

**Quabbin Watershed Advisory Committee Meeting**  
**September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2017**  
**7:30 PM**

**Location:** DCR Quabbin Visitor's Center, 100 Winsor Dam Road, Belchertown, MA 01007

**Members Present:** Tom Barnes (North Worcester County Quabbin Anglers Association), Tom Berube (MA Council of Sportsmen), Jim Boyko (Swift River Valley Historical Society), Tony Brighenti (North Worcester County Quabbins Anglers Association), Craig Cortis (Worcester County League of Sportsmen), Jerry Eves (Trout Unlimited), Larry Gates (Quabbin Fisherman's Association), J.R. Greene (Friends of Quabbin, Inc.), Ralph Lapinskas (General Public), Tom Lautzenheiser (MA Audubon), Bill Pula (MA Wildlife Federation)

**DCR Staff Present:** Dan Clark, Herm Eck, Justin Gonsor, Lisa Gustavsen, Brian Keegan, John Scannell, Jonathan Yeo

**Public Attending:** Rosemary Charron, Brad Miner, John Tobiason, Larry Tucker

**Meeting Start Time: 7:30 PM**

**Approval of Minutes of Meeting on June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2017**

J.R. Greene made a motion to accept the minutes from the QWAC meeting held on June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2017. Tony Brighenti seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

**Presentation on Draft Comprehensive Land Management Plan**

Dan Clark and Brian Keegan presented the draft Comprehensive Land Management Plan to the committee.

DWSP's mission statement is as follows: "...construct, maintain and operate a system of watersheds, reservoirs, water rights and right in sources of water supply (to) supply thereby a sufficient supply of pure water to the Massachusetts Water Resource Authority, and (to) utilize and conserve said water and other natural resources to protect, preserve and enhance the environment of the

Commonwealth and to assure the availability of pure water for future generations.”

Watershed Protection Plans are updated every 5 years. Under the Watershed Protection umbrella, Public Access Plans are updated every 5-10 years and Land Management Plans are updated every 10 years. In the past, individual watershed specific plans were updated every 10 years. These individual plans will now be combined into one comprehensive Land Management Plan (LMP). It will act as a guiding document for a variety of activities and should reduce redundancy and increase efficiency. The comprehensive LMP will include the Sudbury watershed, Wachusett watershed, Ware River Watershed, and the Quabbin Watershed.

The Sudbury watershed consists of 16,300 acres of land, 1,400 acres of reservoir, and is 41% forested. 14.6% of the watershed is protected by DWSP while 10.5% is protected by other groups. The Wachusett Reservoir consists of 70,600 acres of land, 4,100 acres of reservoir, and is 70% forested. 27.9% of the watershed is protected by DWSP while 17.6% is protected by other groups. The Ware River Watershed consists of 61,700 acres of land and is 76% forested. 39.8% of the watershed is protected by DWSP while 12% is protected by other groups. The Quabbin Watershed consists of 95,500 acres of land, 24,500 acres of reservoir, and is 88% forested. 60.3% of the watershed is protected by DWSP while 16.1% is protected by other groups.

The comprehensive LMP will take climate change into consideration. Predicted effects of climate change are as follows:

- Northeast U.S. will likely be more strongly impacted
- Average precipitation will increase
- Warmer, wetter winters
- Drier summers
- Extreme events will be more frequent

In 1985 DCR began a major land acquisition program. \$135 million dollars has been spent over that time (funded by MWRA). \$113 million has been spent at Wachusett, \$13 million at Ware River, and \$9 million at Quabbin. Land was purchased in fee and through Watershed Preservation Restrictions (WPR). The efforts have been focused on the Quabbin and Wachusett watersheds. From

1985 through January of 2015, the percent of Wachusett under Division control went from 7.9% to 28.4%.

The STAC review of the forestry program began in April of 2010 and their report was completed in February of 2013. In August of 2013 DWSP released a 'From Here Forward' document that detailed how the STAC recommendations would be implemented:

- Improve public access to harvesting information through internet postings, public meetings, and signage
- Improvement in the internal review process
- Changes to openings and marking specifications
  - Irregularly shaped and sized cuts, with separation
  - Green-tree retention within most openings greater than 0.5 acres
  - Promotion of late-seral staged forest characteristics through thinning practices
- Best management practices (BMP) monitoring
- Regeneration monitoring and photo documentation
- Short-term water quality monitoring at stream crossings
- Long-term water quality studies under way

The typical approach is to actively manage roughly 75% of all forested acres, with a goal of regenerating 1% of the managed forest annually. Silvicultural considerations include:

- Consider aesthetics when making openings
- Green-tree retention in openings
- Coarse woody debris standards for wildlife have been carried forward
- Sub-watershed rule
  - No more than 25% of the total stocking on DWSP forests can be cut in any sub-watershed in a 10-year period
  - Goal to prevent changes to water yield/quality
- Carbon storage
  - Calculating the forest's contribution to carbon sequestration

The review and oversight process for the forestry program includes:

- Internal review process

- Natural Resources section, Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP), Environmental Quality section, Archeological Resources, and Regional Director approved
- Public presentation and comment period
- Harvesting permit required
  - Includes water quality protections and spill response measures
- BMP Implementation has to meet or exceed regulations
- Service Forestry review and approval

The plan does allow for forest management variations in special situations. Restorative Silviculture may be used to create larger openings in specific areas: plantations, degraded stands, and old field white pine.

