

**Ware River Watershed Advisory Committee Meeting**  
**Thursday, October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2018**  
**7:00 PM**

**Location:** Rutland Free Public Library, 280 Main Street, Rutland, MA 01543

**Members:** (Members in **BOLD** were present)

Massachusetts Council of Sportsmen: William Lebel

Alternate: Mike Moss

Worcester County League of Sportsmen's Clubs: **John Root**

Alternate: Dave Papale

Trout Unlimited: **Jeffrey Schaaf (Chair person)**

Alternate:

A Rod and Gun Club: Joe Cataldo

Alternate: Bryan Waterman

Barre Selectboard: Martha Varnot

Alternate: Edward Yaglou

Hubbardston Selectboard:

Alternate: **Cindy Schlener**

Oakham Selectboard: **Thomas Hughes**

Alternate: Phillip Warbasse

Rutland Selectboard: Charles R. Williams

Alternate: **Brett Russ**

Barre Historical Society: **Margo Petracone**

Alternate:

Hubbardston Historical Society: **Robin Langer**

Alternate:

Oakham Historical Society: Bill Mucha

Alternate: Lee Dougan

Rutland Historical Society:

Alternate:

Massachusetts Wildlife Federation: (group disbanded)

Alternate:

Massachusetts Audubon Society: **Martha Gach**

Alternate:

Sierra Club: **Matt Hopkinson**

Alternate:

Upper Ware River Watershed Association: (group disbanded)

Alternate:

General Public: Mark DuBois

Alternate: Dave Small

**DCR Staff Present:**

Dan Clark, Justin Gonsor, Lisa Gustavsen

**Members of the Public Present:**

Christine Beriau, Leslie Choquette, Wilson Dobson, Lynne Goodnow, Brian Kennedy, Paul Kreswick, Kathleen James, Fouad Laajine, Bob O'Connor, Brian Trimby, Doug Walther, Marianne Wojcicki, Peg Rotti, Dean Zuppio

**Meeting Minutes**

**Meeting Start Time: 7:01 PM**

**Approval of minutes from meeting on Thursday, September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2018**

John Root made a motion to accept the minutes from the Ware River Watershed Advisory Committee (WRWAC) meeting on September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2018. Margo Petracone seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

**Public engagement plan discussion**

Lisa Gustavsen briefed the committee on DCR's actions since the last meeting. Three documents from the previous meeting have been posted on the WRWAC web page: a draft version of the watershed management principles for public access in the Ware River watershed (WRW); a draft version of the public engagement plan regarding the update of the WRW public access management plan; a summary of the key points and next steps from the September 13<sup>th</sup> WRWAC meeting.

A public survey has been drafted which will help to identify the key issues to be addressed by the public access plan update. When the plan was last updated in 2010, three different public surveys were used. For the current update, one survey will be used for all stakeholders. Once finalized, the survey will be available in both hard copy and digital formats. The survey will be distributed at various town halls, to abutters/landowners, to WRWAC members, to numerous

user groups in the area, and be available online via SurveyMonkey. Surveys of watershed users will also be conducted by field staff. DCR will solicit input from internal staff and their other sister agencies (Massachusetts Water Resource Authority (MWRA), MassDEP, MassWildlife, the Army Corps of Engineers, etc.).

Brett Russ asked if the committee could give comments on the draft survey before it is finalized and distributed to the general public. Justin Gonsor will get the survey out to members. Lisa Gustavsen noted that the main goal of the public survey is to identify the different users of the watershed, how and when they are using the land, and if they are aware of any user conflicts. The survey is also used to gather information on people's understanding and acceptance of current WRW regulations.

Matt Hopkinson asked for more information on how staff will be conducting in-person field surveys. Lisa Gustavsen answered that for the previous survey that was completed in 2009, informal interviews were taken at three locations: Long Pond, Comet Pond, and the Rail Trail parking lot off Route 122 in Rutland. Field surveys can catch people who aren't part of an organized group and/or missed seeing the online version.

