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Massachusetts



The newsletter for owners of land protected by a Watershed Preservation Restriction (WPR) held by the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), Division of Water Supply Protection.

Winter 2012

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Watershed Currents

100 WPRs!

The DCR/DWSP WPR program records its 100th Watershed Preservation agreement

You always remember the first time. Back in the late 1980s, the state’s real property directors voiced a willingness to consider a relatively new way to preserve land without actually buying the whole package (called a fee transaction).



Photo: DCR Staff

Protecting land in partnership with a landowner while that owner retains a limited bundle of rights to use the property for open space was cutting edge. Few such transactions had taken place in Massachusetts at that time. Today there are hundreds and hundreds of such conveyances throughout the state with all manner of municipalities, state agencies, and land trusts. These landowner/conservation organization agreements now protect watershed, farmland, wildlife habitat, vistas, historic sites, trail networks, and open space corridor connections in every corner of the Commonwealth. Thousands of privately held acres now enjoy this legally binding protection status. Whether called a Watershed Preservation Restriction (WPR), Agricul-

tural Preservation Restriction (APR), or Conservation Restriction (CR), they all contribute to the natural resource heritage we hold dear, while often serving as an important estate planning strategy for land-owning families.

The first WPRs were recorded on the June solstice of 1990 in the Quabbin towns of Barre and Petersham. Three separate ownerships had been carved from a single farm belonging, up to

that time, to Mr. Arthur Walworth, an elderly absentee owner with a passion for the woods and fields that he had stewarded for years. I remember walking the land with him and being surprised by his youthful stamina. I was equally impressed by the thickest swarm of late spring mosquitoes I had ever had to endure. Mr. Walworth provided relief with his old bottle of “Old Woodsmen”, an early effective repellent smelling like a tar and turpentine mix with a healthy dash of skunk. His Barre farm, until then, encompassed all three tracts now divided to accommodate the rural aspirations of three families: Jeff and Gail Mitchell who moved in to the farmhouse (claimed to be the oldest extant house in

Meet the Staff

Jim French, Land Acquisition Coordinator

Now in his 30th year working for DCR (and formerly MDC), Jim began as the forester in charge of managing the woodlands surrounding the Wachusett and Sudbury Reservoirs. His UMass degree in Forestry (B.S. 1975) initially prepared him for employment in the logging and sawmill industry, followed by a period of private forestry consulting. His career took a turn when offered a position with the Commonwealth in 1983.

Shortly after starting with the state, his duties would also include working on land acquisition priorities for watershed protection. As more resources were allocated for this purpose, Jim's time was increasingly spent on land acquisition and less on land management. Soon this would be his full time

job. During his stellar career, more than 500 landowners have agreed to sell land for water quality protection, adding more than 20,000 acres to the Quabbin, Ware River, and Wachusett watershed system. Jim has had a lot of fun over the years and enjoyed meeting so many wonderful landowners in the process.

When not on the job, Jim works his family's 100 year old apple orchard business in Sterling as the fourth generation caretaker. His two daughters are also a part of the effort. But given a free day, you'll find him in the woods, or on a river, or volunteering for the local land trust. Simply put, he is an impassioned land guy.

Jim gets acquainted with every potential WPR by walking the land as well as talking with the land owner.

