

Quabbin Watershed Advisory Committee Meeting
September 16, 2024
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; Jerry Eves

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: Janet Sinclair

Alternate:

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

Alternate: Gene Theroux

General Public: **Ralph Lapinskas**

Alternate: **Eric Weiss**

DCR staff present: Ken Canfield, Dan Clark, Justin Gonsor, Brian Keegan, Patrick Maher, John Scannell, Christian Smith

Members of the public present: Leonard Crossman, Lexi Dewey, Dave Korash, Chris Perna, Andrew Robinson, Scott Robinson, Moussa Siri

Meeting Start Time: 6:35 PM

Dan Clark gave several QWAC members a brief tour of the decommissioned ranger station on Blue Meadow Road prior to the start of the official meeting.

Approval of minutes from meeting on Monday, June 3, 2024

Ralph made a motion to accept the minutes from the QWAC meeting held on June 3, 2024. Ron seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

FY25 DCR-DWSP Forestry Lot Proposal – Ken Canfield presentation

Chief Forester Ken Canfield presented the DCR-DWSP FY25 forestry lot proposals. The details of his presentation is as follows:

- There has been a logging moratorium since the Healey Administration took office. Since then, the Commonwealth's Forests as Climate Solutions (FACS) initiative evaluated DWSP's forestry program. Results were as follows:
 - 52 previously approved proposals were reviewed
 - 27 proposals were in alignment with CFC report
 - 11 proposals needed adjustments
 - 6 proposals were paused for review of habitat and salvage
 - 8 proposals were abandoned
- DCR-DWSP has created a new online, interactive map that features all the watershed forestry projects and their details.
 - The QR code on the right links to the interactive map, FY25 forestry proposals, links to the public comments form, has information about past and current harvests, contact information, and links to other DCR sites.
- DCR-DWSP FY25 harvest proposal information
 - Months long process – outlined in Land Management Plan (LMP)
 - Mapping, measuring, and write up is done by DCR forester
 - Internal review by staff
 - Public review and comment period
 - Variable timeframe after approval
- DCR-DWSP FY25 proposed forestry lot information (10 proposals in total)
 - Hardwick proposal
 - HA-25-05
 - West of gate 48 (no longer in use); Inside gate 49, East Street to Devils Kitchen Road
 - 90.5-acre footprint
 - Scattered remnant red pine plantation, oak and white pine oak
 - Overstory removal, group selection, thinning



- Pelham proposal
 - PE-25-09
 - Gate 11; south of Pelham Hollow Road, east of Governors Woods Road
 - 67-acre footprint
 - White pine/hardwood and white pine/oak
 - Group selection, thinning, shelterwood
- Shutesbury proposals
 - PE-25-14
 - Between Town Farm Road and Prescott Road
 - 70-acre footprint
 - White pine/hardwood, oak/hardwood, heavy browse
 - Two 5-acre openings, one with a slashwall, group selection, thinning
 - NS-25-02
 - Gate SH4; between Camel Brook and Cooleyville Road
 - 77-acre footprint
 - White pine/hemlock, white pine/oak
 - Group selection, thinning
 - NS-25-09
 - Gate WN-1; New Boston Road; New England Trail
 - 81-acre footprint
 - Hemlock/hardwood, white pine/hemlock
 - Seed tree, group selection, thinning
- New Salem proposals
 - NS-25-12
 - Gate 25; South Main Street
 - 118.7-acre footprint
 - Hemlock/hardwood, red oak, mixed oak
 - Group selection, thinning
 - PR-25-13
 - Prescott Peninsula; Gate 17, south of Pelham Road
 - 144-acre footprint
 - White pine/hardwood
 - Group selection
- New Salem/Petersham proposals
 - NS-25-BFA3
 - Gays Hill Barrens; Focus area is north of Rt. 122

- 37.6-acre footprint
- Mixed oak, white pine/oak
- Retain healthy pitch pine and oak, like a shelterwood preparation, variable retention
- PT-25-04
 - Gate 39; Doubleday Village Road
 - 68.2-acre footprint
 - Oak/hardwood, white pine/hardwood
 - Group selection, thinning
- Petersham proposal
 - PT-25-09
 - Gate 39; Camels Hump Road
 - 112.3-acre footprint
 - Mixed oak, oak/hardwood, white pine/hardwood
 - Group selection, thinning

Additional questions or comments related to the proposed lots or forestry program in general can be directed to Ken via email Kenneth.canfield@mass.gov or phone (857-274-7090).

DCR notifies the board of selectmen in any given town where a forestry operation is proposed. Town selectboards are also notified when a proposal is approved.

Tom Lautzenheiser was complimentary of DCR for their increased transparency of the watershed forestry program.

DCR offered twice to give tours of the proposed lots to anyone who was interested; no interest expressed by QWAC or any audience members.

Discussion – herbicide use in forestry program

Bill Pula expressed concern over the use of herbicides on the watershed and didn't feel that it could really help improve things on a large-scale basis. He questioned if restrictions would be put in place for use near the water. He believes it to be a bad idea and doesn't support herbicide use on native or invasive species.

The 2017 Land Management Plan was discussed. Bill Pula mentioned that there was a carve out in that plan to allow for herbicide use if a new invasive species was discovered and herbicide use deemed necessary to control it.

Dan Clark commented that that DCR is currently drafting a Terrestrial Invasive Species Plan. That plan would address herbicide use on watershed lands. At some point the invasives plan will come up for review and public comment. The herbicide use discussion will be tabled until more specific details are available.

