

Quabbin Watershed Advisory Committee Meeting
June 5, 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: **Richard Taupier**

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, Hillary Siener

Members of the public present: Lexi Dewey, Andrew Robinson, Scott Robinson, Eric Weiss

Meeting Start Time: 6:35 PM

Approval of minutes from meeting on March 20, 2023

Ralph made a motion to accept the minutes from the QWAC meeting held on March 20, 2023, with edits. Clayton seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

2023 Quabbin deer hunt plans

Hillary Siener gave an overview to the committee on the 2022 Quabbin deer management plan as well as plans for 2023.

Four zones were open to hunting in 2022.

- Prescott
 - 2-day controlled hunt (Dec. 7-8)
 - 565 applications; 397 hunters selected via lottery.
 - 337 were eligible to hunt after completing their knowledge check.
 - Two scouting days were held in mid-November for eligible hunters.
 - Permitted hunters could drive in on all accessible roads during the hunt.
 - 250 antlerless deer permits (ADPs) were available.
- Hardwick, New Salem, and Pelham
 - Zones were open for the two-week shotgun season.
 - 618 hunters received a permit for shotgun season.
 - We offered a single permit that allowed hunters access to all three zones.
 - 500 ADPs were available.

Harvest results were as follows:

- Prescott (last hunted in 2017)
 - 47 deer harvested (16 females (34%); 31 males)
 - Roughly 2.5 deer/mi² removed during hunt
 - 298 hunters participated in at least one day of the hunt (88% of those eligible).
- Pelham
 - Between 7-14 deer were harvested (3 female)
 - 2023 pellet count: 21.8 deer/mi² (range: 15-40 deer/mi²)
- Hardwick
 - Between 13-23 deer were harvested (9 confirmed female)
 - 2022 pellet count: 19.6 deer/mi² (range: 14-36 deer/mi²)
- New Salem
 - Between 15-19 deer were harvested (7 confirmed female)
 - 2022 pellet count: 18 deer/mi² (range: 12-33 deer/mi²)

Harvests for Pelham, Hardwick, and New Salem shown as a range because without DCR's on site check stations, we must rely on reviewing data in the MassWildlife database. State-issued buck tags are used at Quabbin and not all hunters may

indicate if they harvested a deer in Quabbin when they report it to the MassWildlife harvest database. Antlerless deer are different because a Quabbin specific ADP is required to harvest a doe or other antlerless deer so those numbers are easy to extrapolate. Out of an abundance of caution, the numbers are presented as a range. Pellet counts indicate the deer population is right around the recommended sustainable density threshold.

2023 plans are as follows:

- Prescott zone
 - Two-day controlled hunt to continue reducing deer density.
 - One antlerless permit/hunter.
 - About 390 hunters will be selected via lottery.
 - The deer population will be reassessed after 2024 pellet count surveys.
- Petersham zone (not hunted since 2019)
 - Two-day controlled hunt.
 - 2021 deer density: 10.1 (7-18) deer/mi²
 - One antlerless permit/hunter.
 - About 250 hunters will be selected via lottery.
- Pelham, New Salem, and Hardwick zones
 - Will continue with 2-week shotgun season hunts (Nov. 27 – Dec. 9).
 - Quabbin shotgun season access permits will be issued.
 - One permit grants access to all three zones.
 - No cap on number of permits given out.
 - One antlerless permit/hunter.
 - Hunters walk-in from gates; some limited drive-in access will be accommodated.

Quabbin Park has still not been hunted:

- The park was a proposed hunting zone in 2019 and was approved before being pulled.
- Quabbin Park was not included in the original hunt plan of the 1990's because agency felt extensive public use and management restrictions made controlled hunting a challenge.
- No deer management has occurred in the park since 1930's.
- Electric fencing tried as an alternative in 1993, was unsuccessful and abandoned in 1998.
- Deer density estimates: 30-75 deer/mi².

- Forest management has been conducted in the park, but regeneration has been unreliable.
- Recommendations for the park remain the same; DWSP would like to open the park to controlled hunting.
 - About 100 hunters would be permitted.
 - Every hunter would get an antlerless permit, with option to purchase a second.
 - Hunt would be pending DCR commissioner approval.
 - DWSP is prepared to move forward with the hunt this year if approved.

Tom Barnes asked about what time of year the pellet counts are conducted. Hillary answered that they are done after snow melts.

Keystone bridge update

Dan updated the committee on the status of the Keystone Bridge.

DCR has a bridge contract. A company was brought in to give an assessment of the bridge and see if they could complete repair work. They passed on taking on the project.

Options are limited. DCR also has a paving contractor, the paving contractor uses a stone subcontractor, they are being asked to take on the work. They have not yet been out to the site to assess.

J.R. reminded everyone that the Friends of Quabbin spent \$15,000 to hire a bridge consultant to complete a report on the status of the bridge, repair options, etc.

Forestry/Ranger station buildings status

Dan updated the committee on the status of decommissioning the forestry and ranger station buildings.

The rangers have vacated their station and have been relocated to the administration building.

