

Quabbin Watershed Advisory Committee Meeting
December 3rd, 2018
7:30 PM

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

Members: (members in **BOLD** were present)

Massachusetts Council of Sportsmen: **Tom Berube (chair person)**

Alternate:

Trout Unlimited: **Jerry Eves**

Alternate: Joe Babineau

Quabbin Fisherman's Association: Larry Gates

Alternate: **Bill Martell**

Worcester County League of Sportsmen: **Craig Cortis**

Alternate:

North Worcester County Quabbin Anglers Association: **Tony Brighenti (vice chair person)**

Alternate: **Tom Barnes**; Dennis Duguay

Mass Audubon: **Tom Lautzenheiser**

Alternate:

Swift River Valley Historical Society: James Boyko

Alternate: Jane Peirce

Massachusetts Wildlife Federation: **Bill Pula**

Alternate:

New England Sierra Club: **Elisa Campbell**

Alternate:

Friends of Quabbin, Inc.: **J.R. Greene**

Alternate: **Gene Theroux**

General Public: **Ralph Lapinskas**

Alternate:

DCR staff present: Dan Clark, Justin Gonsor

Members of the public present: Rosemary Charron, Lexi Dewey, Mike Laprade, Brad Miner, Bob Sagan, Clayton Sydla

Meeting Start Time: 7:31 PM

Approval of minutes of meeting on September 10th, 2018

Tony Brighenti made a motion to accept the minutes from the QWAC meeting held on September 10th, 2018. J.R. Greene seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

DCR updates

Dan Clark briefed the committee on several Quabbin related issues.

Recently, most of the large, historic oak tree at the main entrance was cut down; although a large portion of the trunk will be allowed to remain standing. Four other trees were fully cut down at that location as well. Several sections of the large oak have been set aside. DCR has a portable mill that will be brought on site in the spring. Portions will be milled into lumber. Two potential projects are to make a table and some flooring out of the wood. Ultimately, the legacy of the tree will carry on in some form.

The MDC plaques at the three main entrances on Rt. 9 are being replaced with DCR plaques. They are set to be installed within the next week or so.

A cell signal booster has been installed and tested at boat launch area (BLA) 3. Tests still need to be done using iPads which will be conducted during the upcoming deer hunt. BLA 2 will have one installed before the 2019 fishing season begins. The units cost \$500 each.

2018 Boat launch area (BLA) report

Dan Clark presented the 2018 BLA report to the committee.

The report is missing a tally of the 1-day license sales for the season. That data will be added to the report before it is finalized.

Overall revenue is down slightly from last year. Boat rentals were also down from 2017. Private boating seems to have increased with more decontamination tags being scanned in 2018.

2019 Quabbin fishing season; online season pass discussion

Dan Clark talked about a plan to establish a website where people will be able to pre-register ahead of time for their 2019 season parking pass for the fishing areas. It would be hosted through smartsheets and the goal is to launch the website by January 1st. This would allow DCR and boaters to save time and avoid paper applications that used to be filled out on site. People who pre-register would then simply have to pay for their pass when they show up at the visitor center or BLA and the data collection would already have been completed. DCR would like QWAC's help in publicizing this new system. The goal is to have as many people as possible who are planning to buy a season pass to pre-register with this online system. This would limit the number of people filling out paperwork on the opening day of Quabbin's fishing season and ease traffic. Justin Gonsor will send out the link to the website to all QWAC members once it is launched, which should be around January 1st, 2019.

J.R. Greene asked if local newspapers will be notified. Dan Clark thought a press release would be possible.

The boat seal program is also undergoing a small change. DCR has begun issuing plastic cards to all the boaters who have gone through the decontamination program. The cards have a barcode on them to be scanned by the BLA attendants. The vast majority of season pass holders are people who own a boat and have gone through the decontamination program. The new season pass will come in the form of a sticker to be placed on the back of the plastic cards. The plan is to issue special cards to season pass holders who don't own a private boat. The visitor center will still be selling season passes as usual.

Bill Martell asked if a digital version of the plastic card will be possible. Dan Clark answered that currently only physical versions of the cards are set to be available. But in theory, someone could take a photo of the barcode on their card using a smart phone, and then the BLA attendant could scan the photo of the barcode off your phone (if the photo was taken at a high enough resolution). But this method hasn't been tested yet.

Finalized cemetery management plan

Dan Clark briefed the committee on the recently finalized Quabbin Park Cemetery Rules and Operations Manual. The digital version can be found online at:

<https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2018/09/28/quabbinparkcemeteryplay2018.pdf>

Gene Theroux voiced disappointment that the Friends of Quabbin (FOQ) didn't get a chance to review the plan and provide feedback before it was finalized. He questioned if there is a plan in place to fix the infrastructure that has gone abandoned on the cemetery grounds; sprinkler system, pump house, electricity being turned off, etc. Dan Clark answered that the decision was made to keep the writing of the plan an internal DCR process. This is the first iteration of the plan, but it will be updated as new information is obtained. Specific comments about the plan should be submitted in writing and will be incorporated into the next version of the manual. A substantial investment would be needed to address the cemetery infrastructure issues and get all the facilities back up and running. An early estimate put the project at around \$1,000,000 just to start with.

