

Quabbin Watershed Advisory Committee Meeting
June 27th, 2022
7:00 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 (chairperson)

Alternate: Robert Sagan

Trout Unlimited: Jerry Eves

Alternate: Joe Babineau

Quabbin Fisherman's Association: **Clayton Sydla**

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: James Boyko

Alternate: Jane Peirce

Massachusetts Wildlife Federation: **Bill Pula**

Alternate:

New England Sierra Club:

Alternate:

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

Alternate: Gene Theroux

General Public: **Ralph Lapinskas**

Alternate:

DCR staff present: Dan Clark, Justin Gonsor, Brian Keegan, Ken MacKenzie

Members of the public present: Dan Hammock, Andrew Robinson, Scott Robinson, Bob Sagan

Meeting Start Time: 7:03 PM

Approval of Minutes of Meetings on March 21st, 2022

Ralph made a motion to accept the minutes from the QWAC meeting held on March 21st, 2022. Samantha seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

FY23 forestry lot proposals

Brian Keegan presented the proposed FY23 forestry lots for the Quabbin Reservoir watershed.

There are 13 individual proposed lot. Full details of these lots can be found online at:

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/collections/1ee7a33451ac4c87a51df6c871657159?item=1>

Public comments can also be submitted via the above website through August 13th. Each proposed lot can be found on the website and has a plan associated with it that details:

- location of the lot
- proposed goals of the cut
- a general description of the lot
- soil and wetland descriptions
- subwatershed details
- proposed silviculture
- equipment to be used
- a cultural resources assessment
- wildlife/NHESP description
- environmental quality issues
- access issues
- and much more

Tom Lautzenheiser asked about some of the larger proposed openings and how they fit with the STAC report recommendations from 2012. Brian answered that the cuts are a modification from what was recommended. He also mentioned that the report talked about using restorative cuts in certain situations. There was discussion on the remote locations and justifications for the larger cuts. Dan reminded the committee that the STAC report gave recommendations, not policy restrictions. Forest management, in some instances, have been altered in direct

response to the STAC recommendations. Providing transparent, public information on the website for proposed/completed forestry projects has also increased since the STAC report was released.

Website metrics for the watershed forestry website were discussed.

Tom asked if climate change is mentioned in the proposed lot descriptions. Brian answered there is some information related to climate change in the silviculture section for each lot. There is a plan/goal of highlighting forestry objectives that meet climate change considerations.

A forestry tour of the proposed lots will be scheduled at the next QWAC meeting.

For more general information on DCR watershed forestry visit their main website: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/dcr-watershed-forestry-projects>

2022 Quabbin deer hunt plans

Ken Mackenzie presented plans for the 2022 Quabbin deer hunt to the committee.

The 2021 hunting season at Quabbin was detailed.

- New Salem, Pelham, and Hardwick were hunted for the 2-week shotgun season.
- Access was allowed at designated gates for walk-in hunting.
- Access permits were not limited. 640 permits were issued for the three zones.
- Hunters showed no preference for a particular zone. (80%)
- 36-50 deer were harvested.
 - 8-17 deer in New Salem (8-12 in 2020)
 - 17-18 deer in Hardwick (14-16 in 2020)
 - 12-15 deer in Pelham (14 in 2020)
- Deer density via pellet counts were estimated in Feb.-Mar. of 2022. Estimates are as follows:
 - New Salem: 18 deer/mi² with a range of 12-33 deer/mi²
 - Hardwick: 19.6 deer/mi² with a range of 14-36 deer/mi²
 - Quabbin Park: 74.1 deer/mi² with a range of 51-135 deer/mi²

Deer harvest numbers are given in a range due to reporting limitations and the Quabbin specific check stations not being used anymore.

The plan for 2022 is to hunt New Salem, Hardwick, and Pelham during the 2-week shotgun season (walk-in only). The Prescott Peninsula will also be hunted, but as a controlled hunt, which will take place during the second week of shotgun season (Dec. 7-8). The Petersham zone will be rested for the year while hunting Quabbin Park is still an unresolved issue.

As deer densities have declined, the approach to deer management at Quabbin was evaluated. The ‘controlled’ and ‘managed’ aspect of the Quabbin hunt requires a lot of organization and effort that occupies a lot of staff time, money, and energy. With deer densities low, the need for intense, short duration controlled hunts that Quabbin has utilized in the past has passed. Deer management at Quabbin has been moving towards opening Quabbin hunting blocks to regular hunting seasons. Many of the Quabbin blocks have been made accessible by foot to hunters during the regular hunting seasons. However, some areas (e.g., Prescott) may be too large or restricted to provide this type of access. That is why the Prescott is being run as a controlled access hunt this year.