Both buildings are two separate projects/contracts and will move forward independently. The next step will be to submit a project notification form to the MA Historical Commission.

Status of gate 43 road repaving project

Dan updated the committee on the status of the gate 43 road repaving project.

The money for the project has made it to the DCR account. DCR has a single-source contract for paving. The contract itself has a cap. The cap is being approached. The whole agency uses the same contract, there are other projects in front of the gate 43 project that need to be completed before June 30 (when the fiscal year ends). DWSP is not in charge of the contract. Gate 43 project cannot be started before a new contract is issued. A new contract should be issued on/around July 1. Dan will do his best to get the gate 43 project scheduled once the new contract is approved. It's possible the project could happen around September/October, after the fishing season c. es, or wait until next spring (hopefully before the fishing season begins).

Clayton spoke about damage to his vehicle/boat, as well as others, due to the road conditions on gate 43.

Lack of power at that gate (BLA3) causing closure of restroom

Dan spoke about an issue that came up at the beginning of the fishing season at BLA3. Their battery back was not holding a charge which resulted in them losing power and needing to run on generators. A photo voltaic specialist suggested jump starting the battery cells, which seems to have cleared up the problem. BLA3 should be back to being fully operational by the coming weekend with bathrooms open.

Condition of gate 8 access road

Dan updated the committee on the condition of the gate 8 road to BLA1.

A giant roller was rented in the off season and was used on the road to press/compact the dirt/stones. There is still one section that is wash boarded. Some additional material/rocks have been purchased for the road, like what is currently on the road. The supplier was notified about problems with the previous material being too sharp. They suggested not just laying the material down on top of the road, but that it should be mixed with gravel/dirt first, and then laid down. A test patch will be completed on the road to be evaluated on how well it works. If it goes well, the same process will be used to repair/upgrade other sections of the road as needed.

Clayton commented that the new material/rocks do seem sharp. He also mentioned that using the roller on the road worked out well.

Mike Laprade commented on how dry/dusty the road gets during certain times of the year, potentially damaging fishing equipment. Large dust clouds get shot up into the air. It appears this is simply something that happens on dirt roads when conditions are dry, however unpleasant.

Member Issues

Dan spoke about the official process to join QWAC. He reminded everyone of the statutory regulations for the group. As written, to be appointed as a primary representative for one of the groups on QWAC, a letter should be sent to Dan detailing the QWAC nomination/appointment. The process is then for Dan to send that letter to the DCR commissioner for final approval. In the past, it has been a challenge to get a response from the commissioner. To be appointed as an alternate representative on QWAC, commissioner approval is not needed. The committee simply needs to vote to accept them to QWAC.

Eric Weiss spoke about his interest in joining QWAC as the general public alternate member. He made a brief statement. He has lived in Belchertown for decades, uses the reservoir, and is known by the Quabbin rangers to help them in reporting any illegal activity he sees on the watershed. He has served on many committees in the past. He loves the area and has an engineering background. He would like to help preserve the Quabbin for future generations. He also has a recommendation from Senator Oliveira.

Ralph made a motion to appoint Eric Weiss as the general public alternate representative to QWAC. Tom Barnes seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Dan commented on forest management on state lands in Massachusetts. An official announcement is expected in the next week from the EEA secretary regarding forest management on state lands going forward. QWAC had previously drafted a letter in support of forest management on water supply lands and sent it along to the relevant parties in the state. It does not appear a response was sent back to QWAC.

Clayton spoke about the visitor center dedication that happened on June 4. The visitor center was officially renamed as the DCR Les and Terry Campbell Quabbin Visitor Center.

Clayton spoke about the dock at BLA2 that was missing booms to protect the sides of boats. He commended Dan for directing his staff to get the booms installed. Boaters have been thrilled with the protective booms. He passed around photos showing the changes.

Tom Barnes asked about if the invasive plant survey has started. Dan answered that it has not.

Ralph asked for an update on Quabbin Park Cemetery (QPC) GIS project, getting grave info posted online, etc. Dan reminded everyone that there is lots of information on the QPC website that is searchable by the public:

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/quabbin-park-cemetery>

QPC lots and graves viewer: <https://mass-eoeaa.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=3e3bc15a593749338217e3d849c055d2>

QPC expanded deed and lot viewer:

<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/f95c77e1f522469eb928931925e392bd>

A complete summary on QPC records is attached at the end of these minutes.

Richard Taupier introduced himself. He is the current president of Trout Unlimited and has been appointed by that group to replace Jerry Eves as their primary representative on QWAC. He is one of the founding members of the Friends of Quabbin along with Paul Godfrey. He has lived around the watershed for decades.

