

Quabbin Watershed Advisory Committee Meeting
September 9th, 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, Justin Gonsor

Members of the public present: Bob Sagan, Steve Ward

Meeting Start Time: 7:01 PM

Approval of Minutes of Meeting on March 4th, 2019

Larry Gates made a motion to accept the minutes from the QWAC meeting held on June 3rd, 2019. J.R. Greene seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

General Quabbin updates

Dan Clark updated the committee on upcoming events and ongoing topics.

Deer Hunt

The Quabbin controlled deer hunt lottery drawings for the Petersham and Park zones are set for Wednesday, September 11th.

The plan is to close Quabbin Park to the general public during the Park hunt (Dec. 5th and 6th). The Park hunting boundaries were discussed. No hunting would occur along Blue Meadow Road or Winsor Dam. All hunters would check in and out via the east gate along Route 9.

The Petersham zone will be hunted on Dec. 12th and 13th.

Pelham is set to be open to walk-in hunting for white-tailed deer during the 2-week shotgun season in December. People will apply online to be registered as a Pelham hunter and receive their access permit and hunt information packet via email. All Pelham hunters will have the chance to win a Quabbin specific antlerless tag. There was discussion of potentially opening gate 8 to allow hunter access by vehicle an additional mile or so down the road to the check-in shack.

Division of Water Supply Protection regulations are being updated this year. DCR is proposing that deer hunting regulations on watershed lands be more flexible and give them the opportunity to get more in line with statewide deer hunting regulations.

Steve Ward asked about hunting inside off-reservation gates. Hunters can apply for a permit and be issued a key to drive in off-reservation gates northwest of Route 202 during the statewide deer hunting season. Tree stands can be put up and taken down, but in a way that doesn't damage the tree.

Facilities

The process of building a New Salem field office to replace the one that burned down has been restarted. DCR is hiring an architect to design both an office and garage. Requests for proposals have gone out to multiple architectural firms. The hope is to have the full design and set of plans by the end of the fiscal year. Construction should begin during the next fiscal year.

Cemetery

A secondary source of water, a water buffalo, was brought into the cemetery over the summer. It was loaned from the National Guard. Recent cemetery discussions have determined that it will be a priority to get a source of water back on tap at the cemetery. The goal is to get 3 or 4 faucets installed across the site.

There have been ongoing discussions with DCR's IT departments regarding the GraVoc database that was created years ago by an outside company and has all the cemetery burial records stored in a proprietary digital form. The data is no longer usable, but the goal is to convert it into a usable format going forward.

J.R. Greene mentioned that there is a Trust Board meeting scheduled for Wednesday, September 11th and a site visit to the cemetery with DCR staff is on the agenda.

QWAC membership discussion

There was continued discussion from previous meetings regarding the open vacancies on the committee. Dan Clark spoke of the decades of positive relationships between DCR and the committee and talked about the importance of planning ahead; having current members continually mentoring potential new members. The importance of having the alternate positions for each representative group on the committee filled was mentioned as well.

J.R. Greene suggested sending letters to the heads of the representative groups on the committee who don't currently have alternates. Dan Clark was open to the idea and urged committee members to go to their respective organizations and explain to them the importance of the committee and their relationship to it and DCR.

The mission statement of the committee was discussed. Justin Gonsor will send all the members a copy of the enabling legislation/mission statement of QWAC.

Member Issues

Tom Lautzenheiser mentioned that Robie Hubley recently passed away in June. He was a long-term member of QWAC and director of the Mass Audubon Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary in Easthampton, MA.

Tom's father also recently passed away. He was a longtime state climatologist who had a special place in his heart for Quabbin.

Bill Pula asked about the status of algal blooms at Quabbin near the Chicopee Valley Aqueduct (CVA) intake. Dan Clark answered that it seems to be declining. Our aquatic biologist had been out in the field daily for a couple weeks taking samples. The bloom was unusual in that it was deep under water and was unable to be treated. The water is perfectly safe to drink but a bad taste has been associated with the event.

Larry Gates expressed appreciation about the public forestry tour that happened on the Prescott Peninsula. Only three people attended.

Larry asked about electric bikes at Quabbin. He mentioned that the National Parks Service recently ruled that they will be allowed (up to 28 mph) on their lands. Bill Pula added that they are currently allowed on DCR rail trails.

Larry asked about the gate 43 bridge that needs to be repaired. Dan Clark answered that it is in the plan but won't be able to be addressed immediately.

Tom Berube brought up concern over potential access restrictions in the Ware River Watershed (WRW) that he has been hearing about. Dan Clark updated the committee on the update of the WRW public access plan that is currently underway. No formal plan has been presented yet, but the goal is to have a draft version completed by the end of the year. The process has been very collaborative so far and DCR has met with various user groups of the watershed (equine users, mountain bikers, snowmobilers, etc.). Broadly, DCR is taking a complete look at recreation in the watershed. There is an upcoming meeting with the DCR commissioner scheduled to get his input and feedback. Ideas will be

proposed that should increase resource protection and enforcement. None of the discussions have been about excluding specific types of recreation; they have been about modifications to existing public access. One specific proposal is to lock watershed gates during the night which previously stayed open and provided vehicle access to watershed lands 24 hours per day, 7 days a week.

Ron Komar asked about the observed vehicle problems in the WRW. Dan Clark answered that it is an access issue; free access to watershed lands when all staff are off duty. It is also a public safety issue if someone was to get hurt or lost. It is a maintenance issue and lots of staff time goes into keeping those roads open. There is a proposal to open the roads from October 1st through the end of the calendar year to facilitate deer hunters throughout the watershed. It was recommended that committee members read the draft plan once it is released and provide comments and feedback.

Tom Berube asked about the status of the Quabbin paraplegic hunt. Dan Clark answered that it will operate like past years. No issues were reported from last year.

Steve Ward asked about access to public information, specifically DEP inspection reports. He would like to see those reports available online as well as information regarding DCR's filtration waived. Dan Clark will investigate whether information from those inspection reports can be shared.

Meeting End Time: 8:11 PM

Upcoming QWAC Meetings:

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