Gene was concerned about the burden of maintaining headstones being placed on descendants or surviving family members. He stated that Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 114 says that after 75 years, the responsibility of headstone maintenance falls to the cemetery managers. He also stated that Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 115 says that a Veteran's service officer is to ensure monuments and markers for veterans are maintained and cleaned. He questioned if those statutes apply to Quabbin Park Cemetery. He also asked who would be responsible for liability and maintenance of a headstone if the person interred doesn't have any surviving heirs or lot representatives. He would like to see that question addressed in the next version of the plan.

Gene asked for an update on the status of a project to create a digital database of all the paper burial records for the cemetery. Dan Clark answered the company that was initially hired by DCR created a GraVoc database and transcribed the paper internment records into a digital form; propriety software was used. That company is still in business today. DCR has the data, but it is in a form that is currently irretrievable. The interface between the database and software needs to be rebuilt. The company should be able to recover the data. But, they aren't a state vendor and there is a problem with finding a way to pay them for the additional work that needs to be done while staying within the state's system of procurement. Other options will be explored if plans fall through with the initial

company. QWAC will receive regular progress updates on this project as it proceeds.

Harrington forestry lot update

Dan Clark updated the committee on the Harrington forestry lot that was discussed at the previous QWAC meeting. Significant rutting and ground damage associated with logging equipment had occurred. Ample rainfall over the past couple months hasn't helped remediation efforts at the site. DCR Service Forestry did call in all involved parties (DCR forester who oversaw the job, Herm Eck, and the logger) for a fact finding mission. The goal was to figure out exactly what happened and went wrong, and how to prevent similar issues from happening again. Conclusions from the meeting were as follows: the DCR forester overseeing the job should have conducted better oversight and communication; the logger recognized that when operating conditions on site change they need to alert DCR so things can be reassessed. The logger did not lose his license or have it suspended and will be allowed to keep harvesting trees in Massachusetts.

A mini excavator was rented this past fall to try and remediate some of the rutting and other damage. The wetland crossings (bridges) are still one site. They are not owned by DCR but will remain in place until conditions improve and they can be safely removed.

There was discussion about the bond payment for the job. The bond for the lot was kept by DCR. The bond gets posted by the person or company who wins the bid for the job. The operator who cuts the trees is not always the same person who has posted the bond. DCR will be conducting a review of their contracting and permitting process regarding forestry operations going forward. Currently, a list of everyone working on a given lot gets submitted to DCR. Bond payments tend to be small, \$500 or \$1,000, but DCR will be looking into increasing those bonds to be more in line with the value of the lots that are sold.

Tom Lautzenheiser asked who would be paying for the restoration efforts. Dan Clark answered that DCR will pay the costs. The damage was too extensive to have the operator restore the site himself.

22 forestry operations are presently suspended due to wet conditions.

Deer update: paraplegic hunt; scouting; Quabbin hunt

Dan Clark updated the committee on the deer management programs at Quabbin.

The annual paraplegic deer hunt happened at Quabbin on November 1st-3rd. 6 people participated. Deer were seen, but none harvested.

The larger Quabbin deer hunt is set for December 6th and 7th. Hardwick and Petersham will be the two hunted zones this year. Car scouting occurred over the weekend before Thanksgiving; just under 40% of hunters attended. Access inside Quabbin gates has been limited due to recent rains and roads being washed out or flooded.

Opening day for the Wachusett deer hunt reservoir zone was December 1st. Roughly 27 deer were harvested in that zone so far. Another 16 deer were taken from the larger watershed area. Roughly 95 people are eligible to hunt in the reservoir zone and will do so through the end of the year.

Lake trout sampling: MassWildlife effort

Dan Clark mentioned that MassWildlife recently completed their annual effort to net and tag lake trout at the Quabbin and Wachusett reservoirs. The largest caught weighed 26lbs. from Quabbin (photo attached at end of minutes). Amazingly, the same fish was caught by MassWildlife back in 2014; it has actually lost weight since then. In total, 163 were tagged at Quabbin this year.

Member Issues

Bill Martell asked if the road inside gate 8 that leads to BLA 1 is going to be remediated. Dan Clark answered that the issue will be addressed before the 2019 fishing season begins at Quabbin. Last year, incorrectly sized materials were delivered and laid down that resulted in multiple flat tires to vehicles and trailers throughout the season.

J.R. Greene made a motion to change the QWAC meeting start time from 7:30PM to 7PM going forward. Ralph Lapinskas seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Jerry Eves commented that people fly fishing in the Y-pool above Rt. 9 have been catching salmon ever since water has been cresting over the spillway. The salmon have been spilling out of the reservoir into the river below.

A member of the public asked about a recent proposal to install a solar panel array on the reservoir. The initial proposal letter was actually sent to MassWildlife and not DCR. Brad Miner stated that the DCR commissioner has issued a response letter turning down the idea.

Meeting End Time: 8:35 PM

Upcoming QWAC Meetings:

- Monday, March 4th, 2019 at 7PM – DCR Quabbin Visitor Center, 100 Winsor Dam Road, Belchertown, MA 01007

