

**Ware River Watershed Advisory Committee Meeting**  
**Thursday, January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2020**  
**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 (chairperson)**

Alternate:

A Rod and Gun Club: Joe Cataldo

Alternate: Bryan Waterman

Barre Selectboard: Martha Varnot

Alternate:

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

**Members of the Public Present:**

Peter Abramson, Joseph Afinso, Erik Baldwin, Lydia Barter, Leslie Choquette, Anthony Corazzini, David Corazzini, David Corazzini Sr., Elizabeth Cote, Chris Craigue, Bill Dobson, Bruce Ebbeson, Stephen Femino Jr., Keith Fritze, Tim Gribbons, Mark Guzymek, Adam Heppe, Dick Hutchings, Denise Kellicker, Jim Kennington, Paul Kennington, Ries Kennington, Rich Konde, Paul Kreswick, Dave Morin, Mike Nogueira, Mike Priffi, Giuseppe Ritaco, Raymond Savignac, Duncan Stewart, Brian Trimby, Marianne Wojcicki

**Meeting Minutes**

**Meeting Start Time: 7:06 PM**

**Approval of minutes from meeting on Thursday, November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019**

Dick Williams made a motion to accept the minutes from the Ware River Watershed Advisory Committee (WRWAC) meeting on November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019. Dave Small seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

**Ware River Watershed Public Access Management Plan (WRWPAMP) – update from DCR**

Dan Clark updated the committee on the status of the WRWPAMP update. DCR is currently completing the rough draft of the plan. It will then be sent to the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the Massachusetts Water Resource Authority (MWRA) for their cursory review. Their comments would then be incorporated into the final draft. The goal is to hold a public meeting in late February/early March, separate from a WRWAC meeting, where the plan would be presented. A 30-day comment period would then begin. The draft plan could be viewed online at this time as well. The public comments are then analyzed and incorporated into the plan. It is then sent off to the DCR

commissioner for his final review and sign off. It then becomes official. It could be finalized by mid-late April.

Looking ahead, a Student Conservation Association (SCA) trail work application has been submitted. If approved, one of their crews would do a 10-day hitch in the Ware River this summer to conduct trail maintenance, address wetland crossings, put up signage, etc.

Potential locations for the public meeting where the draft version of the access plan will be presented were discussed. It was determined that the Rutland Free Public Library would probably not be a large enough venue. John Augustus Hall in West Boylston, the Barre Town Hall in Barre, and the auditorium at Quabbin High School in Belchertown, were mentioned as possible venues.

### **Member Issues**

Jeff Schaaf notified everyone that longtime WRWAC member Ed Yaglou recently passed away in December of 2019. He will be sorely missed.

Dave Small has submitted paperwork announcing that he will be resigning from WRWAC as of March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020. There will then be an opening on the committee under the general public, alternate position, that should be filled.

Brett Russ notified everyone that early steps have been taken in researching how to officially form a Friends of the Ware River group. A person in the 'DCR friends' network has been contacted to help assist in the process. Brett also submitted a NEMBA grant for either \$5,000 or \$10,000 to kick start trail work preparations. The money could be used to purchase tools and materials and to construct a shed to house said tools for the Friends group.

Cindy Schlener asked if it would be possible for a WRWAC meeting to be held after the MWRA/DEP review of the access plan but before DCR's public presentation of the plan. Dan Clark answered that he doesn't anticipate any major edits coming from those groups but will keep the committee informed.

Jeff Schaaf asked when/if the rough draft of the plan could be disseminated to committee members. He was concerned on how/if public comments have altered the proposals presented at the November WRWAC meeting. Dan Clark will

investigate the issue and determine at what stage the committee should have access to the draft. Cindy Schlener expressed a desire to see the updated maps before they are presented publicly.

A member of the public commented on the Long Pond permit program. He is against the proposal to do away with the large motor permits (above 25hp with a 4-stroke engine or above 20hp with a 2-stroke engine) on Long Pond. He asked for more information on why it is being proposed. Dan Clark answered that the proposal is to stop issuing the annual large motor permits for Long Pond and go back to the standard motor restrictions (no boats with motors larger than 25hp with a 4-stroke engine or 20hp with a 2-stroke engine). The proposal is being made for public safety, to make regulations consistent with other water bodies in the system, and to make the regulations easier to enforce. The permit system for large motors was originally started as a pilot program but was never analyzed/evaluated on whether to discontinue the program. It was stated that no boating accidents have been documented at Long Pond.

Jeff Schaaf asked if DCR would be willing to hold a user-group meeting with boaters to discuss the Long Pond permit program. It was determined that an additional user-group meeting will happen between 2-3 representatives of the boating community and DCR.

Thomas Hughes commented that he appreciates the Long Pond permit program, supports it, and stated that the water body doesn't seem to be overcrowded. It was noted that swimming is not allowed at Long Pond.

Matt Hopkinson stated that Long Pond is the only pond in the watershed where DCR owns all the land and fully controls it. He talked about it being a shallow, narrow pond. He also noted that the town of Rutland has regulations that prohibit motor boating within a certain distance of the shoreline. He felt that there may be other ponds in the watershed that are more appropriate for allowing motorboats.

Cindy Schlener asked if any water quality testing is done at Long Pond and why specifically does DCR want to do away with the large motor permits. Dan Clark answered that it would help make the regulations consistent across water bodies in the watershed. Currently, swimming is not allowed at Long Pond, but water

skiing is allowed, which inevitably puts a person in the water. A member of the public stated that other ponds in the watershed allow swimming, and to prohibit swimming at Long Pond would be an inconsistency.

