

Quabbin Watershed Advisory Committee Meeting
June 5th, 2017
7:30 PM

Location: DCR Quabbin Visitor's Center, Belchertown, MA 01007

Members Present: Tom Barnes (North Worcester County Quabbin Anglers Association), Tom Berube (MA Council of Sportsmen), Elisa Campbell (Sierra Club), Craig Cortis (Worcester County League of Sportsmen), Jerry Eves (Trout Unlimited), Larry Gates (Quabbin Fisherman's Association), J.R. Greene (Friends of Quabbin, Inc.), Ralph Lapinskas (General Public)

DCR Staff Present: Dan Clark, Herm Eck, Justin Gonsor, Ken MacKenzie, John Scannell

Public Attending: Rosemary Charron, Mike LaPrade, Bill Pula, Randy Stone, Clayton Sydla, Steve Ward, Heidi Waugh

Meeting Start Time: 7:29 PM

Approval of Minutes of Meeting on March 13th, 2017

Elisa Campbell made a motion to accept the minutes from the QWAC meeting held on March 13th, 2017. J.R. Greene seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

FY18 Quabbin Proposed Forestry Lot Proposals

Herm Eck presented 13 FY18 Quabbin Watershed forestry projects proposed for harvest to the committee. A copy of Herm's PowerPoint presentation as well detailed versions of the lot proposals will be available to view online before next month on DCR's Watershed Management Forestry Projects website:

<http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/water-res-protection/watershed-mgmt/forestry-projects.html>.

The 1st lot proposed (HA-18-13 North & HA-18-13 South) is located off both sides of Rt. 32A near Raccoon Hill in the towns of Hardwick and Petersham. The details of that lot are as follows:

- 465 acre lot. At most, 25% of the lot will be harvested.

- Contains red pine, white pine, white pine/hardwood, oak/hardwood, and white pine/hemlock forest types.
- Goal is to harvest as much of the red pine as possible before it is impacted by insect and disease issues.
- Openings in the red pine type will be up to 5 acres in size. Openings in the other types will be less than 2 acres. Some thinning around openings is planned.
- All cellar holes, wells, vernal pools, and seeps will be protected.

The 2nd lot proposed (NS-18-7) is located off of West Street in the town of New Salem. The details of that lot are as follows:

- 38 acre lot.
- Contains white pine, hemlock/hardwood, and red oak forest types.
- Goal is to remove primarily pine weevil affected white pine, nectria infected black birch, and declining hemlock in small groups (up to 2 acres)
- We will try to minimize stream crossings by using more than one landing site.

The 3rd lot proposed (NS-18-20) is located at Quabbin's Boat Launch Area 2 in the town of New Salem. The details of that lot are as follows:

- 61 acre lot.
- Contains red pine, white pine, and white pine/oak forest types
- Goal is to remove primarily red pine in openings up to 4.5 acres in size. The white pine between the gate 31 road and O'Loughlin Pond will be thinned to help reduce potential impacts from needle cast fungal disease.
- Several rare species in this area will be protected.

The 4th lot proposed (NS-18-21) is located off of Spectacle Pond along Rt. 122 in the town of New Salem. The details of that lot are as follows:

- 40 acre lot.
- Predominantly white pine, hemlock, and red pine.
- Goal is to remove as much of the red pine as possible before it is infested with red pine scale. Small openings averaging about 1 acre are planned for the white pine and hemlock areas. Some thinning around oak is also planned.
- Lot is located off-watershed.
- Rare species will be protected.

Natural Heritage bubbles were discussed. These bubbles are areas that have endangered species habitat inside them. When endangered species habitat falls inside a proposed lot DCR's Natural Resources staff coordinates with MassWildlife to ensure proper precautions and restrictions are put in place.

The 5th lot proposed (NS-18-24) is located near Adams Hill off the northeast side of Rt. 122 in the town of New Salem. The details of that lot are as follows:

- 188 acre lot.
- Predominantly white pine/oak type but also contains mixed oak, hemlock/hardwood, and red pine types.
- Goal is to remove most of the red pine and low quality white pine.
- Irregularly shaped openings up to 4.5 acres will be opened in the red pine.
- Openings will average about 1 acre.
- Some sections of this lot are not operable.
- Rare species will be protected.

The 6th lot proposed (NS-18-RP-Rt 122) is located off of Rt. 122 along the north end of O'Loughlin Pond in the town of New Salem. The details of that lot are as follows:

- 34 acre lot.
- Mixture of red pine, white pine, and hardwoods.
- Goal is to remove most of the red pine in openings up to 4.5 acres and some of the poorer quality white pine in openings up to 2 acres.
- Some red pine may be removed in the wetland filter strip and most of it may be cut in the road buffer strip.
- All cutting will be in compliance with the Forest Cutting Practices Act.

