

Quabbin Watershed Advisory Committee Meeting
June 3rd, 2019
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:

Trout Unlimited: **Jerry Eves**

Alternate: Joe Babineau

Quabbin Fisherman's Association: **Larry Gates**

Alternate: Bill Martell

Worcester County League of Sportsmen: **Ronald Komar**

Alternate:

North Worcester County Quabbin Anglers Association: **Tony Brighenti (vice chairperson)**

Alternate: **Tom Barnes**; Dennis Duguay

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: **Elisa Campbell**

Alternate:

Friends of Quabbin, Inc.: **J.R. Greene**

Alternate: Gene Theroux

General Public: **Ralph Lapinskas**

Alternate:

DCR staff present: Dan Clark, Herm Eck, Justin Gonsor, Brian Keevan, Ken MacKenzie, John Scannell

Members of the public present: Peter Deslauriers, Lexi Dewey, Dan Eaton, Mike Krunklevich, Emily Lapinskas, Mike Laprade, Andrew Robinson, Scott Robinson, Bob Sagan, Bruce Spencer, Clayton Sydla, Steve Ward

Meeting Start Time: 7:03 PM

Approval of Minutes of Meeting on March 4th, 2019

Tony Brighenti made a motion to accept the minutes from the QWAC meeting held on March 4th, 2019. Elisa Campbell seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

2019 Quabbin deer hunt

Ken Mackenzie reviewed the 2018 Quabbin hunt and discussed proposals for the upcoming 2019 hunt.

The 2018 hunt took place on December 6th and 7th. Only hunt zones with an estimated deer density above 15 deer/mi² were hunted. 850 hunters applied to hunt the Petersham and Hardwick zones. 458 hunters were selected (54%). A total of 275 antlerless permits were awarded to hunters (60%). 35 deer were harvested over the two-day hunt (25 bucks; 10 does).

As deer densities at Quabbin have declined, the approach to deer management is being evaluated. The 'controlled' and 'managed' aspect of the Quabbin hunts requires a lot of organization and effort that occupies staff time, money, and energy; it is nearly a year-round effort. Results of the Division's pellet group survey indicate deer densities on Quabbin are below those needed to maintain good forest regeneration (approximately 20 deer/mi²) and very similar to deer densities outside the watershed. With deer densities low, the need for intense, short duration-controlled hunts at Quabbin has passed. In the near future, deer management at Quabbin should be moving towards opening Quabbin hunting blocks to regular hunting seasons. Starting in 2019, the Division plans to explore options to change the way certain zones are hunted at Quabbin.

For the current season, only zones with an estimated deer density above 15 deer/mi² will be hunted (Petersham). Approximately 250 hunters will be chosen by lottery to hunt Petersham (150 will receive an antlerless permit). Additionally, Quabbin Park is being proposed to be added in as an expansion of the controlled

hunt. Approximately 100 hunters would be chosen by lottery to hunt the Park. Each hunter would get a Quabbin Park antlerless permit and have the option to buy a second. As in previous years, each block will be hunted for one, 2-day segment during the second week of shotgun season (Dec 12th and 13th). New Salem, Hardwick, and Prescott will not be hunted in 2019.

Also, The Division will build off the success of last year's Wachusett hunt and is also proposing opening the Pelham zone for the span of the 2-week shotgun season (Dec. 2nd – Dec. 14th). Hunters would park outside the access gates and walk in to hunt. People would apply online for free and there will be no cap on the numbers of permits given out. However, no 'bonus' antlerless tags will be issued. Hunters will have to use a zone 6 tag to harvest a doe.

When the decision was made in 1991 to manage deer populations through regulated hunting, Quabbin Park was excluded because at the time, the agency felt the combination of extensive public use and management restrictions made controlled public hunting a difficult option. Quabbin Park is over 85% forested and these forests help to ensure the reliable protection of the drinking water supply at Quabbin. Forest management is conducted in the Park for the purpose of maintaining a diverse and resilient forest cover for long-term water supply protection, but regeneration has been unreliable. As an alternative to hunting, electric fencing was initiated in 1993 in the Park to try and achieve tree regeneration objectives. The program was unsuccessful and abandoned in 1998. No specific management efforts have been directed at deer since. As a result, the Park has served as a refuge from hunting and supports a high deer population density. Current deer density in the Park is estimated to be between 40-90 deer/mi². Further, the Chicopee Valley Aqueduct (CVA) is located within Quabbin Park and is surrounded by forests with very little understory. The deer density in all areas outside of the Park was substantially reduced within the first few years of the controlled hunt being implemented in 1991. Building upon the continued success of the controlled deer hunts in the rest of the Reservation, the Division feels it is appropriate to revisit how deer are managed in Quabbin Park.

