

Quabbin Watershed Advisory Committee Meeting
April 6, 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: **Dave Morin**

Alternate:

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 Lapinskas**

Alternate: **Eric Weiss**

DCR staff present

Dan Clark, Justin Gonsor

Members of the public present

David Korash, Rob Lavoie, Eugene Lavoie, Michael Maiers, Andrew Robinson, Scott Robinson, Moussa Siri, Robin Ward

Meeting Start Time: 6:33 PM

A moment of silence was observed for the recent passing of Ron Komar. He represented the Worcester County League of Sportsmen on QWAC.

Approval of minutes from meeting on Monday, January 5, 2026

Ralph made a motion to accept the minutes from the QWAC meeting held on January 5, 2026. Samantha seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Update on the status of Pottapaug and O'Loughlin Ponds for boat fishing

Dan Clark updated the committee on plans for the upcoming fishing season. The details are as follows:

- The fishing season is scheduled to begin on Saturday, April 18.
- All people renting boats born after 1989 will be required to produce a boater safety card to attendants at the boat launch areas.
- An update on the swollen bladderwort issue at Pottapaug and O'Loughlin Ponds was given.
 - DCR's mission statement was reiterated: To protect, promote and enhance our common wealth of natural, cultural, and recreational resources for the well-being of all.
 - A public meeting was held on February 2, 2026, and a summary of the opinions, comments, thoughts, and feedback from people at that meeting are as follows:
 - More effort is needed to control the plant
 - DCR should use volunteers to assist
 - What does a reopening plan look like?
 - Why are private boaters being blamed for the problem?
 - Why hasn't DCR consulted with Dr. David Wong from DEP?
 - MWRA ratepayers are trying to take away recreational access
 - If eradication isn't possible, then DCR should figure out a way to allow boaters back onto the pond
 - Pottapaug should be reopened
 - DCR's considerations of the feedback and steps taken after the public meeting are as follows:
 - Consultation:

- DCR and MWRA met with TRC (contractors)
- DCR aquatic biologists conducted an extensive literature review
- DCR aquatic biologists and regional director met with Dr. Wong
- Reviewed the use of volunteers:
 - DCR to implement a program to ask the public to photograph plants that may be swollen bladderwort in new locations
 - Determined volunteers to help harvest the plant not feasible
 - Plant is hard to identify, mixed with other species, fragments easily, and requires specialized training/experience
- DCR aquatic biologists met with Dr. Wong and his feedback is as follows:
 - Eradication possible at O'Loughlin but not Pottapaug
 - Combination of management practices is recommended
 - DASH, dredging
 - Pottapaug is furthest known western population of the plant
 - Plant most likely introduced by boats
 - Boating is a significant risk due to concern about the plant spreading
 - Boating should be prohibited; decontamination is necessary if boats are allowed
 - Offered to continue collaborating; visit Pottapaug
- DCR's plan for the ponds for the 2026 season:
 - Keep Pottapaug and O'Loughlin Ponds closed to boat fishing during the 2026 season.
 - Continue survey, removals and assessments and work with Dr. Wong and other experts to determine density thresholds.
 - Identify potential capital and operational funding sources.
 - Begin design/permitting of on-site Decontamination Station.
 - Implement plan for public involvement to identify plant locations (during flowering period).
- DCR's Pottapaug Pond reopening actions:

- Pre-opening decisions:
 - Measure current plant densities against biological threshold to determine threat of spread.
 - Make sure capital and operational funding is adequate and in place.
- Actions:
 - Ongoing survey and hand harvesting annually in April, May, and June
 - Pre-opening one-time capital investments:
 - Install new fragment barrier below Horseshoe Dam
 - Install floating barriers to delineate exclusion zones
 - Install new check-in station
 - Install new decontamination station
 - Pre-opening ongoing costs:
 - Seasonal attendants and rangers
 - Additional decontamination days (House of Wax), new seals
- Pottapaug Pond: Potential Access Strategy
 - Potential restrictions:
 - No rental boats
 - Pottapaug specific boat seal required to launch
 - No travel between Pottapaug and Quabbin
 - All boats leaving Pottapaug decontaminated
 - No boat travel beyond barriers
 - No boat travel within 100 feet of current shoreline
 - DCR's Pottapaug Pond estimated costs to reopen:
 - Estimated one-time costs:
 - Fragment barrier (\$10,000)
 - Floating barriers, buoys, line (\$20,000)
 - New check-in station (\$25,000)
 - New decontamination station (\$50,000+)
 - New equipment (iPads, Wi-Fi, etc.) (\$5,000)
 - Total: \$110,000+
 - Estimated annual costs:
 - 4 long-term seasonal attendants (\$100,000)
 - Boat seals (\$1,200)
 - 2 seasonal rangers (\$50,000)