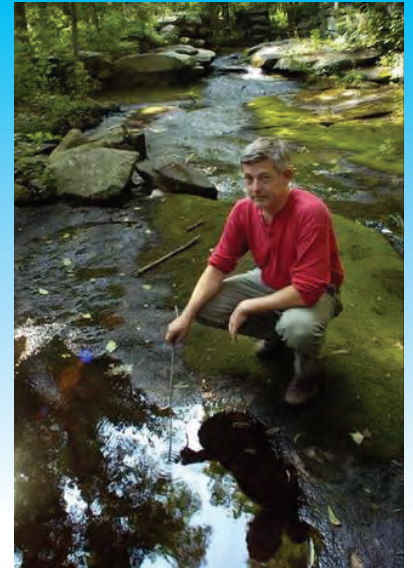
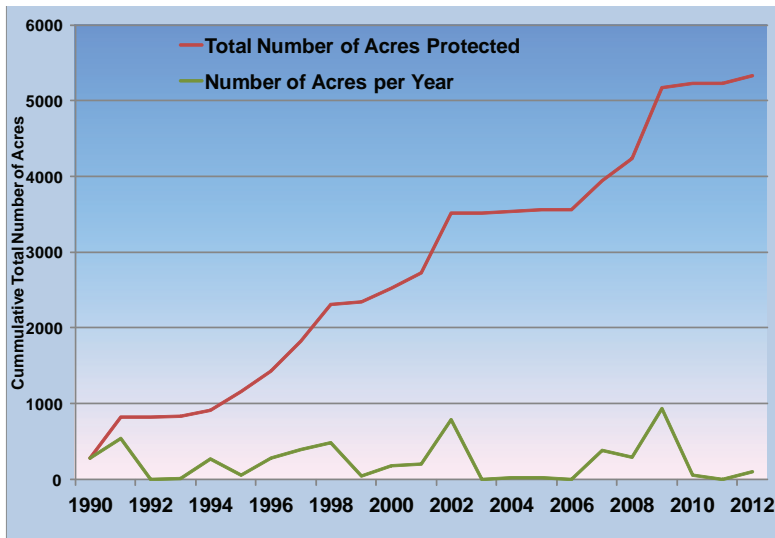


Photo: Worcester Telegram and Gazette

100 WPRs

Facts and Figures

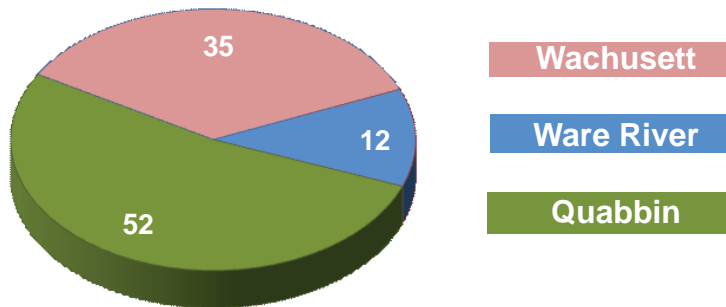
WPR acquisitions over time



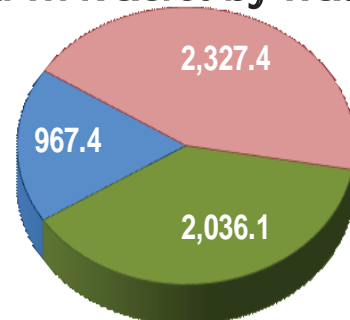
The table at left shows how the DCR Division of Water Supply Protection's WPR program has added over 5,300 acres to the total amount of protected land in the Quabbin Reservoir, Wachusett Reservoir, and Ware River Watersheds over the last 25 years. This acreage, in conjunction with outright fee purchased land, equals over 22,000 total acres of protected land.

The charts below show the proportion of protected land in all three watersheds by both number of WPRs in each watershed (below left) and totals number of protected acres in each watershed (below right).

Number of WPRs by Watershed



Protected WPR acres by Watershed



100 WPRs - From Page 1

Barre), on 12 acres; John and Ellen Ebersol on almost 9 acres; and Ted and Donna Williams on 72 acres. Ted is a well known freelance environmental writer with frequent articles in Fly Rod and Reel and Audubon magazine. Donna also has worked many years for Mass Audubon. On the same day, we recorded a WPR on 186 acres in Petersham belonging to Dr. William Foye, Professor of Pharmaceutical Sciences at the Mass College of Pharmacy, an Athol native, and author of *Trout Waters*, a book about fishing the upper Quabbin Watershed. Dr. Foye would go on to place conservation covenants on hundreds of additional acres he accrued throughout his long life.

What a treat to have the opportunity to work with such environmentally astute and caring folks as all of you. You are changing the landscape one deed at a time, and with each new property protected, we are closer to a greener and healthier world.

During the ensuing 20+ years, the WPR option has been taken up by you and so many others who are what we affectionately refer to as “engaged landowners.” That is to say, landowners who know their acreage, appreciate it for its inherent open space values, and wish to continue to have a say in the future of the land you steward. You are also averse to seeing your land carved up by development, and take pride in taking steps to preserve the land you have under your care and control. You and DCR are

partners in seeing a future landscape kept in a natural state for the benefit of generations to come. I have enjoyed working with all of you, and am honored to be a part of your land protection ethic.

