

Quabbin Watershed Advisory Committee Meeting
March 20th, 2023
6:30 PM

Location: DCR Quabbin Visitor 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: **Jerry Eves**

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:

New England Sierra Club:

Alternate:

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

Alternate: Gene Theroux

General Public: **Ralph Lapinskas**

Alternate:

DCR staff present: Dan Clark, Justin Gonsor

Members of the public present: Andrew Robinson, Scott Robinson

Meeting Start Time: 6:40 PM

Approval of minutes from meeting on December 12, 2022

Ralph made a motion to accept the minutes from the QWAC meeting held on January 12, 2022. Tom Lautzenheiser seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

2023 fishing season preparations

Dan updated the committee on preparations for the 2023 Quabbin fishing season.

No significant changes are being made this year compared to 2022. Opening day will be the third Saturday in April (April 15).

350 season parking passes have been sold so far this year. All sales are completed online. The BLA's will continue with credit only sales, they no longer take cash.

The plan is to add an extra attendant at each BLA during the morning shift on days where there is only single coverage. The funding is already in place for this. The hope is to be at full staff come opening day.

Additional buoys will be installed at the southern fishing/boating limit on the reservoir. The new buoys will have signage on them and act as another visual barrier. There is money to get the buoys installed on the west arm of the reservoir this year, and if they seem to help, will be installed on the east side the following year.

Update on status of gate 8 and 43 roads

Dan updated the committee on the status of the roads leading the BLA 1 and 3.

The plan for the gate 8 road is to rent an industrial size pavement roller to use on the road and compress any loose stones at the surface. This will be done before the season opens. The hope is that this will eliminate the issue of people getting flat tires on the road.

The plan for the gate 43 road is that funding has been secured (\$300,000) to repave the entire road. DCR has not received the money yet. The paperwork still needs to be finalized. In the meantime, there is a contract already in place to be used for the paving. DCR has been told project can be fit in this year, but the contractor won't officially put it on the schedule until they receive the money from DCR. The paving would happen this summer if funding were delivered in time. BLA3 would need to close during this potential paving period. The money doesn't expire until 2026, but it won't be an issue getting it spent by then.

Update on restoration of damaged gravestones at Quabbin Park Cemetery

Gene Theroux is still in process of fundraising for this project.

Member Issues

Bill Pula asked about Governor Healey's campaign proposal to halt any commercial logging on state lands. Dan responded that DCR hasn't received any updated from EOEEA Secretary Tepper. DCR has provided the Secretary with a comprehensive summary of the forestry program over the past 10 years, management objectives, etc. Typically, forestry lots are advertised quarterly, but no lots were shown this March. Even though there is not an official logging moratorium currently in place, new lots are not currently being sold. However, FY24 proposals are being prepared. Bill Pula suggested QWAC draft a letter in support of DCR's watershed forestry program. Bill made a motion that QWAC, who by legislation advises DCR on their land management, send a letter in support of DCR's watershed forestry program. The motion was discussed. Tom Lautzenheiser commented that he supports to motion. He has also seen various climate change initiatives in the state to preserve forests or passively manage forests. He feels the letter should accurately detail why QWAC supports DCR's active forestry program. He spoke about passive management not always being appropriate on a particular piece of land. Bill will draft the letter and send it out to the rest of the committee for their comments/edits. Ralph seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Tom Barnes commented on a dead pine near the entrance to gate 31. He is hoping it can be cut down and included in the proposed forestry project near that area.

Clayton asked if all the regular restrooms at the BLA's would be open this year for opening day. Dan answered that they will be.

Clayton asked about the possibility of building new shacks at the BLA's for workers. Dan answered that an initial exploratory conversation happened with our carpenter. It is on the radar, options are being explored, but no commitments have been made yet.

Clayton mentioned a recent MWRA Trust Board meeting where Quabbin Park Cemetery was brought up. They hope research can be done to identify the unknown graves at the cemetery. Dan answered that there will be an upcoming meeting with Quabbin's GIS specialist to investigate this issue.

Ron Komar brought up current update to the Ware River Public Access Plan. He mentioned concern over locking of gates resulting in loss of access to certain areas. Dan answered that the public comment period ended in February. The Secretary

has been briefed on the Plan and are waiting to hear her office's feedback. No final decisions have been made on the plan yet.

Ron asked about the status of a future deer hunt in Quabbin Park. Dan answered that if/when a new DCR commissioner is appointed, that person would be briefed on Quabbin's deer management plan and the potential to have a deer hunt in Quabbin Park.

Tom Lautzenheiser asked if warm weather during winters is affecting logging operations. Dan answered that there have been several mud seasons during the current winter. In the past, winter used to be an ideal time for logging where roads would regularly be frozen, but that hasn't been the case in recent years. DCR does dictate when/where/how logging can take place through stipulations in their forestry contracts.

Elena asked for details on the plan to decommission buildings along Blue Meadow Road. Dan answered that there are plans to demolish two buildings, the forestry office and ranger station. The forestry office was built after Quabbin was created. It has already been vacated and decommissioned. The plan is to demolish the building. DCR Cultural Resources will first need to approve the process. A permit would have to be obtained through MA Historical Commission. There is also an internal process within DCR that will need to be completed. The ranger station is still occupied, the rangers are transitioning their staff over to the admin building at Winsor Dam. The ranger station was a building from the 1880's that was relocated to Blue Meadow Road. The thought process being that those two buildings have outlived their usefulness. Getting rid of the buildings would result in a reduced environmental footprint. DCR cultural resources will review the buildings to determine their historical significance. Windows and siding have been replaced over the years at the ranger station.

Elena asked about the status of reopening the Quabbin Observation Tower. Dan answered that an assessment was recently completed to investigate the structural integrity of the tower. Some issues were identified such as steel support beams that hold up the floors are corroded. Temporary shoring has been put in place. The steel beams will need to be replaced or repaired. The exterior needs to be completely repointed. The windows need to be replaced. Essentially, moisture is finding its way into the inside of the building is causing the problems. There is not currently enough money in the annual budget to address these issues. It appears the cost would at least be in the hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Tom Lautzenheiser brought up Tom Ricardi's Raptor Rehabilitation Program. A recent storm resulted in a tree falling and destroying some of his bird enclosures. Those interested in donating to Ricardi and the Birds of Prey Rehabilitation Center can send a check or money order to the Birds of Prey Rehabilitation Center, P.O. Box 26, Conway, MA 01341. The facility is a nonprofit and contributions are tax-deductible. Additionally, an online GoFundMe page is available at bit.ly/3J4o0Po.

Bill Kimball brought up an issue at the gate 8 barrel line. There seems to be a series of 6 ropes that are floating in the vicinity. Bill has spoken with someone from the State Police dive team who says they can help with going down and cutting these ropes free and getting them removed out of the water. Dan will get in touch with the State Police and come up with a plan.

Meeting End Time: 7:33 PM

Upcoming QWAC Meetings:

- Monday, June 5, 2023, at 6:30 PM – DCR Quabbin Visitor Center, 100 Winsor Dam Road, Belchertown, MA 01007