

Quabbin Watershed Advisory Committee Meeting
April 2nd, 2018
7:30 PM

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

Members Present: Tom Barnes (North Worcester County Quabbin Anglers Association), Tom Berube (MA Council of Sportsmen), Tony Brighenti (North Worcester County Quabbin Anglers Association), Elisa Campbell (Sierra Club), 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 (Mass Audubon), Bill Martell (Quabbin Fisherman's Association), Jane Peirce (Swift River Valley Historical Society), Bill Pula (MA Wildlife Federation)

DCR Staff Present: Dan Clark, Justin Gonsor, Lisa Gustavsen, Leo Roy, John Scannell

Public Attending: Donald Berthiaume, Rosemary Charron, Lexi Dewey, Doc Filinowich, Anne Gobi, John Kellstrand, Brad Miner, Mike Moss, Rob Roy, Todd Smola, Clayton Sydla, Susannah Whipps

Meeting Start Time: 7:31 PM

Approval of Minutes of Meeting on January 8th, 2018

Tom Lautzenheiser made a motion to accept the minutes from the QWAC meeting held on January 8th, 2018 with edits. Elisa Campbell seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

2017 Quabbin fishing season discussion

Larry Gates noted that there was no information about 1-day fishing license sales in the 2017 fishing report. He would like to see that information compiled and presented in the 2018 report.

2018 Quabbin fishing season updates – season parking passes and boat decontamination program dates

Dan Clark talked about preparations for the upcoming 2018 Quabbin fishing season. Opening day is scheduled for April 21st. Season parking passes went on sale at the visitor center on March 25th. They will also be sold at all three fishing areas through the duration of the season. Boat decontaminations started on April 4th. The full schedule of decontamination dates are attached at the end of these minutes. Anyone interested should call the visitor center to schedule an appointment.

iPads have been purchased for use at all three fishing areas. They will be used preliminarily to record boat seal information digitally in conjunction with scanners. Boat rental forms will be available online so people can fill them out ahead of time as opposed to be handed the form when they show up. The goal is to speed up the check-in process and reduce wait times. Two new boats were purchased in the previous fiscal year (FY17) with more set to be bought sometime in the next fiscal year (FY19), which begins on July 1st. This year rather than transitioning his work to one of the fishing areas, Andy Donelan will continue to work in the boat maintenance shop throughout the fishing season to provide continuous repairs through the summer.

Bill Martell brought up an issue from the 2017 opening day at gate 8. He stated that in past years people could drop their boat off at the gate on Friday morning, leave, and then come back on Saturday morning for opening day. He questioned why a new rule was put in place requiring that no boats be left unattended. Dan Clark answered that it will help to avoid conflicts with people cutting in front of others and clarified that you cannot leave your boat unattended inside DCR's gate overnight, which is a general Quabbin regulation. People are allowed to drop their boat outside of gate 8 on the town road. It was also mentioned that no portable toilet was placed there in 2017 as had been the practice in previous years.

Larry Gates noted that the 2018 fishing guide has two separate bullet points for four-stroke engines that could be combined into one to save space and reduce redundancy.

Proposed changes to the draft Quabbin Public Access Management Plan

DCR Commissioner Leo Roy solicited input on various proposed changes to Quabbin's public access plan.

The designation of off-reservation vs. on-reservation lands was discussed. J.R. Greene noted that on-reservation lands refer to the 45,000 acres of land that are generally bounded by and within Massachusetts Routes 9, 202, 122, and 32A while off-reservation lands refer to the approximately 10,000 acres of land that fall outside of those route boundaries. Certain activities, such as cross country skiing, are allowed on off-reservation lands but disallowed on-reservation. Multiple committee members commented that they would like to keep the off-reservation distinction as is; it is a useful delineation tool. Off-reservation and on-reservation distinctions will not be changed.

Hunting off-reservation lands was discussed. Currently, hunting is allowed on those lands consistent with MA Division of Fisheries and Wildlife regulations. A member of the public commented that he would like to see the hunting rights on off-reservation lands stay the same. No changes will be made to this activity.