Plans for the Prescott hunt are as follows:

- Hunt would occur over 2 weekdays during the shotgun season (Dec. 7-8)
- Approximately 400 hunters will be chosen by lottery.
- A percentage will get an antlerless permit (after consulting with MassWildlife)
 - In 2017, about 50% of hunters received an antlerless permit.
 - MassWildlife must consider all of zone 6 when allocating permits to Quabbin.
- 2020 Prescott density estimate: 9-23 deer/mi²
- Prescott has been rested since 2017 (5 years)
 - Only 13 deer taken in 2017 (3 does)

An overview of the situation related to hunting Quabbin Park is as follows:

- Quabbin Park was not included in the original controlled hunt plan for Quabbin, and no lethal deer management has occurred there since the 1930s.
- Quabbin Park is over 85% forested and these forests help to ensure the reliable protection of the drinking water supply at Quabbin.
- Electric fencing (1993) was tried in Quabbin Park as an alternative to controlled hunting, it was unsuccessful and was abandoned (1998).
- Deer density estimates indicate densities of 50-90 deer/mi².
- Forest management is conducted in Quabbin Park, but forest regeneration is unreliable and often limited to white pine.

- The Chicopee Valley Aqueduct is located within Quabbin Park and is surrounded by forests with very little understory.

DCR's plan to hunt Quabbin Park, when possible/approved, is as follows:

- Open Quabbin park to controlled hunting.
- Hunting would be by permit only.
- Approximately 100 hunters would be chosen by lottery.
- Every hunter would get a Quabbin Park antlerless permit and have the option to buy a second.
- Hunt would occur over 2 weekdays during the shotgun season.
- Hunt is pending DCR Commissioner approval and public comment period.

Gate 43 paving discussion

Clayton asked how soon the gate 43 road could be repaved. It is the road that leads to Boat Launch Area (BLA) 3. Dan answered that various estimates have been drawn up to repave the road, it would be divided up into 3 sections. The cost for any individual section is more than what is currently available in the budget for FY22 or FY23. One potential option for funding this project would be to tap into upcoming American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) money that will be coming to Massachusetts. Dan also mentioned that he has been tasked by the Trust Board to provide a visual representation of the current road conditions.

Clayton asked about the total cost to repave the road. Dan answered that it was around \$300,000 to repave the first and third sections, ignoring the middle section that is the most recently paved (2011) of the 3 sections.

Clayton suggested crack-sealing the road as soon as possible to prevent from further, immediate deterioration.

Options for getting the repaving project in a future fiscal year budget was discussed. Dan detailed how the overall budget is constructed. It starts with the long list of projects that need to be done. Large projects (which this paving project would be) are pipelined out 2-3 years in advance. The FY23 budget has already been approved and there is no line item in it for gate 43 repaving. It is the operating budget for the year. Any additional funds for a project not in the budget would have to come from the MWRA.

J.R. asked about when it would be possible for this paving project to get a line item in a future budget. Dan would first need to review the large project list for FY24 and FY25.

Clayton made a motion that the committee recommends and supports that the gate 43 road be repaved at the earliest possible opportunity. Samantha seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Whether or not the repaving project tops the list of large, upcoming Quabbin projects was discussed.

Member Issues

Clayton asked about moving the QWAC meeting start time from 7PM to 6:30PM. The notion was discussed. Clayton made a motion to change the meeting start time to 6:30PM. Tom seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Ralph asked for an update on the Quabbin Park Cemetery. Dan gave a general update:

- Major projects over the past couple years have finished
 - New well is installed
 - New irrigation system is up and running
 - Office has been renovated (new roof; lead paint abated; repainted; windows restored)
 - Buildings no longer in use have been demolished
- It has been determined that 125 people are buried in the cemetery that do not have an associated record in our database

Ron asked how the new cashless system at the BLA's is going. Dan answered that it has been working well so far. June 4th was when the official transition to credit/debit only sales happened. If someone shows up without a plastic form of payment, there is a workaround for them. They are given a bill they need to mail in. It is a one-time exception to get them out on the water. BLA staff has appreciated not having handle/count cash anymore.

Ron asked about American chestnut trees at Quabbin. Brian answered that the species has not been officially worked into the watershed forestry plan. However, some areas of the watershed have been planted with hybrid chestnuts.

A member of the public brought up the need for maintenance of some of the bronze plaques at the Quabbin Park Cemetery.

Meeting End Time: 8:44 PM

Upcoming QWAC Meetings:

- Monday, September 19th, 2022, at 6:30 PM – DCR Quabbin Visitor Center, 100 Winsor Dam Road, Belchertown, MA 01007