Dan also mentioned that DWSP is following the terrestrial invasive species strategy laid out in 2011, which does allow for herbicide use. For example, herbicides have been used in the Ware River Watershed on a limited basis.

Progress on clearing Pelham and Enfield Lookouts

J.R. asked for an update on the status of clearing the Pelham and Enfield Lookouts. He would like to see improvements made to the view as trees have grown in significantly over the years.

Ken Canfield commented that the Enfield Lookout area features a major stream and improving the view would mean cutting trees on both sides of that stream, potentially leading to increased erosion and sediment loading into the reservoir. It is also close to the reservoir in a riparian zone.

Ken also commented on the Pelham lookout. It is over a mile from the lookout to the shore and clearing trees for miles to get a better view of the reservoir doesn't seem practical.

Dan commented that it would take a significant harvest to clear the multiple acres of trees needed to reclaim the view at the Pelham Lookout. He feels that although the view is different that it was 25 years ago or more, it is still a great view of the reservoir. There is no current plan to try and restore that view to was it was decades ago.

Tom Lautzenheiser spoke about how the lookouts could be an educational/interpretive opportunity to show how the landscape has changed and evolved since the reservoir was created.

There was discussion on a couple different ways that minimal alterations could be made at the Enfield Lookout to significantly improve the view rather than cutting down large swathes of trees.

Condition of gate 8 road – still some tires being flattened

Clayton Sydla spoke about the condition of the gate 8 road. It has been mostly in great shape throughout the season, and he thanked Dan for that. The road has been

graded/maintained throughout the season. He was fishing at gate 8 recently and did see someone who had gotten a flat tire from a very sharp stone on the road. This was an outlier example; continuous monitoring of the road has kept flat tires to a minimum this season.

Gate 43 road was successfully repaved in May.

Report on contractor treatment at O'Loughlin and Pottapaug Ponds

Dan gave a general update on the invasive plant issue at the ponds. Swollen bladderwort was found in 2023. 2024 preparations included MWRA hiring a contractor to survey both ponds and capture the extent and density of the plant. June and July were spent hand harvesting the plant from the ponds. DWSP is waiting for the contractor's final report, their efforts will be summarized, and they will make recommendations. Quabbin staff will then convene internally to discuss plans for the 2025 season.

Member Issues

Elena was one of the members who took the tour of ranger station. She asked if decommissioning that building has allowed for DCR to address maintenance issues at the administration building. Dan answered that they are in the process of replacing every window in the building (114 windows), it is roughly a \$1,500,000 project. There are plans to replace the roof and all chimneys on the building, roughly a \$2,000,000 project. They are also in the early stages of contracting out a consultant to conduct a renovation study of the building. They will come up with recommendations on how proceed forward. In theory, the renovation of the building would follow that study. DCR is trying to invest significantly in the long-term capital improvement of the administration building.

Elena asked about the status of the observation tower and keystone bridge. Swift River Valley Historical Society (SRVHS) supports DCR putting more money toward those projects. The observation tower being a real for visitors and a showcase to the public was mentioned. Dan answered that an internal meeting recently happened to discuss next steps with the bridge. DCR is committed to some aspect of remediation at the bridge. The plan is to try and reinforce the slumping side. This would be a partnership with DCR and FOQ to hire a dry-stone mason and reinforce the wall where it is slumping to try and prevent and further slumping. DCR did commit between \$25,000-\$50,000 during the last fiscal year for tree removal at the site. DCR is committed to completing all the permitting for the project. The observation tower has structural deficiencies that need to be addressed before it can be reopened to the public. To correct those deficiencies, it

would be between a \$1,000,000-\$3,000,000 project. DCR-DWSP does not have a capital budget, they have an operating budget. Major projects are fit in when/where possible, but it would take around 5 years' worth of major projects budget to come up with \$1,000,000. The observation tower work can't be done through the operating budget, it needs a capital investment. Who would invest that money is unclear now.

Clayton mentioned that on August 17th, Quabbin Fisherman's Association with New England Adventures held an event at BLA1 where they took veteran's fishing. This was 3rd year in a row the event was held and he thanked Dan for allowing the event to be held at Quabbin.

Clayton asked about the status of the restrooms at the observation tower. Dan answered that the plan is get them reopened. There were complications in making that happen; some minor upgrades are needed related to the plumbing.

Bill Pula brought up MWRA's recent study of watershed abutting communities to Quabbin in the central part of the state. Jo Comerford and Aaron Saunders are currently working on legislation that would result in these towns getting more compensation from MWRA going forward. Bill has been getting in touch with the town select boards to make them aware and help organize to towns as a united front.

Tom Lautzenheiser asked about a recent Sierra Club hosted walk that happened at Quabbin. The club was issued a group access permit for their walk. It was mentioned that around 50 people attended and that the Sierra Club has a stance, in general, of being against the watershed forestry program at Quabbin.

A member of the public asked the potential for syncing the opening/closing days for the fishing season at Quabbin to match the Wachusett fishing season schedule. Dan answered that the issue was discussed internally, but no formal decisions came out of that meeting. It could be considered in the future.

J.R. let everyone know that letters did go out on behalf of QWAC to local town selectboards and representatives alerting regarding the watershed rangers not having many enforcement capabilities. Clayton commented that the Ware selectboard voted 'no' in support of changing the ranger enforcement capacity.

Meeting End Time: 8:00 PM

Upcoming QWAC Meetings:

- Monday, December 2, 2024, at 6:30 PM – DCR Les and Terry Campbell
Quabbin Visitor Center, 100 Winsor Dam Road, Belchertown, MA 01007