Meeting End Time: 7:30 PM

Upcoming QWAC Meetings:

- Monday, September 18, 2023, at 6:30 PM – DCR Quabbin Visitor Center, 100 Winsor Dam Road, Belchertown, MA 01007



Quabbin Park Cemetery Records – Summary of Efforts and Current Status

There are several sources of information related to the Quabbin Park Cemetery (QPC). When the cemetery was constructed and individuals were being transferred to the cemetery, 4x6 cards were created. Orange cards are ownership cards for each lot, while white cards are the original burial cards:

CEMETERY RECORD—LOT OWNERSHIP
OWNER OR REPRESENTATIVE ADDRESS
ORIGINAL CEMETERY NEW CEMETERY
BLOCK NO. LOT NO. NO. BURIALS GRAVE NOS.
LOT DIMENS. PERPETUAL CARE
MONS. HDSTNS. MARKERS PHOTO NO.
PLAN ACC. PHOTO NO. REMOVAL DATE DEED RECORDED NO. DATE BOOK PAGE
RELEASE NO. DATE REMARKS
OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES
NAME ADDRESS
METR. DISTR. WATER SUPPLY COMMISSION FORM B3, 1500-9-'39, NO. 8134 (CONTINUE ON REVERSE SIDE)

METROPOLITAN DISTRICT COMMISSION — DIVISION OF WATERSHED MGT.
CEMETERY RECORD
ORIGINAL INTERMENT IN QUABBIN PARK CEMETERY

Name of Deceased
Date of Death Age Years Months Days
Date of Interment Box Size
Undertaker
Block No. Lot No. Grave No. Deed No. Q-
Lot Representative
Address
Remarks

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS · EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS
Department of Conservation and Recreation
251 Causeway Street, Suite 600
Boston, MA 02114-2199
617-626-1250 617-626-1351 Fax
www.mass.gov/dcr
Maura T. Healey Governor
Rebecca L. Tepper, Secretary
Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs
Kimberley Driscoll Lt. Governor
Brian Arrigo, Commissioner
Department of Conservation & Recreation

In addition, there are deed record books that contain the deeds (transfer of ownership from MDWSC/MDC/DCR to individuals) for all QPC graves, and these are referenced by a specific “Q” number. Finally, there are various paper files associated with each person or family buried in the Cemetery. These paper files are contained in several large filing cabinets at the Quabbin Administration Building (QAB), and within each individual file is a variety of information including correspondence between the agency and individual, hand-drawn maps, lot representative information, etc.

For some of the information (ownership cards, burial cards), there is a duplicate set of records in DCR’s archival collections at the Massachusetts State Archives. These represent the “Boston Office” duplicate set that were maintained between the 1930s and 2003. However, the original paper files in the filing cabinets only exist in the QAB.

Over the last 75+ years, many different staff have been involved in the management and record maintenance of the Quabbin Park Cemetery, and as a result, some of the files were misplaced, never recorded, or lost. Recognizing the vulnerability of the paper records, DCR has made several attempts to digitize everything. Around 2008, DCR contracted with Gravoc Company to digitize existing cemetery records and develop an independent cemetery records management system. Gravoc digitized the cemetery records (Interment Date, Interment Name, Interment Location) and scanned the original ownership and interment cards. Each cemetery record was linked to its scanned cards. Unfortunately, the software was never used, and over time the proprietary software stopped working. No records from 2008-2023 were ever entered into the system, and traditional paper records were maintained.

In 2020, DCR contracted with the Gravoc Company to export records from the original database and the associated scanned images into an Excel spreadsheet that could be imported into an ArcGIS platform. These exported data supplemented existing work by the GIS analyst to create an authoritative Cemetery database. The result of this effort was to create several spatial based databases to be accessible by the public and internal DCR staff.

These include a QPC lot and grave viewer:

<https://mass-eoea.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=3e3bc15a593749338217e3d849c055d2>

Visitors to this website can search interments by Name of Deceased using a query tool. Searches can also be conducted using Deed Lots by Owner Name, Deed Lot Number or Deed Number. Finally, viewers can select Map Feature and data associated with the selected features can be exported in CVS format from the Attributes table.

More recently, an expanded deed and lot viewer was created by the GIS analyst:

<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/f95c77e1f522469eb928931925e392bd>

This application allows the viewer to search for ownership of deeds and lots, search for burials by name and display the original burial card and map of grave location, search for burials transferred from

the 37 former cemeteries to locations other than Quabbin Park Cemetery, apply for permit to clean cemetery stonework, and also use the existing Lots and Graves viewer.

In 2022, a new project was begun to scan all the individual files in the filing cabinets at QAB. These files represent the final piece of information that needs to be digitized. The contents of each file are being scanned into .pdf format and organized by last name. These digital files will be accessible to DCR staff and will provide redundancy for the paper files.

Missing records

After the Gravoc database was integrated into DCR's own digital database, 304 names could not be accounted for in the database. Through a process of quality control, information (grave and burial cards) was obtained on 228 of 304 records. In addition, 7 records were identified as having been moved out of the QPC, and 34 records were only memorials (no person was buried in QPC). The remaining 35 records were missing burial cards, and it was impossible to determine if the individual had in fact been buried in QPC.

These 35 records were cross-referenced with the Boston set of records, and 1 additional record was located. There are 8654 interments in QPC, and only 34 records are missing, which is only 0.4% of the entire database. The database is at least 99.6% accurate.

Going forward, DCR staff will inspect each paper file before it is scanned to determine if any burial cards were accidentally misplaced. It is possible that some of the missing 34 records could be located during this effort.