Bruce Spencer asked for information on moose population dynamics in the watershed and if they are affecting forest regeneration. Ken answered that there are signs of local and intense browsing in certain areas of the Reservation but there doesn't appear to be any signs of moose in Quabbin Park. Ralph Lapinskas

asked if the Quabbin moose population is increasing or decreasing. Ken answered that it appears to be steady.

Steve Ward asked if hunters would be allowed to enter Quabbin in places other than the access gates when hunting Pelham off Rt. 202. Ken answered that you should be able to walk in where pull-offs are located but people should not be simply parking on the side of Rt. 202 in general.

A member of the public asked how the proposals will be publicized. Ken answered that information will be published on the website, local media, social media, and wherever possible.

Elisa Campbell asked if the Division will still be able to get moose sighting data from the Pelham hunters. Ken answered the moose survey that gets conducted during the controlled hunts will not be possible for Pelham. Although, it may be possible to send those hunters surveys through the mail, online, or get in touch with them via other means.

Bill Pula asked to what extent the Pelham zone is set to be hunted. Ken answered that the extreme southern end of Pelham (formerly zone E) will not be hunted. Bill also asked if there are plans to close the Park during the 2-day hunt. Ken answered that no decision on that has been made yet.

Elisa Campbell made a motion to support the 2019 Quabbin hunting proposals. Tom Lautzenheiser seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

FY2020 Quabbin forestry lot proposals

Herm Eck presented the four FY2020 proposed forestry projects for Quabbin to the committee. The direct link to the detailed harvest proposals is as follows:
<https://eoea.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=308b040375974ea1b4c69af87fbb8a73>

The first lot (PE-20-2) is located off Jucket Hill Road in Pelham and encompasses 87 acres. Group selection will be the main silviculture used here with openings from around ¼ - 2 acres in size being created. Openings will be irregular in shape as much as possible and will be spaced at least 100' apart. At least 5 square feet of basal area will be retained in most, if not all openings over ½ acre. Historic

features such as stone walls and cellar holes will be avoided and/or protected as per current DWSP policy. Portable bridges will be required for two southern stream crossings. No vernal pools are in the area.

The gypsy moth population was discussed. Herm noted that the egg hatchings seem to be running three weeks late this year. It is unclear how much defoliation of trees will occur over the upcoming season.

The second lot (PE-20-14) is located along the eastern side of Rt. 202 between Shutesbury Road 2 in Pelham and Prescott Road in Shutesbury and encompasses 69 acres. This proposal seeks to accomplish DWSP Forestry's broader goals of forest resistance and resilience through age and species diversity by treating areas with poorly formed white pine, low diversity regeneration, and few age classes. The lot is dominated by eastern white pine, northern red oak, and eastern hemlock. Two vernal pools on the interior of the lot will be buffered consistent with DWSP policy. Most of the proposal will be treated with intermediate (0.3 acre) to larger (2 acre) regeneration openings with retention. Species retained will favor hardwood species currently present in the canopy but missing in the regeneration (northern red and white oak, paper and yellow birch, red maple). Openings will be placed to maximize the release of existing viable white pine regeneration. Areas between regeneration openings will be treated with intermediate thinning to improve the vigor of remaining stock for the next harvest. There are no harvesting restrictions or known cultural resources within the proposed harvest area. No rare species or habitats are known to be within the proposed area.

Steve Ward commented that the website for the FY19 proposals is currently password protected and not able to be viewed by the public. Dan Clark answered that the link will be fixed to not require a password. The direct link to the FY19 watershed forestry projects is as follows:

<https://eoea.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=21072c6a92434c9fbe1a50b8e64a93fe>

