

Quabbin Watershed Advisory Committee Meeting
January 5, 2026
6:30 PM

Location

DCR Les and Terry Campbell Quabbin Visitor's Center, 100 Winsor Dam Road, Belchertown, MA 01007

Members

(members in **BOLD** were present)

Massachusetts Council of Sportsmen: **Bill Pula**

Alternate: Robert Sagan

Trout Unlimited: Richard Taupier

Alternate: Joe Babineau

Quabbin Fisherman's Association: **Clayton Sydla (Vice-Chair)**

Alternate: **Mike Laprade; Bill Kimball**

Worcester County League of Sportsmen: Ronald Komar

Alternate: John Root

North Worcester County Quabbin Anglers Association: Samantha Robinson

Alternate: **Tom Barnes**; Mike Polchlopek

Mass Audubon: **Tom Lautzenheiser**

Alternate:

Swift River Valley Historical Society: Elena Palladino

Alternate: **Lexi Dewey**

New England Sierra Club: Janet Sinclair

Alternate:

Friends of Quabbin, Inc.: **J.R. Greene (Chair)**

Alternate: Gene Theroux

General Public: **Ralph Lapinkas**

Alternate: Eric Weiss

DCR staff present

Dan Clark, Justin Gonsor, John Scannell

Members of the public present

Chris Bain, Larry Bandolin, Dennis Begley, Jake Oliveira (state Senator),

Chris Paine, Rick Romano, Aaron Saunders (state Representative),

Moussa Siri, Todd Smola (state Representative), Bruce Spencer, Bill Zinni

Meeting Start Time: 6:33 PM

The three MA legislators in attendance, Senator Jake Oliveira and Representatives Todd Smola, and Aaron Saunders, all made statements at the beginning of the meeting related to fishing and public access. They spoke about the invasive species issue on Pottapaug and O'Loughlin ponds and their desire for continued fishing access on the reservoir as well as the ponds going forward. They expressed support for Quabbin's mission statement as well as getting the invasive species issue under control on the ponds. They underscored DWSP's responsibility to provide public access to Quabbin and expressed hope that the ponds can be reopened in a responsible way that ensures control of the swollen bladderwort.

Approval of minutes from meeting on Monday, October 6, 2025

Ralph Lapinkas made a motion to accept the minutes from the QWAC meeting held on October 6, 2025. Bill Pula seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Presentation of the 2025 Quabbin fishing report

Dan presented the 2025 Quabbin fishing report to the committee. Paper copies were given to QWAC members. Usage and revenue for 2025 was similar to 2024.

There will be some changes to Quabbin's fishing program beginning in 2026. Those changes include:

- Starting April 1, 2026, all motorboat operators born after January 1, 1989 must have a boater safety card to operate a motorized vessel. Anyone born before January 1, 1989 will have until April 2028 to obtain their boater safety card. DCR fishing attendants will check for boater safety cards for anyone wanting to rent a boat. Customers born after January 1, 1989, who don't possess a boater safety card will not be allowed to rent a DCR boat. DCR will not be checking boater safety cards for private boats.
 - Signage was posted at all the BLA's last season to proactively prepare people for the new law.
- No personal anchors/ropes will be allowed on rental boats.
 - This rule is being put in place to control the spread of invasive species.

- Personal trolling motors for rental boats must first be decontaminated before being used on Quabbin.
 - There will be a small decontamination station at each BLA to decontaminate the trolling motors.
 - This rule is also being put in place to control the spread of invasive species.
- Going forward, boats with carpeted bunks will not be allowed to go through the boat decontamination or cold weather quarantine program to get their boat sealed and ready to fish Quabbin.
 - Current boats with carpeted bunks will be allowed and grandfathered in until they need a new seal.
 - This rule is also being put in place to control the spread of invasive species.

Dan mentioned one other issue that came up during the 2025 fishing season. A group calling themselves ‘Heroes on the Quabbin’ has been identified. They have a presence online ([Heroes on the Quabbin](#)) and refer to themselves as a veteran, nonprofit organization. However, DCR legal staff have investigated the group, and they don’t officially exist as a legal nonprofit organization. The group solicits monetary donations on their website in exchange for various Quabbin fishing experiences.

Update on status of swollen bladderwort in Pottapaug and O’Loughlin ponds and DCR’s plan moving forward

Dan updated the committee on the status of the swollen bladderwort on the ponds and DCR’s next steps.

A contractor (TRC) was hired by MWRA to conduct removal and assess the status of the bladderwort on the ponds over the past two years. Paper copies of TRC’s status report were given to committee members. A digital copy of the report is available upon request to Dan (Dan.clark@mass.gov). DCR is planning to host a separate public meeting on February 2 at 6:30pm at the Belchertown Town Hall specifically to review the report, answer questions, and discuss the invasive species issue on the ponds. The plan is then for DCR to make a final decision, soon after the meeting, on whether the ponds can be reopened to the public.