There will also be a focus on early successional habitat (ESH) management; young forest habitat and barren habitat. These types of habitat can support globally or regionally rare species, represents a small fraction of our lands, and will be concentrated in focus areas. The use of prescribed fire and terrestrial invasive plant control may be used in this management type. Quabbin will have 3 young forest focus areas. Ware River will have 2 young forest focus areas. Wachusett will have 1 young forest focus area. They will all be located adjacent to existing open habitat, openings of at least 10 acres will be created, and one section in each area would be cut every 5-7 years to create a continuous supply of this habitat type. Quabbin will have 5 barren focus areas. Ware River will have 1 barren focus area. These areas contain rare species and have been identified in collaboration with NHESP. Management will be done via tree removal and thinning as well as maintained by periodic fire.

Wildlife management will continue under the comprehensive LMP. Protecting water quality and infrastructure is still the main responsibility. But there is also a responsibility to be good stewards of the land and to protect rare, common, or unique wildlife and habitats where possible.

Wildlife programs for watershed management include beaver trapping/removal, resident geese population control, gull harassment, the Quabbin deer hunt, and moose population monitoring and research.

There is a proposal to expand hunting at Wachusett Reservoir. There will be future meetings and a thorough public process next year to discuss the proposal. The current extent of allowed hunting is located west of I-190 (about 10,000 acres), is free, and a permit is required. The proposal is to expand hunting into areas east of I-190. Two zones would be created; the reservoir zone and everything east of I-190 outside of the reservoir zone. The I-190 East zone (4,700 acres) would be open to hunting all seasons, no dogs would be allowed, and a permit would be required. The reservoir zone (2,800 acres) would be limited to deer hunting during the two weeks of shotgun season and the two weeks following shotgun season (the primitive arms season). A permit would be required and would be based on a random lottery drawing.

Cultural resources are also included in the comprehensive LMP. Archeological reviews are conducted for any management activities that might affect cultural resources. Harvesting restrictions can also be put in place. Active vegetation management is done in some areas to preserve specific cultural resources.

A copy of the Comprehensive Land Management Plan can be found online at <http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr>. Written comments will be accepted until 10/20/2017. You can mail written comments to Department of Conservation and Recreation, Offices of Public Outreach, 251 Causeway Street, Suite 600, Boston, MA 02114. Comments can also be submitted online to [DCR.Updates@state.ma.us](mailto:DCR.Updates@state.ma.us) (put 'DWSP land management plan' in the email subject line).

Tom Lauzenheiser expressed appreciation that DCR is willing to make special considerations to create openings larger than 2 acres where appropriate (wildlife habitat). He questioned if DCR is taking the secondary effects of climate change into account (longer growing seasons, increased pests, etc.). Brian Keegan answered that yes, those factors are being thought about. Various invasive insects were discussed.

Tom Berube asked for clarification on the Wachusett hunting proposal east of I-190, if dogs are allowed or not. John Scannell clarified that no dogs would be allowed on new hunting lands east of I-190. Dogs are allowed west of I-190.

Tony Brighenti made a motion that QWAC supports the comprehensive Land Management Plan. Bill Pula seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved. Tom Lautzenheiser abstained from the vote

### **Brief Overview of Quabbin Public Access Plan Update Review Process**

John Scannell updated the committee on the Quabbin Public Access Plan Update review process. Quabbin's Public Access Plan update will be presented at the next QWAC meeting on October 16<sup>th</sup>. No significant changes are being proposed to Quabbin's plan. Drone usage will be addressed in the plan; they will not be allowed except in limited research type cases with permit. Our rangers now have increased enforcement capabilities and are now able to write tickets for watershed infractions.

J.R. Greene noted an error on the Reservation Bicycle Access map; the bicycle road from Gate 31 is missing on the map. He was also looking for additional clarification on access to the baffle dams in Hardwick for various recreation activities (bicycling, hiking, shore fishing).

Tony Brighenti asked if the canoe rentals at BLA2 and BLA3 can hold 2 or 3 people. They hold 2 people maximum. John Scannell mentioned that there has been discussion to purchase 3-person canoes in the future. Jonathan Yeo talked about the Adaptive Canoe program that took place this season at BLA3. DCR-Universal Access provided free canoe rentals on 4 or 5 different days this season.

### **Member Issues**

J.R. Greene asked for an update on the management of the Quabbin Park Cemetery. John Scannell and Lisa Gustavsen recently walked the cemetery with Gene Theroux, president of the Friends of Quabbin (FOQ), where Gene pointed out some management concerns and suggestions that he had.

Tom Lauzenheiser mentioned that Mass Audubon will shortly be publishing their 3<sup>rd</sup> State of the Birds Report.

Larry Gates commented that DCR gave a nice tour of the proposed Quabbin forestry projects back in July.

Tom Berube asked about the dates for the annual paraplegic deer hunt at Quabbin. Lisa Gustavsen answered that it will take place on November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup>. Tony Brighenti encouraged DCR to think about including Wachusett in the paraplegic hunt in the future.

Lisa Gustavsen mentioned that there is a current forest harvest underway along Webster Road.

**Meeting End Time: 8:37 PM**

**Upcoming QWAC Meetings:**

- Monday, October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2017 at 7:30 PM – DCR Quabbin Visitor Center, 100 Winsor Dam Road, Belchertown, MA 01007