

Quabbin Reservoir's Management Agency

The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), part of the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, is steward of one of the largest state parks systems in the country. Its 450,000 acres is made up of forests, parks, greenways, historic sites and landscapes, seashores, lakes, ponds, reservoirs and watersheds.

DCR's Division of Water Supply Protection manages and protects the drinking water supply watersheds for 51 Massachusetts communities, mainly in the Greater Boston area. The Division provides technical support to other state agencies, monitors lakes and ponds, and precipitation throughout the state, and promotes policies for the long-term sustainability of the Commonwealth's water resources.

Preserve your privilege to use this unique resource. Please follow these rules and regulations.

ALLOWED IN DESIGNATED AREAS:

- Fishing
- Bicycling
- Walking/Snowshoeing
- Picnicking (without fire or grills)
- Cross-Country Skiing

ACCESS IS RESTRICTED TO HOURS POSTED AT GATES AND ENTRANCES.

PROHIBITED

- Disposal of human waste, refuse, or litter anywhere except where appropriate receptacles are provided
- Alcoholic beverages
- Swimming and wading
- All fires
- Horses, dogs and other domestic animals.
- Camping, hunting, trapping, and firearms.
- Trespassing in posted restricted areas and on the ice
- Removal of historic artifacts or natural resources
- Drones

Please report violators to:
 Watershed Rangers at **(617) 828-2452**
 State Police - Quabbin at **(413) 323-7561**

For more information contact the Quabbin Visitor Center at 413-323-7221.

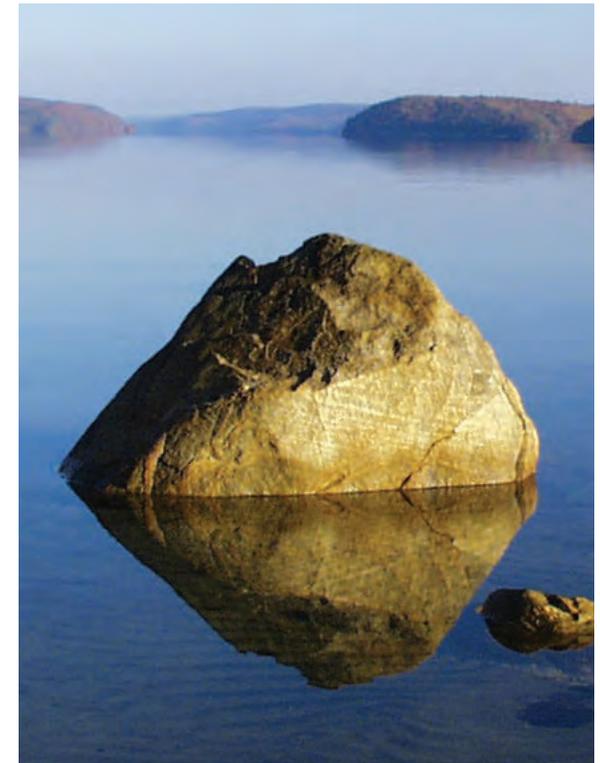
QUABBIN RESERVOIR

Department of Conservation and Recreation
 Division of Water Supply Protection
 485 Ware Road
 Belchertown, MA 01007
www.mass.gov/dcr/watershed

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Quabbin Park and Reservoir

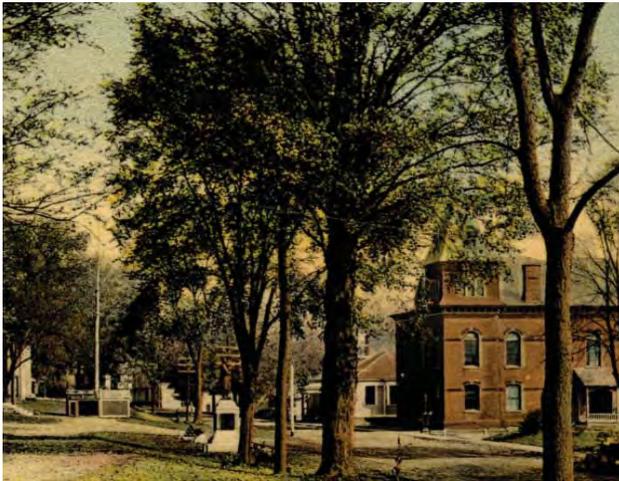
THE MEETING OF MANY WATERS



“The Meeting of Many Waters”

