set up at one of the DCR facilities near Rte. 495/90. Only two staff members are needed for the inspection. Currently, DCR is sealing brand new boats near a marina in Holyoke for free. They have to get the boat registered and prove that it is brand new. Gate 8 road had a major washout during the latter part of the winter which has already been fixed. However, the road still needs to be graded.

Tom Barnes asked if all three fishing areas need to be opened simultaneously. Bill Pula said that is how it has always been, and would be too confusing to open them separately.

Bill Pula gave a presentation on the repairs planned at the private boat launch ramp that is located at Gate 8. The shoreline has been eroding rapidly there as water levels are higher now than they traditionally have been. This is partly due to the decline in water use by the Metropolitan Area as a result of the water's cost, leaks in the system being repaired, low flow plumbing and appliances, and industries using water more efficiently. These higher water levels and the delay in ice cover results in more erosion. The plan is to completely revamp/repair the launch ramp for private boats in the fall of 2011 if water levels drop low enough. The Comet Pond boat ramp will be used as a. The repaired ramp will be made of pre-cast concrete and will have dual ramp operations (high/low water) to accommodate reservoir water level fluctuations. The new structures will offer wave protection and shoreline stabilization features that will be built into their construction and placement. The shoreline will be armored to prevent erosion. The ramp width will be maintained at 14 ft. It will be a floating ramp that goes up or down depending on the water level at the time. This system will be fully handicap accessible and better for the annual Special Olympics Event that Quabbin hosts. DCR has set aside \$40-50 thousand for the project, with all construction and engineering to be done in-house.

Art Miner agreed that the ramp upgrades will be better for the Special Olympics Event. Bill Elliot asked about how we handle rental boat launching. Bill Pula said that they are stored and launched at a separate ramp.

Member Questions/Comments

Bill Elliot is looking forward to seeing the update to the Land Management Plan. Elisa Campbell was wondering about the extent of road erosion that occurred over the winter. Dave Small said that DCR crew's are just starting to get out assessing road conditions, and that they haven't been everywhere yet, but anticipates road damage to be similar to previous seasons. The Gate 8 washout occurred in an unusual spot, and a larger culvert has been installed at that site to prevent further washouts there. Jane Pierce voiced her appreciation for the swift cleanup of the cemetery after the May storm. Dennis Duguay alerted the board to House Bill 646 that is going to a vote in the near future. If passed, it would require everyone, even adults, to wear lifejackets on boats less than 20 ft. while in operation. Someone from the public suggested that even if the bill doesn't pass, that people be required to sign a waiver if they are not required to wear a life jacket. Bill Pula responded saying that currently, everyone is given a life jacket that goes out on the water in one of our rental boats. Whatever the law is, we will abide by it at Quabbin. Art Miner asked when the Gate 43 road will be repaired. Bill Pula said that we are trying to come up with some extra money to fix parts of the road. It would cost \$300 thousand to fix the whole road, which isn't feasible given the budget. The plan is to spend \$20-30 thousand on repairs to the worst sections of the road. Someone asked about paving the Gate 8 road. State Law says that we can't pave a road that isn't already paved. Plus, as a general rule of thumb, you don't want to add pavement to a watershed as it's not usually a positive thing to do. Glen Ayers commented that a year ago the Secretary issued a directive for DCR Quabbin to make all of their management information publicly accessible, and was supposed to be put on the web. He hasn't seen anything done about that yet. Bill Pula responded saying that on our DCR webpage there is a description of every one of our proposed lots for cutting. It isn't the actual cutting plans. But, no new lots have been proposed for over a year and there currently is no cutting going on at Quabbin. Glen Ayers also wanted to know more about the public input process in the Forest Management Plan. Bill Pula stated that the STAC report needs to be finished first, and that the public participation process would be formulated after that. Dennis Duguay asked when trout stocking will be done at Gates 8 and 43. Bill Pula said the

stocking will be carried out this coming week. The Quabbin Anglers Association annually tags 40 trout for their Tagging Trout Program at Quabbin. Nobody caught a tagged trout last season.

Meeting End Time: 9:13 PM

The next QWAC meeting is scheduled for June 6th, 2011 at 7:30 PM.

Meeting
Quabbin Watershed Advisory Committee
June 6, 2011, 7:30 PM
Quabbin Visitors Center
485 Ware Road, Belchertown MA

Agenda

Approval of minutes of April 4, 2011

2011 Fishing Season Update

Quabbin Park Plan Update

Members Questions or Comments