



Department of Conservation and Recreation  
Division of Water Supply Protection  
Office of Watershed Management

Summary of Key Points and Next Steps  
September 13, 2018 Ware River Watershed Advisory Committee Meeting

**In Attendance:** The meeting was attended by Ware River Watershed Advisory Committee (WRWAC) members, Department of Conservation’s Division of Water Supply Protection (DCR/DWSP) staff, about a dozen members of the public who primarily represented recreation interests.

**Facilitator:** Sara Cohen (DCR Office of Water Resources)

**Overview:**

The meeting focused on responding to two requests from the April 12, 2018 WRWAC meeting. In April, recreational users and WRWAC members asked for an explanation of the criteria DCR/DWSP used in making management decisions affecting trails and public access. Meeting participants also wanted to know what opportunities they would have to provide input to DCR/DWSP during the update of the Ware River Public Access Management Plan (WRPAMP).

In response to these requests, DCR/DWSP presented two documents at the September meeting:

- DCR/DWSP Public Access Management Principles for the Ware River Watershed
- Public Engagement Plan for updating the WRPAMP.

**Public Access Management Principles:**

Dan Clark, DCR/DWSP’s Quabbin/Ware Regional Director, presented ten Public Access Management Principles for the Ware River Watershed to provide stakeholders with a greater understanding of DCR/DWSP’s goals and constraints governing public access. DCR/DWSP hopes that a common understanding of these principles will allow the update process to be collaborative and constructive.

**Key Points of Discussion**

- There was much discussion about the principle: “Avoid expansion of activities including significant increase in total number of trail miles relative to current conditions.”
  - Concern that the number of trail miles was not the right metric to characterize intensity of use.
  - Concern that the word “significant” might imply a statistical rigor that was not intended.
  - Concern that the phrasing left open the interpretation that off-road mountain biking was an “expansion of activity” and would, therefore, be categorically not allowed.
  - Request that official trails that have become unusable and are expected to remain unusable be subtracted from the accounting of trail mileage.
- Concern was raised that the principle “Reduce unauthorized access” was not practical, given how difficult it is to achieve.

- In response to a concern raised, DCR/DWSP confirmed that the principle “Ensure well-coordinated and defined maintenance and upkeep of approved trails, signage and points of access with groups and DCR-Parks” includes coordination around minor trail adjustments to mitigate emerging problems.

### **Public Engagement Plan:**

Sara Cohen of DCR’s Office of Water Resources presented a draft Public Engagement Plan for updating the WRPAMP, which provides details on how the general public, recreational users, landowners and abutters, and WRWAC members will be invited to provide input and collaborate in the update process. The proposed Public Engagement Plan will be posted on the WRWAC website.

### **Key Points of Discussion**

- A participant suggested that more than one recreational user group at a time be allowed to come to the DCR/DWSP “office hours”, as they may have overlapping concerns (e.g., horseback riders, mountain bikers, and snowmobilers). DCR/DWSP pointed out that multiple groups would be included during the collaborative problem-solving meetings later in the process. However, if groups feel it’s important to attend jointly during the “Issue Identification” phase office hours, that can be discussed.
- A request was made to provide a communication channel between recreational users and MassDEP regulators responsible for assessing DCR/DWSP and the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority’s (MWRA) eligibility for an ongoing waiver from water filtration, as this eligibility underpins many of DCR/DWSP’s management principles. DCR/DWSP will inquire whether MassDEP could send a representative to some of the relevant problem-solving meetings. Any member of the public is free to individually reach out to MassDEP.
- A concern was raised that public engagement shouldn’t end with the finalization of the updated WRPAMP. DCR/DWSP confirmed that it intends to continue to collaborate with users after completion of the Plan and expects to specify and formalize the nature of some of those ongoing structures for collaboration within the WRPAMP itself.

### **Next Steps**

- DCR/DWSP will discuss internally whether to make any changes to the Public Access Management Principles as a result of tonight’s discussion, and circulate any updates if so.
- DCR/DWSP will begin the outreach efforts that are part of the Issue Identification phase of the WRPAMP update, as described in the Public Engagement Plan.
- DCR/DWSP will document and share its own identified concerns within the watershed as part of the Issue Identification phase of the WRPAMP update.