The activity of geocaching, and whether or not it should be allowed on the watershed, was discussed. Representative Susannah Whipps stated that she has received several calls from constituents who would like to see geocaching remain an allowed activity and asked if there have been any problems in the past related to geocaching. Dan Clark answered that there have been instances of caches being found on accident, people thinking they might be dangerous, and then having to get the state police get involved. It was noted that geocaching gives kids and families an opportunity to get outdoors and learn orienteering skills. Elisa Campbell suggested only allowing geocaching on off-reservation lands. Tom Lautzenheiser commented that Mass Audubon has had problems dealing with geocaching on their properties; caches showing up without sanction and can cause access issues. He also stated that if properly administered, geocaching should be able to be done with minimal impact. The committee recommended that if geocaching is to continue to be allowed on the watershed, DCR should come up with a specific set of rules and guidelines to be monitored and enforced.

Quabbin fishing regulations were discussed. Boating on the reservoir is allowed for fishing purposes only. Currently to rent a boat you need a Massachusetts' fishing/sporting license. 1-day Quabbin fishing licenses are also sold at all three fishing areas for people who don't have a sporting license for the year. Bill Pula commented that the 1-day fishing license was developed in conjunction with

QWAC. Commissioner Roy stated that commercial activities are not allowed on the reservoir and that the 1-day license can be a loophole to allow people who aren't fishing to get out on the water. There was an incident last year where a photographer purchased a 1-day fishing license and was documented harassing loons. Visiting family and friends from out of state who only want to fish Quabbin that day were given as examples of the type of people who benefit from having the 1-day licenses available. Tony Brighenti felt that there was no reason to change the fishing regulations and does not support altering any of the fishing access policies. Anne Gobi commented that she hasn't heard any major problems with current public access and wondered if DCR is looking for a problem that doesn't exist. She cited the loon harasser as an example; find and ban him, but don't take away the 1-day licenses for everyone else. Tom Barnes thought roughly 2,000 1-day licenses were sold at Quabbin last year. He felt that people who rent a boat and don't plan to fish represent a very small percentage of the 1-day licenses sold. A member of the public commented that he would like to see anyone who is disrupting wildlife to lose their privileges at Quabbin. He would also like to see some sort of access on the water given to photographers, by permit or otherwise. A member of the public commented that he would like to see photography and other non-impact related activities encouraged at Quabbin, as long as it is done in a safe and respectful manner. It was mentioned that the public should be reporting any violations they see to the watershed rangers or the state police; those phone numbers can be found in the Quabbin fishing guide. Bill Martell commented that he would hate to see the 1-day license sales go away. A member of the public stated that the money from the 1-day license sales goes toward land stamps and that he would like to see the program continue.

Larry Gates asked about the night access program for shore fishing; the program is currently suspended. Ralph Lapinskas added that he hasn't heard of any problems stemming from the program. Although the permits are supposed to be given for shore fishing, anyone can receive a permit. Multiple members of the public commented that people who hunt and fish can act as the eyes and ears throughout the watershed, know the resource best, and are protectors of the water supply. The night access program will no longer be suspended and the application will be put back on the web site ASAP.

Cross country skiing and snowshoeing was discussed. Currently, snowshoeing is allowed on-reservation while cross country skiing is limited to off-reservation

land. Bill Pula noted that Quabbin's public access rules stem from a mix of historical usage, public pressure, and lobbying efforts at different times. J.R. Greene thought one of the reasons cross country skiing was banned on-reservation was due to concern of people making their way on to the ice.

A member of the public asked about night access to the Swift River Y-pool for fly fishing. Due to security reasons, access to the Swift River, Y-Pool, and Rt. 9 parking area is prohibited between 11PM and 4AM.

Elisa Campbell talked about her experiences on QWAC over the years and the increasing proposals for new forms of recreation on the watershed. She talked about the balancing act between conservation and recreation.

Bill Pula asked about the proposal which would clarify that walking and snowshoeing are allowed only on designated routes in the watershed. He gave examples for why some people hike off route: searching for fallen antler sheds in the forest, fishing tributaries/brooks, bird watching, and off-season deer scouting. J.R. Greene commented that he would like to see access stay the way it has been.

A member of the public asked that the list of proposed changes to the public access plan be posted on the DCR web page. J.R. Greene commented that if DCR is planning to make any changes to the access plan that was presented to the committee last year, those changes should be made clear to the committee before implementation. Commissioner Roy responded that public comments will be taken through the end of April, the public access plan will then be posted online by mid-May, and that any changes to the plan would be presented at the next QWAC meeting in June.