As they say, the rest is history, for we have recently recorded our 100th WPR! The Huck family in Princeton holds the distinction of being the centennial WPR acquisition for DCR’s Watershed Land Protection program. You, the 100, are fairly evenly dispersed within the three active watersheds: Quabbin Reservoir, Ware River, and Wachusett Reservoir, and represent a cumulative total of over 5,300 exemplary acres.

We are not done. It is our hope to continue working with watershed landowners in protecting their lands. Most funding for these acquisitions (some have been donated, and some have been acquired with federal dollars through the Forest Legacy program) comes from the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority. Their continued support for the watershed land protection program is the key to our long-term success. Lastly, word of mouth is our primary source of new referrals, so if you know of a landowner who may wish to be a part of the second hundred WPRs, tell them about your partnership with DCR.

To all of you who make up the first 100 WPRs, we raise a glass of crystal clear water in your honor.

-Jim French

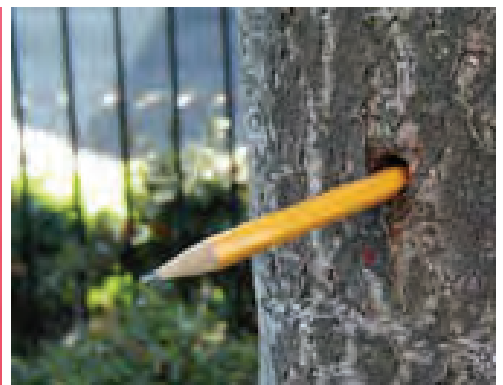
Beware of the Asian Longhorn Beetle

Most of you, have heard plenty about the Asian Longhorn Beetle (ALB) in Massachusetts. Arriving from China in the 1980s, this invasive pest was first spotted in Worcester in 2008. With no natural predators, it poses a significant threat to our forests. Currently, state and federal agencies are working diligently to contain the outbreak. The shiny black beetle, with white spots, sometimes accented with blue or yellow, lives much of its life cycle burrowing inside the tree, causing structural weakness and providing a setting for opportunistic disease. Therefore, it is wise to be very cautious when considering bringing wood from distant locations onto your property. If you think you see signs of the beetle’s presence on your land, immediately call the ALB Hotline at (617) 626-1779. For more information on the ALB go to <http://massnrc.org/pests/alb/>.

-Jim Taylor



Photos: USDA Forest Service



The male Asian Longhorn Beetle (at left) grows to 3/4" long, while the similar looking female can grow to 1.5" in length. This invasive pest should not be confused with the native Pine Sawyer Beetle, which, while similar, has no white spots and smooth rather than alternating colored segmented antennae. The pencil in the hole made by an ALB (shown above) demonstrates the potentially fatal damage the insect can cause.

Wildlife on Your Land

Is there a vernal pool on your protected land?

A vernal pool is a unique seasonal wetland that recurs each spring in the field or forest. It usually dries up completely by the end of summer. This set of conditions creates a distinctive little ecosystem with no predatory fish, which in turn provides the opportunity for some very peculiar creatures, such as Fairy Shrimp, Wood Frogs and Spotted Salamanders, to flourish.

As the snow melts and the days warm, adult Wood Frogs and Spotted Salamanders make their way to the pool to lay eggs. Typically, the first warm rainy night will signal a mass movement of Wood Frogs and Spotted Salamanders, which is known to some enthusiasts as “The Big Night.”

As the pool dries, newly hatched frogs and salamanders race against time to mature and leave the pool. Fairy Shrimp never leave the pool, but they lay eggs that require a drying out phase before hatching again the next year. Some vernal pools depend on fall rains and winter snow; there are good and bad years. This past winter’s minimal snow fall will likely mean shallower, less enduring pools that will make for a challenging year for all the critters.

While it is OK to peek at the progress of this little world, please do not disturb it. Always allow any branches or leaves nature has deposited there to remain. Also, be very careful not to disturb any egg masses, so that they will be an active part of nature’s grand plan.

- Jim Taylor



Photo: DCR Staff

For more information on vernal pools, go to www.vernalpool.org/vernal_1.htm.



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