A member of the public asked when field surveys will be conducted and if they will be announced ahead of time. Lisa Gustavsen answered that no announcements were planned. Watershed rangers are set to do the surveys on weekends; no dates are currently set. There was discussion on the best time of year to conduct a field survey. It was mentioned that staggering the interviews throughout the year would best capture the most amount of user groups, but doing so would delay the public access plan update schedule.

Brett Russ suggested posting a link/QR code to the survey at various popular points of entry throughout watershed. This could be done instead of, or in addition to, the field surveys. Dan Clark added that watershed rangers will have copies of the survey on hand as they patrol and will hand them out as they encounter users. A member of the public suggested posting a link to the survey at the five Ware River kiosk locations as well.

A member of the public asked how people will be alerted when the survey becomes available. Lisa Gustavsen answered that the exact date the survey will

go live is unknown, but it will be open for over a month once it is open. Once complete, it is set to be published on the DCR website, the WRWAC website, and town hall meeting boards (of watershed towns). Landowners/abutters will be sent a letter notifying them of the survey. The hope is that WRWAC members will also spread the survey throughout their communities as well as to the organizations they represent on the committee.

A member of the public suggested posting the survey on watershed town Facebook pages.

Cindy Schlener suggested contacting the clerks from watershed towns to see if they might have an email list of townspeople who have signed up with them to receive notifications regarding local issues. Brett Russ proposed that the committee members who represent the Barre, Oakham, Rutland, and Hubbardston select boards personally publicize the survey to those town clerks once it becomes available. The clerks could then send out the survey to everyone on their town email list. Cindy Schlener will cover Hubbardston and Brett Russ will cover Rutland. Cindy will also contact the folks at Wachusett Greenways so they can send out the survey to the people of their email list.

Geographic Information System (GIS) staff has generated an updated abutters list. The technology has helped to identify people who own land within 100 ft. of the watershed boundary. DCR staff have also been preparing for upcoming office hours in Belchertown and/or Oakham. These would be meetings scheduled by appointment between user group representatives and DCR to address key public access management issues. Matt Hopkinson suggested setting up a conference call style meeting for those who can't attend in person but still want to contribute to the discussion.

Dean Zuppio asked who from DCR will be involved in the office hour's sessions. Dan Clark, Lisa Gustavsen, and any other relevant DCR staff (depending on the user group) will be at the meetings.

Brett Russ asked about the possibility of including the results of a change.org petition as part of the public survey results. The petition was started in 2015 and garnered 1,700 signatures in support of balanced access to the watershed;

comments were also submitted as part of the petition. Dan Clark answered that the information could be submitted as public input.

A member of the public asked which user groups were represented in the audience. The following groups were mentioned: equestrian, snowmobilers, mountain bikers, kayakers, hikers, skiers, snowshoers, bird watchers, geocachers, hunters, fishers.

### **T7 trail closure report**

Dan Clark updated the committee on the status of the T7 trail. It is located off Pine Plains Road near Route 122. It was determined that staff from the MWRA had closed the trailhead after noticing illegal ATV usage in the area. They were asked to please not close any trails in the future without first contacting DCR. Closing of the trailhead was a mistake and it has been reopened.

Cindy Schlener asked if it would be possible to place a rock or other obstruction at the trailhead that would block ATVs but still allow horses to get through. There was discussion of downed trees blocking ATV access to the trail as well.

### **Member Issues**

Dean Zuppio mentioned that there is a beaver dam located north of Route 62 near the rail trail that has flooded the area.

Matt Hopkinson noted that he doesn't have contact information for numerous committee members. Justin Gonsor will send a message to all the members with an attached phone and email list for everyone.

Brett Russ commented on a new bridge along Intervale Road that has a breached silt fence, causing erosion and sediment to get into the river.

Cindy Schlener asked about a new bridge that is being put in place near Fisher Road and whether or not it will be open to horses. Dan Clark answered that once the project is completed DCR will begin to determine who can use the bridge.

**Meeting End Time: 7:58 PM**

### **Upcoming WRWAC Meetings**

- Thursday, January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2019 at 7 PM – Rutland Free Public Library (downstairs), 280 Main Street, Rutland, MA 01543