Dick Williams commented that he is still working on finding more information on the management at Fisherman's Road. He contacted DCR personnel at Long Pond and was told that they plow and maintain that road.

Brett Russ stated that one of the biggest attractions to this area of the state is the open space and outdoor recreational opportunities. Chipping away at that access makes the area less desirable to live in or visit. He appreciates the balance between protection and recreation that has been fostered over the years. He hopes that in the absence of data to show any kind of meaningful reason to upset that balance, it can be maintained.

A member of the public asked about the roads proposal that calls for closing DCR internal roads to unauthorized vehicle traffic from January through September. The gates will be closed and locked. The proposal allows for some DCR gates to be unlocked and open October through December each year to permitted hunters. He commented that he fly fishes the Ware River off Charnock Hill Road and if gates would be locked, he would have a 3-mile walk to his fishing spot. He also wondered if MassWildlife will continue to stock the Ware River with fish if vehicle access via DCR gates is limited 9 months out of the year.

Jeff Schaaf agreed that the road closures could be a potential access issue for people who fish. Since the last meeting, he also investigated the existing canoe/kayak launch site near Rt. 122 as well as the newly proposed canoe/kayak launch site at the end of Covered Bridge Road. He found the new launch site to have limited access to the river and felt it would deny access for many people. If the proposed launch site is not changed, he would not vote to endorse the access plan. Matt Hopkinson agreed about the limited access on Covered Bridge Road. But his bigger concern was regarding safety in moving the launch site upstream, resulting in people launching downstream and then having to paddle back upstream to get back to their car. The way it currently works is that people launch upstream and when they turn around, are headed downstream guaranteed not to get too tired paddling back to their car.

Jeff Schaaf commented on the Rt. 122 buffer zone. He stated that provisions have been made to allow the rail trail to continue through the buffer zone as well as for a snowmobile trail to clip the buffer. He feels that the launch site at Rt. 122 should also be grandfathered in and allowed to remain in place.

A member of the public asked if MassWildlife has been notified of the proposed changes to the DCR roads policy. Dan Clark answered that DCR had a meeting with MassWildlife's commissioner a couple months back to brief them of the proposals. To clarify, the proposal states that all DCR internal roads will be closed to unauthorized vehicle traffic January through September. Some DCR gates will be unlocked and open October through December each year to permitted hunters. A member of the public commented that he uses those roads to access areas for reasons other than hunting, such as mushroom picking and dog training. If the gates were locked, he would lose access as he isn't able to walk to those areas. A member of the public commented that opening the gates from October through December only provides access for two seasons of hunting and doesn't include the turkey or trapping seasons, among others. It was also stated that locking the gates would push people to train their dogs closer to busy roads and could be a safety issue.

A member of the public brought up an executive order put out by Governor Baker shortly after taking office. He couldn't remember the specific order but said that it relates to unnecessary regulatory burden and public safety. He will research the order and then send it to committee members so that they are aware of it.

Two members of the public stated the closing the internal roads would place a burden on disabled and elderly individuals, making it difficult for them to access areas they've used for decades. He asked why DCR wants to close the roads. Dan Clark answered that there are several reasons. Throughout the agency, there are no roads that are open to the public 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This causes issues with illegal dumping, a vehicle got stuck in a swamp a couple winters back and was stuck there for months, vandalism, other unauthorized activities at night, and the general wear and tear on roads. The roads are needed by DCR for certain management activities and because there is so much public traffic on the roads 24/7, the maintenance and repair burden are more extensive than if the roads were closed to the public. Closing the roads would bring the regulations in line with the rest of the agency. Cindy Schlener asked if a single internal parking lot

could be created/remain open throughout the year; roads could still be closed except the one in/out to the parking lot. Dan Clark answered that it hasn't been considered but is open to suggestions or specific proposals.

A member of the public talked about his positive experience using public lands in northern New Hampshire where road closures are done at certain times of the year for specific reasons: mud season, washouts, general damage, safety.

A member of the public stated that most of the sportspeople use the land do so in a respectful manner and are not committing illegal acts. He hopes the roads won't be closed due to a few bad actors.

Dick Williams asked if the prison camp is designated as a historic district. No one knew for certain. But if it is, he would like to see that area remain open.

Brett Russ asked if DCR has heard back from the Army Corps of Engineers about the T7 reroute proposal. Dan Clark answered that he did reach out to them and was told that they are unclear on the process to construct a new trail on their land. DCR told Army Corps were told that under ideal circumstances the long-term maintenance of the trail would go to the currently forming Friends' group under DCR's supervision.

A member of the public commented that he is against the proposal to prohibit paddleboards on all watershed-controlled ponds. Dan Clark clarified that DCR has reconsidered and paddleboarding will be allowed at Comet Pond but not at Long Pond. The rationale being paddleboarding is prohibited except where designated by the commissioner in the Ware River, and DCR's designation is Comet Pond because swimming is already allowed there. Swimming is not allowed at Long Pond.

Cindy Schlener commented that she would like committee members to receive copies of the draft access plan with maps after the DEP/MWRA internal review of the draft plan but before the open meeting where the final draft of the access plan is officially presented to the public.

A member of the public expressed displeasure that Long Pond permit holders were not notified of the proposal to do away with the large motor permits on Long Pond.

**Meeting End Time: 8:18 PM**

**Upcoming WRWAC Meetings**

- Thursday, February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020 at 7 PM – Rutland Free Public Library (downstairs), 280 Main Street, Rutland, MA 01543