- Additional decontamination days (\$10,000)
- Total: \$161,200+
- Grand Total: \$272,200+

A member of the public commented that the plant has been documented in other water bodies in Massachusetts and New Hampshire already. He stated that New Hampshire does not manage for the plant. He noted that he does not support a decontamination program on the pond. He commented that he doesn't believe DCR ever really plans to reopen the pond to boats.

Mike Laprade questioned the need for additional funding for new gate attendants and rangers at the ponds. Dan cited the new activities and protocols for decontamination at the ponds that would require separate staffing than the usual BLA workers. These details have not yet been finalized, just ideas for potential reopening of the ponds.

Janet Sinclair asked if the plant could live in the reservoir in addition to the ponds. Dan answered that it is possible.

Clayton expressed disappointment that the ponds won't be reopened for 2026. It was confirmed that the DCR commissioner signed off on the decision to close the ponds to boats for 2026. He read a statement from the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services: 'Swollen bladderwort is not under active management in New Hampshire. The boom-and-bust nature of this plant means that it rarely, if ever, becomes a problem.' He expressed interest in a future boat seal procedure for Pottapaug Pond.

Whether or not the plant effects water quality was discussed. No research has been conducted on the topic.

A member of the public mentioned Weedoo boats. The company is located out of Florida and is a manufacturer of amphibious work equipment that specializes in weed removal.

Tom Barnes asked about the details of what a decontamination station at BLA3 would look like. Dan answered that ideally it would be a high pressure, hot water, power wash of boats and trailers. Drainage of the water used in decontaminations would also need to be addressed.

The potential to reopen the ponds in future years was discussed. Dan is hopeful that boat fishing on the ponds can be allowed again at some point.

A member of the public commented that he has seen researchers in Quabbin boats on the ponds in the recent past and questioned if they could be spreading the plant. He expressed desire that the ponds be reopened to boats. Dan answered that canoes and kayaks are mostly used for harvesting and removal of the plants.

Tom Lautzenheiser commented that he believes DWSP is sincere in wanting to reopen the ponds to boats in the future.

Discussion of Gene Theroux's gravestone preservation plan for Quabbin Park Cemetery (QPC)

Dan recently met with Gene and updated the committee on his gravestone preservation plan for QPC.

Gene is developing a plan to try and assess the condition of various gravestones and memorials in QPC and then set up a plan for repairs and improvements. He has submitted a plan to DWSP. Dan has proposed \$10,000 for the next fiscal year to be earmarked for cemetery safety, repair, and restoration efforts. Dan envisioned a contract being signed with a preservation specialist to be on call to get work done in QPC as needed.

Member Issues and other items not reasonably anticipated

There was a brief discussion about free speech at public meetings, being allowed to be heard without being interrupted and disrespected, civility, and a potential code of conduct being drafted and voted on for QWAC. A member of the public told Janet Sinclair to 'shut up' earlier in the meeting when she was making a comment.

Eric Weiss brought up the state guidelines for public meetings and open meeting laws in Massachusetts. He offered to research the state guidelines for the next meeting.

Clayton asked about the condition of the gate 8 road to BLA1. Dan answered that the road being prepared as usual and should be in good condition for opening day. Conditions will be monitored throughout the season and maintenance conducted as needed.

Meeting End Time: 7:40 PM

Upcoming QWAC Meetings

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