

Ware River Watershed Advisory Committee Meeting
Wednesday, October 5, 2023
7:00 PM

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

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

Massachusetts Council of Sportsmen: **Laurie Pray**

Alternate: Mike Moss

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

Alternate: Dave Papale

Trout Unlimited: **Jeffrey Schaaf (chairperson)**

Alternate:

A Rod and Gun Club: **Vincent Kotowski**

Alternate: **Dennis Guberski**

Barre Selectboard: **Mike Wood**

Alternate:

Hubbardston Selectboard: Cindy Schlener

Alternate: **Dave Marsh**

Oakham Selectboard: **Thomas Hughes**

Alternate: **Phillip Warbasse**

Rutland Selectboard: **Charles R. Williams**

Alternate:

Barre Historical Society: **Dave Flick**

Alternate: Margo Petracone

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: **Brett Russ**

DCR Staff Present: Dan Clark, Justin Gonsor, John Scannell

Members of the Public Present: Lucy Allen, Clark Coppolino, Eric Goodhart, John Havachek, Martha Hawley, Steve LaRivee, Dave Morin, Duane Pray, Darren Ross, Rusty Savignac, Mike Stoll, Marianne Wojcicki

Meeting Minutes

Meeting Start Time: 7:01 PM

Approval of minutes from meetings on Thursday, July 27, 2023 and Wednesday, September 13, 2023

Charles Williams made a motion to accept the minutes from the Ware River Watershed Advisory Committee (WRWAC) meeting on July 27, 2023. John Root seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Tom Hughes made a motion to accept the minutes from the Ware River Watershed Advisory Committee (WRWAC) meeting on September 13, 2023, with edits. A public comment asking whether bicycling groups can request night access permits needs to be added at the end of the minutes. The answer to the question was no. Dave Flick seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Discussion of the final Ware River Watershed Public Access Management Plan

Jeff Schaaf commented that he was appreciative that DCR edited their draft plan based on comments/feedback they received from the committee and the public, but expressed disappointment that the committee did not get one more chance to read through the plan and give one last set of comments before it was finalized.

Dave Flick commented on behalf of the Barre Historical Society that they appreciated the changes made to the draft plan and look forward to strengthening their relationship with DCR-DWSP going forward. He spoke about wanting to develop a positive working relationship with DWSP and how the town/historical society can collaborate and advocate on their behalf.

Dennis Guberski commented that overall, he was happy with the final plan. He mentioned that there is language on page 65 related to giardia and cryptosporidium that is inaccurate and suggested that it be removed. He also asked for clarification

regarding hunting dogs entering the water. Specifically, he would like a provision to be added to allow for training hunting dogs for water retrieval.

Vincent Kotowski spoke about vehicle access from the end of mud season to October 1st. He asked DWSP to consider opening roads that would let the public drive from one side of the watershed to the other: Ruben Walker Road to Coldbrook Road. He also mentioned that since the trails subcommittee can submit smaller, simple recommendations/modifications to the trail network in between the regular 10-year updates to the public access plan, he would like other user groups, such as hunters, the same possibility to be heard.

Tom Hughes expressed gratitude that the permit system (50 to be given out per season) for large motors was allowed to remain in place at Long Pond, although he wished that residents of the WRW towns would have been given priority/access to the permits.

Brett Russ commented on behalf of the trails subcommittee and had a few areas of concern and feedback. He thanked DCR for listening to their comments when crafting the final plan. The watershed friends' group are planning 3 upcoming trail workdays this fall, one in the south side of the watershed, one in the central area, and one northern region. The first trail day is set to be held on November 18. Two concerns were as follows:

1. Two agreed upon trails were missing from the final plan: trails around Muddy Pond and T7
2. Night access: There is hope for a potential special use night permit in the future.

Dennis Guberski asked for clarification on page 70 of the plan which states that fishing derbies are not allowed on DWSP lakes and ponds. John Scannell answered that the above wording has been in place in previous versions of the access plan and mainly applies to groups looking to make a profit with a derby or tournament.

Dennis also asked about endotoxin levels coming out of Quabbin after the water has been treated. He has looked through various reports and can't seem to find the data. He is looking for how much giardia is coming into Quabbin, how much is killed off through treatment, and endotoxin levels could help clarify this. John Scannell answered that MWRA is the group who does the end water testing after it is treated. Dan Clark mentioned the pathogen zone at Quabbin that is listed in the

Land Management Plan, it is a buffer zone around the intake and other sensitive zones where beavers are removed as a pathogen preventative measure.

Dennis Guberski made a motion that the committee approves/supports the plan overall, but does have 6 concerns/issues they would like to see addressed:

1. Ability for other user groups apart from the trails subcommittee to be allowed suggest annual modifications to the access plan in between the regular 10-year updates.
2. Cryptosporidium and giardia language addressed on page 65 of the plan.
3. Consider giving watershed residents priority to Long Pond large motor permits.
4. Consider opening Ruben Walker Road from the end of mud season to October 1st.
5. Two agreed upon trails were missing from the final plan and should be added to it: trails around Muddy Pond and T7.
6. Consider giving out a special use permit for night access to the watershed.

Dick Williams seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Dave Flick led a discussion on how to best move forward with the new access plan in place; how to best document and monitor the challenges and successes that user groups are seeing and experiencing in the watershed under the new rules. Currently, many issues come up and are addressed at committee meetings throughout the year.

Member Issues

Vincent Kotowski asked about what the plan is to fix Gilbert Road which has a severe washout on it, the gate near Route 62 is currently closed. Dan answered that he will investigate why the gate is locked. The new plan does open Gilbert Road to Rice Road, but a gate isn't yet in place there.

John Root talked about a book titled 'Before the Flood' that goes into detail about the land that was taken to create the Quabbin and Ware River watersheds. He spoke of a meeting that took place at the Athol Town Hall in 1988 to mark the 50th anniversary.

Dave Flick questioned how DCR sponsored events could be better publicized. DCR does not have a Facebook or other social media account to advertise Quabbin and Ware River related events. There was discussion on how the committee can help publicize DCR-sponsored watershed events such as group hikes and interpretive walks. Interpretive services have lately been working more closely

with watershed towns and historical societies to spread the word on upcoming events. The hope is to strengthen the link between DCR-DWSP and the watershed towns.

Brett Russ asked about evidence he has seen of unauthorized ATV usage in the WRW, if the rangers have been getting reports of this type of thing. Jeff Schaaf agreed that it has been an ongoing issue for decades. A member of the public suggested reaching out to the environmental police to see if they could do some increased patrols in the watershed. Putting up signage describing the potential fines if caught was also suggested. Vincent Kotowski commented that having more locked gates in watershed could result in more ATV usage in those areas.

Brett Russ asked about ranger staffing in the watershed. Dan answered that Kim English was promoted to ranger II (head ranger in WRW); her former ranger I position is set to be back filled.

Dick Williams asked for an update on brush hog work for maintaining fields and fire breaks in the watershed. Dan reminded everyone that the fire breaks haven't been maintained by DCR for years, possibly decades. Vincent Kotowski noted that the fields on Coldbrook are looking better than last year and asked about mowing for the Prison Camp. Dan answered that the same technique would be used around the Prison Camp.

Meeting End Time: 7:48 PM

Upcoming WRWAC Meetings

- Thursday, January 11, 2024, at 7PM – Rutland Free Public Library, 280 Main Street, Rutland, MA 01543