For thousands of years this valley was part of the territory of the Nipmuc Indians, who referred to the area as Quabbin, or “the meeting of many waters.” By the 17th century their population had declined, decimated by war and disease, and the valley was rapidly settled by Europeans drawn by the abundance of water and rich farmland.

Four towns were eventually established in the valley, Dana, Enfield, Prescott and Greenwich (green-wich) and by the mid-19th century they were thriving communities. With an economy based mainly on farming, the towns were also home to small industries such as soapstone quarrying, ice-harvesting, textile manufacturing and palm leaf hat braiding. When a branch of the Boston and Albany Railroad was run from Springfield to Athol through the valley, the area became a popular destination for summer visitors. The train route was known by the locals as the “Rabbit Run” because it made frequent stops, or hops, on its journey, taking three and a half hours to travel fifty miles.



A view of Enfield Center with the town hall, c. 1916. Enfield was the largest of the four valley towns.

However, at the beginning of the 20th century, rural New England, including the Swift River valley, was affected by declining land values and a decrease in population. Increased industrialization drew people away from farms and small towns to cities in search of opportunities. In Massachusetts, people flocked to Boston and its surrounding areas. Despite the 65 miles that separated them, the Swift River valley was destined to feel the impact of population growth in the eastern part of the state.

Why the Swift River Valley?

Throughout the 19th century, the growing need for drinking water in metropolitan Boston had state officials looking westward into central and western Massachusetts to find or create a source of abundant fresh water. After the construction of the Wachusett Reservoir in 1908 failed to meet the region’s long term water needs, officials set their eyes upon the Swift River valley.

Due to the geography of the valley with its low hills and broad lowlands, as well as the high quality of the water, this area had been considered since 1895 as an excellent spot to build a reservoir. By impounding the Swift River and Beaver Brook where they exited the valley, a huge source of fresh water could be created.

In 1927, after years of discussion, the legislature passed the Swift River Act, appropriating money to build a reservoir in the valley. In order to construct the reservoir the valley would have to be cleared of all structures, vegetation and people.

Quabbin Reservoir

Although the decision to flood the valley met with some local resistance, the residents had few options and construction of the reservoir began in 1927. Systematically, the Metropolitan District Water



Although some families moved their homes from the valley, the majority of structures were torn down.

Supply Commission (MDWSC), the state agency responsible for the construction of the reservoir, moved to transform the valley. Homes and factories were purchased from the townspeople, then razed or moved. Large tracts of land were purchased including 25,000 acres for the reservoir alone. The land which was to be flooded was clearcut and burned. The state removed 7,613 bodies from the valley’s 34 cemeteries and the majority (6,601) were reburied at Quabbin Park Cemetery. On April 28, 1938, Dana, Enfield, Prescott and Greenwich officially ceased to exist and the 2,500 people who once populated the towns and villages no longer had a place to call home.



Enfield, February 1939; only the town hall remains.

Pure Water

Today Quabbin Reservoir, the Ware River, Wachusett Reservoir and their contributing watersheds supply drinking water to 51 communities in the metropolitan Boston area. Sudbury Reservoir is not currently used as an active water source but is held as an emergency supply. Quabbin and the Ware River also supply three communities in the Chicopee Valley (South Hadley Fire District 1, Wilbraham and Chicopee).

Management of the Water System is divided between the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation Division of Water Supply Protection (DCR-DWSP) and the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA).

