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October 26, 2015

Matthew A. Beaton, Secretary
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900
Boston, MA 02114-2534

Dear Secretary Beaton:

On behalf of the 2.5 million residents spanning 50+ communities who receive their drinking water from the Quabbin/Ware/Wachusett Reservoirs, I respectfully request any and all attempts to include off-road mountain biking as an allowable recreational activity in the Ware watershed be rejected. Further, I advocate that you strengthen the enforcement of the rules that are in place, denying this illegal activity.

The Quabbin/Ware/Wachusett watersheds, first and foremost, are for the protection and insulation of our drinking water supply.

Watershed protection is the critical most direct line of defense in assuring that the drinking water for over 40% of the residents of Massachusetts are protected. It provides us with a natural forest-filtered safety-net around our drinking water supply.

Watershed protection was the single largest factor that swayed the federal courts to rule against the Environmental Protection Agency and allowed the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, DEP and MWRA a waiver of the Safe Drinking Water Act's requirement of filtration.

If we were forced to build a filtration plant today, costs could broach \$300+ million.

In addition, ratepayers of the MWRA fully fund the nearly \$30 million annual budget of the DCR's Division of Water Supply Protection (DWSP). Included in this amount is over \$8 million for payments in lieu of taxes for communities that surround the reservoirs and over \$1 million goes to Ware River communities.

In total, since 1990, MWRA ratepayers have funded over \$140 million in watershed land acquisitions or land-use restrictions to ensure long-term protection of the water supply.

DCR/MWRA have in fact worked closely with Advisory Committees (representatives from the North Worcester County Quabbin Anglers Association, the Quabbin Fishermen's Association, and the Swift River Valley Historical Society members on the Water Supply Protection Trust) in developing and periodically updating public access and land-management plans. The Ware River went through this public process in 2010.

DWSP rangers have documented off-road mountain biking in the Ware River Watershed forest that has caused erosion, stream bank degradation, and plant and wildlife destruction. Off-road mountain biking activity often involves construction of illegal ramps, bridges and towers. Damage has been found in highly sensitive ecological areas, including priority habitat for rare wildlife.


In conclusion, if "passive" recreational uses were to allow off-road mountain biking, it would, in fact, open "Pandora's Box" for any and all recreational activities and would be the beginning of the end for watershed protection. DWSP already allows a great deal of public access across the watersheds, more so than other unfiltered water supplies and even more than local filtered systems like Worcester and Springfield who have fences surrounding their watershed land.

No longer would the lands around our precious reservoirs be for watershed protection; they would make these sensitive areas parkland, seriously jeopardizing the drinking water of Greater Boston, ultimately becoming an extreme sport enthusiasts' playground at the expense of our drinking water protection and our ratepayers.

Dear Mr. Secretary, please work with us to ensure that the advocates for off-road mountain biking in the Ware River watershed are rejected as they try to make regulatory changes through EO562 and/or legislative changes, which would allow off-road mountain biking.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Joseph E. Favaloro, Jr.
Executive Director

cc: Carol Sanchez, Commissioner, DCR
Fred Laskey, MWRA Executive Director
Jonathan Yeo, Director, Division of Water Supply Protection
Lou Taverna, MWRA Advisory Board Chair
Katherine Dunphy, Water Supply Protection Trust
Kathy Baskin, EOEEA Director of Water Policy