The third lot (PR-20-09) is located along the east side of Prescott Brook about 2,000 ft. south of Kelly Hill Road and 500 feet Prescott Brook Road on the Prescott Peninsula. The lot covers 152 acres. An extended period of no forest management is the primary reason for selecting the proposal area. The purpose of the proposed project is to broaden the diversity of structure and species, so the

forest is poised to weather the challenges brought by climate change. The entire area is covered with high canopy forest. There has been heavy mortality of the oak, likely due to gypsy moth, the extent of which became apparent upon full leaf out (May 2019). The goal of the proposed silviculture is to create a new forest age class that is identifiable and free to grow. Larger openings would be sited in drier soil types that historically exhibit a higher probability of more diverse and timely regeneration capacity. All foundations located near harvest operations will be flagged and protected. Stone walls will be flagged and avoided as much as possible. Existing barways will be used where feasible and harvest layout will protect walls as much as possible. NHESP has determined that certain state-listed sensitive species or habitats may exist within the lot proposal area. DWSP will coordinate with NHESP and follow recommendations to protect these species during the proposed activity.

Jane Peirce asked for additional information regarding filter strips and why logging will be done in those areas. Herm Eck answered that most of the logging done in the filter strip would be to create stream crossings. Quabbin's filter strip can be variable in size depending on the slope along the shoreline. Chapter 132 best management practices (BMP's) are followed. The law states that you can cut up to 50% of a filter strip. Bill Pula added that logging equipment is not allowed to be used in the filter strip, but general cutting is permitted. Tom Lautzenheiser and Elisa Campbell commented that it is important for DCR-DWSP to have a well explained reasoning, in clear language, that describes why logging in the filter strip is warranted.

The fourth lot (PR-20-19) between Fish Hill Road and Barnes Road along the west side of North Prescott Road (gate 20) on the Prescott Peninsula. The lot covers 154 acres. The area has been selected to continue fostering diversity of forest composition. There will be no more than two stream crossings. Broadly, the primary goal is to foster young forest development. It will be achieved by creating canopy openings that allow young forest to develop unencumbered by direct overstory shade. The proposal area may end up as two separate projects with different harvesting systems. The northern half may need a chipping operation to reasonably handle the significant stocking of poor-quality timber. Like the previous lot, NHESP has determined that certain state-listed sensitive species or habitats may exist within the lot proposal area.

Separate from the four lot proposals, oak salvage was discussed. A combination of stresses from a multi-year drought, repeated gypsy moth defoliation events, and outbreaks of native boring beetles has resulted in widespread oak mortality throughout the Quabbin and Ware River forests. While a large amount of the dead oak will remain in place to add to wildlife habitat and forest structural diversity, DWSP intends to temporarily shift its forest management focus to harvesting in areas of significant oak mortality. All DWSP standard management policies apply to these salvage operations. The DCR Commissioner will need to approve any salvage work that will create openings >5 acres as is the case for other DWSP silvicultural operations. There will be an accelerated proposal and sale schedule of these areas.

Bruce Spencer asked for more information about the guidelines regarding the salvage process. Herm Eck answered that the goal of the salvage operations is to harvest trees that are dead or will be dead within a reasonable amount of time. DCR foresters do their best to make those projections. Steve Ward asked how the oak salvage is factored into the sub-watershed analysis. DCR is allowed to harvest up to 25% of the acreage in any given sub-watershed. Herm Eck answered that it hasn't been an issue since the salvage lots are so scattered across the watershed and the current projects fall well below 25% in any sub-watershed. Tom Lautzenheiser reiterated his encouragement that DCR provide clear, written justifications for the salvage lot cutting proposals.

Elisa Campbell asked about the hemlock wooly adelgid population. Herm Eck answered that there seems to be less adelgid activity in the forest and hemlock trees in some parts of the state are responding positively.

A public tour of the proposed Quabbin watershed forestry projects was scheduled for Wednesday, June 19th at 4PM. Everyone will meet at the former DCR building on Elm Street in New Salem.

General Quabbin updates

Dan Clark updated the committee on current and upcoming Quabbin projects.

The new boat launch area (BLA) check in/out process is going well; kinks are being worked out. BLA attendants are now using digital scanners linked to iPads that can record peoples boat seal electronically. Larry Gates added that private

boaters can take a picture of the qr code on their boater ID card with a smartphone and the scanners are able to read the code off the photo on their smartphone.

DCR Bureau of Forestry has some leftover money that has been given to DCR-DWSP to cut down hazard trees in the Quabbin Park Cemetery. 66 trees are marked to be harvested.

The Massachusetts Open Meeting Law was discussed. According to the law, it requires public bodies to create and approve minutes within a timely manner. Which is defined as within the next three meetings or 30 days from the date of the last meeting, whichever is later. If a member of the public makes a specific request to view the minutes, they should be provided within ten days of the request, even if they are in draft form and haven't been approved by the committee.