While MWRA is responsible for drinking water transmission and treatment, DCR-DWSP is responsible for the protection of reservoir water quality and management of the watershed lands. Water quality sampling and field inspections by Environmental Quality Section staff at Quabbin Reservoir help identify tributaries with water quality problems, aid in the implementation of the Division's watershed protection plans, and ensure compliance with state and federal water quality criteria for public drinking water supply sources.

A healthy, resilient forest cover on watershed lands also contributes to the protection of pure water. Much of the operations of Quabbin Reservoir's forest management activities focus on encouraging a diversity of tree species and age classes. A vigorous forest filters incoming precipitation, stabilizes soil and mitigates impacts of natural and human disturbances. Careful thinning operations of the wooded land surrounding the reservoir help to promote a diverse forest community and benefit both water quality and wildlife.

“Accidental Wilderness”

The result of this land management approach is an area often referred to as the “Accidental Wilderness.” Relatively free from human disturbance, this sizable area of protected land with a diversity of habitats has resulted in varied and abundant wildlife communities. Wild turkey and white-tailed deer are common, along with smaller species of rodents and birds, which provide food for fox, bobcat, coyote and hawks. More uncommon wildlife, such as bald eagles, common loons, bear and moose are also found at Quabbin, benefiting from the protected watershed lands. DCR-DWSP wildlife biologists monitor the wildlife to help maintain a diversity in population as well as to study the impact on the forest and water quality.

Quabbin Facts and Figures

1927 - year clearing of the Valley began
1938 - year that the 4 towns were dis-established
2,500 - number of residents who lost their homes to the reservoir
1939 - year the reservoir began to fill
1941 - first year water was sent from Quabbin to Wachusett Reservoir
1946 - first year the reservoir reached capacity
18 miles - length of reservoir
118 miles - shoreline of reservoir (without islands)
151 feet - maximum depth of reservoir
45 feet - average depth of reservoir
530 feet - elevation of reservoir above sea level when at capacity
412 billion gallons - full capacity of Quabbin Reservoir
81,000 acres - combined acres of water and land owned and managed by DCR-DWSP
2,640 feet - length of Winsor Dam
295 feet - height of Winsor Dam above bed rock
2,140 feet - length of Goodnough Dike
264 feet - height of Goodnough Dike above bedrock
24.6 miles - length of Quabbin to Wachusett aqueduct
3 million - number of Massachusetts residents that drink Quabbin water
199.98 million gallons - average daily water usage (in 2018) for the water system.

Recreational Access

Quabbin Reservoir and its 56,000 acres of protected watershed provide drinking water to 40% of Massachusetts residents. This primary mission of assuring the availability of pure water for future generations determines what types of recreation DCR-DWSP allows. However, Quabbin's vast acreage provides many opportunities for wildlife viewing, walking, and fishing. For more information, please visit the Quabbin Visitor Center from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily or call 413-323-7221.

Quabbin Park

Quabbin Park, located off Route 9 in Belchertown, MA, is a small corner of the vast Quabbin Reservation. Open every day of the year from dawn until dusk, the park is the only section of the Reservation accessible by vehicle. The area offers visitor services including restroom facilities, the Quabbin Visitor Center, and the Quabbin Observation Tower, as well as many of the unique cultural and natural features of the Quabbin Reservation. Much of the main infrastructure that created the reservoir, Winsor Dam, Goodnough Dike and the reservoir spillway, are all located in the park. A walk or drive through Quabbin Park Cemetery reveals the history of the valley's lost towns. There are over twenty miles of walking trails available in the park giving visitors an opportunity to view wildlife.

Bicycling and fishing are also allowed in certain designated areas in the park. The Quabbin Visitor Center offers programs and information about the cultural history, and the management of the reservoir, watershed, and wildlife. For more information, please visit the Visitor Center from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily or call 413-323-7221.

This map provides a general orientation to Quabbin Park and its diverse landscape.