The 7th lot proposed (PE-18-6) is located off of Davis Road in the town of Pelham. The details of that lot are as follows:

- 58 acre lot.
- Predominantly white pine type with areas of white pine/hardwood mixtures.
- Goal is to thin the northern section of this proposal and release advance regeneration or establish diverse regeneration (openings up to 2 acres) in the rest of the proposal area.
- Cellar holes will be protected.

The 8th lot proposed (PE-18-11-1) is located near Purgee Brook inside Gate 13 in the town of Pelham. The details of that lot are as follows:

- 69 acre lot.
- Predominantly the white pine/hardwood forest type but also includes 3 acres of red pine and 8 acres of northern hardwood types.
- Goal is to remove the red pine and poor quality white pine in openings that average 1 acre and to thin the hardwood sections.
- Foundations and wells will be protected.

The 9th lot proposed (PE-18-11-2) is located off the west side of Rt. 202 in the town of Pelham. The details of that lot are as follows:

- 100 acre lot.
- Contains white pine/hardwood and oak/hardwood forest types.
- Goal is to increase age structure diversity in this area by removing poorly formed or unhealthy hemlock, pine, and oak stems and by increasing the size of some of the gaps created by the wind storm.
- Openings created will average 1 acre.
- Near New England Scenic Trail.

The 10th lot proposed (PE-18-12) is located inside Gate 14 in the town of Pelham. The details of that lot are as follows:

- 35 acre lot.
- Predominantly covered by the white pine/hardwood type but also includes a few acres of hemlock type.
- Goal is to remove declining hemlock and release advance regeneration by creating small (up to 2 acres) openings.
- Mountain Laurel study will be conducted to see how it affects regeneration.

The 11th lot proposed (PE-18-13 & 14) is located off the west side of Rt. 202 along Town Farm Road near the town boundaries of Pelham and Shutesbury. The details of that lot are as follows:

- 114 acre lot.
- Predominantly the white pine/hardwood type but also includes 7 acres of red pine.
- Goal is to harvest the red pine, release advance regeneration and stimulate new regeneration by creating openings that average about 1 acre in size.

- Finding appropriate landing sites will be complicated.
- Cultural resources will be protected.

The 12th lot proposed (PR-18-7) is located near Shay's Brook on the Prescott Peninsula. The details of that lot are as follows:

- 100 acre lot.
- Predominantly in the mixed oak forest type.
- Goal is to release advance regeneration, particularly oak, by creating openings that average 1 acre in size.
- Foundation will be protected.

The 13th lot proposed (PR-18-17) is located off of Clifford Road on the Prescott Peninsula. The details of that lot are as follows:

- 153 acre lot.
- Predominantly in the red oak type but also includes 15 acres of white pine.
- Goal is to regenerate more oak in this area by creating irregularly shaped openings that average 1 acre. Some of these openings will result from expanding gaps created by a May 2010 wind storm.

In summary, all proposals will adhere to the following guidelines:

- Most openings will be irregularly shaped.
- Most openings over ½ acre in size will have green tree retention.

Elisa Campbell requested that the committee members and people on the mailing list be notified when the detailed lot proposals are posted on DCR's Watershed Management Forestry Projects website.

Craig Cortis asked if there are any wooded areas within the reservation that are older than the mid 19th century. Herm Eck answered that although there are no stands certified as old growth inside the watershed, there are some individual, scattered trees that are very old.

A public tour of the Quabbin FY18 proposed forestry projects was scheduled for Wednesday, July 19th. The tour starts at 4PM at the Gate 12 Overlook in Pelham.

Quabbin Deer Hunt – 2016 Results; 2017 Plans

Ken MacKenzie presented the results from the 2016 Quabbin deer hunt as well as upcoming plans for 2017.

During the 2016 hunt a total of 53 deer were taken (40 males; 13 females). Pelham and Prescott were hunted Dec. 1st and 2nd while New Salem and Petersham were hunted Dec. 8th and 9th. 16 deer were harvested out of Pelham, 14 out of Prescott, 7 out of New Salem, and 16 out of Petersham. 2016 was the first year an antlerless permit allocation system was put in place. Out of 1,101 selected hunters, 841 showed up to hunt (77%). Hunters had a 6% success rate.

The Quabbin herd has averaged around 10 deer/mi² over the past 10 years (using harvest data projections) and is just below MassWildlife's hunting density goal of 12-15 deer/mi² for zone 6. It is important to have a suitable density that allows for successful hunting and continued support by hunters, as well as a density that allows for adequate regeneration of desired tree species. Another index used to estimate relative deer abundance is Catch per Unit Effort (CPUE) which simply measures the amount of effort it takes to harvest a deer. Compared to 2015 it took hunters less effort to harvest more deer in 2016.