There was discussion on the hydrology and water chemistry of Quabbin and whether the bladderwort poses a water quality or infrastructure risk.

Bill Pula mentioned that the Massachusetts Council of Sportsmen he represents would like to see fishing access to the ponds reopened.

Bill Kimball asked how much it costs to hire TRC. Dan answered that it is an annual contract, managed and paid for directly by the MWRA. Additional details will be given at the February 2 meeting.

2025 Quabbin deer hunt preliminary results

Dan presented the preliminary results of the 2025 Quabbin controlled deer hunts.

For 2025, 2-day controlled hunts occurred in Pelham (December 3 and 4), Petersham (December 10 and 11), and Quabbin Park (December 8 and 9). In total, 118 deer (46 male, 72 female) were harvested across the three hunts. There was snow cover for all three hunts.

For Pelham, 31 total deer (15 male, 16 female) were harvested, with a hunter success rate of 15%. For Petersham, 63 total deer (19 male, 44 female) were harvested, for a hunter success rate of 33%. For Quabbin Park, 24 total deer (12 male, 12 female) were harvested, for a hunter success rate of 26%.

Lexi asked about the recent drone population density estimate study conducted by DWSP natural resource staff. Dan responded that the drones can detect deer using infrared sensor technology. The drones were flown along transect lines in Quabbin Park to count the number of deer. The deer signature is unmistakable and easily distinguished from squirrels and other species. The infrared study has only been conducted in Quabbin Park so far, but the plan is to expand its use to other Quabbin hunt zones. It was mentioned that from DWSP's perspective, more than twenty deer per square mile is when the population density can become a concern to forest health. This infrared technology could also be used to sample the moose population as well.

A final report will be forthcoming.

Clayton praised how well the road crew plowed and prepared the interior watershed roads for the controlled hunts with the recent snowy weather that occurred.

Keystone bridge stabilization project completion

Dan updated the committee on the Keystone Bridge stabilization project.

The bridge was originally built by Adolphus Porter and his son in 1886. It was completed using dry stone construction – no mortar. The bridge spans the middle branch of the Swift River. The bridge was first reported to be compromised in the summer of 2021. DCR then hired consultants to assess the bridge. In July of 2022 the Friends of Quabbin (FOQ) hired Michael Weitzner to assess the bridge. A small collapse was documented in 2023. Funding was authorized in 2024, then Curtis Construction and Michael were hired in 2025 to complete the stabilization project. The project was completed in November of 2025 with a final cost of \$106,000.

The stabilization project was ultimately a DCR and FOQ partnership. DCR was unable to find a suitable contractor for the work. So, it was the FOQ who hired Michael to do the repairs and paid all costs of the project.

The next step for DCR will be to put up fencing or some sort of safety barrier to make sure people don't climb on repaired areas of the bridge.

Status of the Terrestrial Invasive Species Management Plan

Dan updated the committee on the status of the Terrestrial Invasive Species Management Plan. It is currently still being drafted and not yet ready to be released to the public. As soon as it is ready it will be presented to QWAC and released for public comment.

The use of glyphosate on watershed lands was discussed. Its use is currently allowed and detailed in the land management plan. Bill Pula expressed concern over whether glyphosate usage is safe, and the extent to which it will be used in the watershed going forward.

Status of gate 8 road that leads to BLA1

Dan updated the committee on the status of the gate 8 road that leads to BLA1.

The road crew will assess the road in the spring prior to the opening of the fishing season. The approach that has been used in recent years to prepare the road will continue. It will be rolled, graded, and prepped ahead of the fishing season.

Boat launch status with water level down at BLA1

Clayton asked if the low water level could affect launching boats from BLA1. Dan answered launching at BLA1 should be uncompromised unless something critical happens. This is because there are other boat ramps underwater that will become usable if the water level continues to drop.

Various options to reduce bottlenecks and make launching at lower levels easier were discussed.

Member Issues

Lexi asked for an update on the forestry lots that were sold this past autumn. Dan responded that all the lots that went out to bid were sold. Lexi requested the bidding sheets and other documents related to the sales. Dan will send the documents to Lexi. Bruce Spencer asked that the forestry lot information also be sent to the Water Supply Citizens Advisory Committee (WSCAC).

Meeting End Time: 7:34 PM

Upcoming QWAC Meetings:

- Monday, April 6, 2026, at 6:30 PM – DCR Les and Terry Campbell
Quabbin Visitor Center, 100 Winsor Dam Road, Belchertown, MA
01007