Member Issues

Jane Peirce stated a reminder that the Quabbin land was taken for water supply purposes, displacing 2,500 people, and is concerned about constant pressures from user groups for increased levels of access on the watershed.

Elisa Campbell brought up the topic of forestry. She is concerned about lobbying efforts on behalf of groups in Massachusetts that are opposed to all cutting on public lands. She reminded DCR that they should always be prepared to defend their forestry program.

Tom Barnes talked about the night access program. He doesn't believe that getting rid of the program would solve any problems of illegal activity happening after dark, and that it might remove any responsible people from the area who would report illegal activities. Ralph Lapinskas agreed with this sentiment. Commissioner Roy added that he is interested in consulting with the watershed rangers on how often people are calling in to use their night access permits and to possibly do some targeted monitoring and enforcement at night.

J.R. Greene mentioned that the president of the Friends of Quabbin (FOQ), Gene Theroux, recently met with Dan Clark in regards to the condition of the Quabbin Park Cemetery. Dan noted that DCR is currently coming up with a cemetery policy and operations plan. The plan is to include FOQ in that process.

Craig Cortis asked about a forthcoming public meeting with respect to hunting east of I-190. John Scannell answered that as part of the new land management plan there is a proposal to expand hunting around Wachusett Reservoir. A public meeting will be happening but the exact date has not yet been set; it would probably happen in early May.

Bill Pula thanked Commissioner Roy for attending the meeting and hearing out the committee and public in person.

Bill Martell asked about the protocol at the fishing areas on Friday nights and Saturday mornings through the fishing season. In past years the main gates have been left open and a smaller cable bar way has been put up further down the road. This has allowed cars to line up before the 6AM opening time on Saturday mornings and not have cars spilling out on to the highway. He would like to see this process continued. Tom Barnes agreed that this has been the process in the past. There have been conversations about installing permanent gates where the cable bar ways currently are.

Bill Martell also commented people should be allowed to leave their boat unattended on the side of the town road outside gate 8. He feels that the rangers should not be telling people they need to stay with their boat if they are parked outside of gate 8, as it is not DCR property. Dan Clark will investigate the issue.

Larry Gates brought up the topic of electric bicycles. With the technology getting better and cheaper he would like to see electric bicycles specifically addressed in the public access plan. Lisa Gustavsen responded that she thought it was addressed in the new plan and that they are currently allowed where all bicycles are allowed.

Ton Lautzenheiser emphasized that with water supply being the primary purpose of Quabbin's existence, he would like to see public access policy changes evaluated more on the merits of how they would affect water quality. He respects the sporting and fishing tradition at Quabbin but doesn't want to see decisions made based on a knee jerk reaction to tradition or how things have been done in the past.

Tom Berube reiterated that people who hunt and fish are additional eyes and ears in the watershed and report violations to the state police or watershed rangers.

Meeting End Time: 9:20 PM

Upcoming QWAC Meetings:

- Monday, June 4th, 2018 at 7:30 PM – DCR Quabbin Visitor Center, 100 Winsor Dam Road, Belchertown, MA 01007



2018 Quabbin Boat Seal Program Schedule

All private boats must have an intact Quabbin Boat Seal to launch on the Quabbin Reservoir. Seals can be obtained through a DCR approved decontamination process. Decontaminations and inspections will be held on the following dates in 2018.

You must call the Quabbin Visitors Center at (413) 323-7221 to make an appointment. Appointments will begin being taken on March 1st. Make sure you have your boat registration information when you call.

BOAT DECONTAMINATION

April

4/4/18 Wednesday
4/7/18 Saturday
4/11/18 Wednesday
4/18/18 Wednesday
4/19/18 Thursday

May

5/2/18 Wednesday
5/16/18 Wednesday
5/23/18 Wednesday

June

6/6/18 Wednesday
6/20/18 Wednesday

July

7/11/18 Wednesday

August

8/1/18 Wednesday
8/15/18 Wednesday

September

9/5/18 Wednesday

New dates may be added if appointment times on these scheduled dates are completely filled.

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS · EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

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