Member Issues

Elisa Campbell commented that her term on the DCR Stewardship Council has recently come to an end. As of her term ending, all current members live in the eastern part of the state. There are presently a few open positions on the council.

J.R. Greene stated DCR underspent their budget by roughly \$500,000 for the 2019 fiscal year and questioned why that was the case. John Scannell answered that the two biggest areas of underspending were two building projects that got proposed but didn't move forward and that the remainder of the underspending came from unfilled positions. At the beginning of January there were 22 open vacancies out of 157 full time equivalents in DWSP. 20 of those positions have been filled with another 7 going through the hiring process. J.R. Greene also stated that the Massachusetts Water Resource Authority (MWRA) advisory board suggested cutting the FY2020 budget by \$500,000 as a result of the underspending from the previous year. John Scannell clarified that the DWSP budget as proposed for FY2020 does not include a \$500,000 cut; the MWRA board proposal mirrors DWSP's as this point as well.

J.R. Greene asked about the Quabbin Park Cemetery budget for FY2020 and how it compares to the previous year. John Scannell answered that there isn't a dedicated cemetery maintenance account but within the overall budget is a

general maintenance account where funds can be allocated to cemetery work. There are no major cemetery projects programmed into the upcoming fiscal year budget.

J.R. Greene asked for more information on how the budget process works and how money can be shifted from one area to another. John Scannell answered that in general, a budget is proposed, that money is then spent throughout the year, and what ends up not being spent goes back to the rate payers; the budget is not revolving. If need be, DWPS can go to the Trust Board during the year to propose moving money from one portion of the budget to another.

Tom Lautzenheiser commented that House Bill H.897 is currently under consideration in the Massachusetts state legislature. It is an act relative to forest protection and Susannah Whipps is the bill's sponsor. Mass Audubon has no formal position on the bill. Tom stated that the bill would effectively move DCR lands from the current reserves/forests/parks designations to all reserves. He believes it includes watershed lands as well and was largely written by the group 'Save Massachusetts Forests', which has been largely critical of DCR's forest practices in the past.

Larry Gates asked about the status of the restrooms at BLA3. Dan Clark answered that there have been issues with the restrooms this past season and a service call has been put in with the state DCR plumber to come out and investigate the issue. An additional portable toilet has been placed on site in the interim. Larry stated that the seasonal portable toilets that get delivered along the reservoir shoreline for the fishing season didn't get put out in time for opening day. Dan answered that due to wet conditions, the roads weren't in good enough shape to be driven on; the toilets were all recently delivered or will be soon. Larry also commented on the BLA fishing report that gets produced annually at Quabbin. Recent reports have left out the statistic about how many visitors come from out of state and he would appreciate that information being tallied going forward.

Bill Pula followed up on discussion from the last meeting about the Massachusetts Wildlife Federation being disbanded as an organization. He recently spoke with the chairman of the Fish and Wildlife Board, who told him that there is still a National Wildlife Federation. Fish and Wildlife has a representative on the national organization and would like Bill to continue representing them on QWAC.

There was discussion about the enabling QWAC legislation listing the Massachusetts Wildlife Federation as the representative group, not the national group.

J.R. Greene made a motion that QWAC petition to have the seat designated to the Massachusetts Wildlife Federation be changed to the National Wildlife Federation. Ralph Lapinskas seconded the motion. There was discussion on the merits of the motion and if any other groups that are represented on QWAC need to be altered/updated. Steve Ward commented that the MA Division of Fisheries and Wildlife does not have a seat on QWAC. 6 voted in favor of the motion, 4 against. The motion passed. Bill Pula abstained from voting.

Tom Berube commented that Bob Durand was recently appointed to the Massachusetts Fisheries and Wildlife Board.

Steve Ward asked for information about the remediation effort that was set to happen at a Pelham forestry lot last year. The topic was discussed at a past meeting. The site had gotten rutted out from equipment being used in wet conditions. Herm Eck answered that a mini excavator was used last fall to begin the process, but wet conditions have stalled restoration progress. As conditions dry up more work will be completed.

Meeting End Time: 8:49 PM

Upcoming QWAC Meetings:

- Monday, September 9th, 2019 at 7PM – DCR Quabbin Visitor Center, 100 Winsor Dam Road, Belchertown, MA 01007