



Department of Conservation and Recreation  
Division of Water Supply Protection  
Office of Watershed Management

## Update of the Ware River Watershed Public Access Management Plan – Public Engagement Plan –

The 2010 Ware River Watershed Public Access Management Plan will be updated by the Department of Conservation and Recreation's Division of Water Supply Protection (DCR/DWSP) beginning in the fall of 2018, with a completion target date of December 2019. Outlined below is the anticipated process for engaging with key stakeholders and user groups as part of the Ware River Watershed Public Access Management Plan update. This engagement plan may be revised if new needs or improved process suggestions arise.

### **Kickoff Meeting**

Meeting with Ware River Watershed Advisory Committee (WRWAC) and public, April 12, 2018

Purpose:

- Review DCR/DWSP's watershed management priorities and the context for the plan revision.
- Establish common understanding of geographic references and trail names.
- Capture the initial range of concerns and interests from the WRWAC and user groups.

### **Communicating Decision Criteria and Approach to Public Engagement**

Meeting with WRWAC and public, Sept. 13, 2018

Purpose:

- Present DCR/DWSP's Watershed Management Principles for Public Access in the Ware River, so all stakeholders have a common understanding of DCR/DWSP's goals and constraints governing public access.
- Propose a Public Engagement Plan for discussion, to ensure effective ongoing communication and collaboration with stakeholders.

### **In-Depth Issue Identification**

From September through December 2018, DCR/DWSP will work with all stakeholders to identify the key issues to be addressed by the plan update, guided by the public access management principles. Public sources of input during this phase will include:

- Surveys of watershed users conducted by field staff.
- Targeted outreach to abutters/landowners in the watershed.
- DCR/DWSP "office hours" in Belchertown or Oakham to meet with user group representatives, by appointment (user groups are invited to select up to three representatives for these appointments).
- Online comment portal, posted at town halls, on town websites, and disseminated through WRWAC.

During this phase, DCR/DWSP will also reach out to internal staff and other stakeholders, such as the MWRA, MassDEP, MassWildlife, the Army Corps of Engineers, etc.

### **Solution Analysis**

Over the winter and spring of 2019, DCR/DWSP will engage in focused, solution-oriented discussions to address the key public access management issues identified over the fall.

- Key stakeholders (e.g., user groups, land holders, partner organizations/agencies) will be invited to participate in the appropriate collaborative sessions.
- DCR/DWSP's public access management principles will inform the search for solutions. Outcomes will not necessarily be consensus decisions, although consensus will be sought, where possible.
- WRWAC will be regularly updated.

### **Solution Proposals**

In the summer or fall of 2019, plan elements representing the proposed solutions to the identified issues will be presented to WRWAC and the public in written form, for review and feedback.

- These plan elements will include maps, written descriptions, tables etc.
- If the review and feedback process bring to light misunderstandings from the collaborative sessions or critical new information, additional collaborative meetings may be scheduled to finalize the plan elements.

### **Draft Plan**

A complete draft Ware River Watershed Public Access Management Plan will be presented to WRWAC and at a public hearing, followed by a 30-day public comment period.

### **Public Comment Consideration**

DCR/DWSP will review, consider, and respond as appropriate to public comments.

### **Final Plan**

The final plan is anticipated to be released in December 2019.