The antlerless permit allocation system gives DCR greater control over the deer population and allows them to adapt to the many variables that are associated with a hunt like Quabbin. Quabbin antlerless permits are still considered 'bonus permits' and don't count towards the state bag limit. 500 antlerless permits were available for 2016. Historically, since the Quabbin hunt entered the maintenance phase, antlerless harvest averaged about 60% of the harvest (2001-2015). In 2016, with the introduction of the antlerless permit allocation system, the antlerless harvest decreased by 50%, accounting for only 30% of the harvest.

DCR is also using two harvest-independent indices that help to better understand what is happening with the deer population: forest impact monitoring and deer/moose pellet count surveys. Since the beginning of the deer hunt program in 1991, the primary goal has been to maintain a deer density that allows for adequate and continued forest regeneration. Since 2006, Quabbin has continued to meet its management goal of 2,000 stems/acre above 4.5 ft.; generally considered to be above deer browse height. DCR Natural Resources and Forestry staff began a pilot study in 2015 to investigate whether a pellet-group count survey on watershed lands could provide insight into the number of deer and

moose using DCR property. Pelham and Quabbin Park were surveyed in 2015 and resulted in estimates of 11-16 deer/mi² for Pelham and 36 deer/mi² for Quabbin Park. Petersham and Prescott were surveyed in 2016 and resulted in estimates of 16-27 deer/mi² for Petersham and 2-6 deer/mi² for Prescott. Hardwick and New Salem were surveyed in 2017 and resulted in estimates of 13-26 deer/mi² for Hardwick and 7-18 deer/mi² for New Salem. Moose density was also calculated while walking transects. The Ware River Watershed and Pelham were surveyed in 2015 and resulted in estimates of 5-8 moose/mi² for the Ware River Watershed and 6-9 moose/mi² for Pelham. Petersham and Prescott were surveyed in 2016 and resulted in estimates of 8-11 moose/mi² for Petersham and 5-8 moose/mi² for Prescott. Hardwick and New Salem were surveyed in 2017 and resulted in estimates of 2-6 moose/mi² for Hardwick and 1-3 moose/mi² for New Salem. Moose density estimates were higher than reported in Maine (1-3) and New Hampshire (3) but estimates in those states were determined using aerial surveys and may not be comparable to our technique.

Since 2006, moose observation information has been collected during the Quabbin deer hunt. The population of moose on the Quabbin watershed appears to be relatively stable. The bull:cow ratios have been very close to 1:1, which is indicative of an un hunted population.

DCR also continues to work with the Mass. Coop. Unit on the experimental exclosure study. A dissertation examining the first 5-6 years of the exclosure research was just completed and will be available soon. The presence of moose added to the effect of browsing by deer and appeared to set succession back by at least 3-4 years. The exclosures will continue to be monitored and future research will address how browsing and forest succession shape the forests of the future.

For 2017 the antlerless permit allocation system, online application, and online orientation for returning hunters will continue. Petersham will be the rested zone. Hunter density will be maintained at 1 hunter per every 35 acres. There are plans to update the classroom hunter orientation video. There is a plan to do away with the paper access permits and implement a new check-in/check-out system for hunters that utilizes digital scanners and plastic access permits.

Ralph Lapinskas asked about the status of the moose population in the Quabbin watershed. Ken MacKenzie answered that the population is estimated at around 100 individuals. Although warming winters and summers in the state going forward are not favorable conditions for moose.

Member Issues

Ralph Lapinskas asked about the status of a fishing tournament that the Ware Business Association was organizing and was scheduled to take place at Quabbin, among other local ponds. Larry Gates answered that the tournament has been cancelled at this point.

Elisa Campbell asked for an update on the status of the gypsy moth population this year. Herm Eck answered that the caterpillars have defoliated a large number of trees again this year. April rain is anticipated the encourage growth of a fungus that kills the caterpillars. If there is a large caterpillar die off this year, the hope is that there will be far fewer hatching next year.

Larry Gates asked if all of the power line construction projects that have been happening recently are completed. John Scannell answered that those projects have been completed.

Tom Barnes asked about the upcoming construction project scheduled at Gate 31. John Scannell answered that the plan is to have Gate 31 closed from June 12th – 16th. All traffic will be detoured through Gate 33 during those days.

Bill Pula asked if there are any upcoming plans to remove hazardous trees from Quabbin Park Cemetery. John Scannell answered that there are plans to remove red and white pine trees along Monson Turnpike Road. There is money available to cut down about ¼ of the trees that need to be removed.

Meeting End Time: 8:45 PM

Upcoming QWAC Meetings:

- Monday, September 11th, 2017 at 7:30 PM – DCR Quabbin Visitor Center, 485 Ware Road, Belchertown, MA 01007