

**Ware River Watershed Advisory Committee Meeting**  
**Thursday, January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2019**  
**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, John Scannell

**Members of the Public Present:**

Lydia Barter, Christine Beriau, Sean Blood, Gary Brigham, Bill Dobson, Dennis Guberski, Bob Hatch, Kathleen James, Denise Kellicker, Brian Kennedy, Rich Koude, Paul Kreswick, Mike Priffi, Peter Richards, Brian Trimby, Marianne Wojcicki, Dean Zuppio

**Meeting Minutes**

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

**Approval of minutes from meeting on Thursday, October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2018**

Brett Russ made a motion to accept the minutes from the Ware River Watershed Advisory Committee (WRWAC) meeting on October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2018 with edits. Margo Petracone seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved. Dick Williams abstained from voting since he didn't attend the October meeting.

**Update on the Ware River public access management plan - DCR**

Dan Clark updated the committee on DCR's progress on updating the Ware River public access management plan.

Internal discussions have happened with Quabbin and Ware River staff. The public survey has been available online for several weeks and will remain open through the end of January. A series of meetings were held over the past couple months between DCR and representatives of various user groups. In the near future DCR will schedule in-person meetings with partner agencies that have a vested interest in the watershed such as Army Corps. of Engineers, MassDEP, MassWildlife, and the Massachusetts Water Resource Authority (MWRA). There is also a plan to release the public survey to all Division of Water Supply (DWSP) staff and give them a chance to think about Ware River management and give

their feedback. Those results would be kept separate from the general public's responses. The goal is to then start breaking down the survey data and have a first-glance summary ready by March.

Initial results of the public survey were discussed. There have been about 900 responses submitted so far. The survey featured five open response questions, which can take some time to sort through and categorize. The survey link was given to committee members, town halls, and direct mailed to 1,000 people who own land that abut the watershed. Early observations from the responses are showing that there is a diversity of where people live (inside or outside the watershed), how they use the land, and why they use the land. Two-thirds of respondents felt that the regulations (what is allowable) were clear, while one-third felt they were unclear. Many respondents cited concern regarding illegal activity, ATV usage specifically. Some other concerns that were mentioned were habitat degradation (real or perceived), unsafe swimming, blocked trails, usage restrictions, aquatic invasive species, and beavers.

Dick Williams asked if DCR is happy with the amount of responses they have got from the survey. Dan Clark answered that he anticipates over 1,000 responses coming in before it is closed. He clarified that it is not a scientific based, statistical survey, but hopes that it will provide a lot of good feedback that DCR can take into account when crafting policy.

The meetings between DCR and the watershed user groups were discussed. Five meetings were held with representatives from four different user groups. Those groups were mountain bikers, snowmobilers, and two horseback riding groups. There was also a meeting with a Sierra Club representative who represented multiple recreation interests. DCR had some concerns over several of the proposals brought forward at those user group meetings. Dan Clark reminded everyone that one of the main thrusts of the access plan update is to shift recreation away from the Ware River intake with the understanding that trails could be accommodated elsewhere in the watershed. Some activities may need to be minimized or eliminated that occur closest to the intake. Additional meetings with the user group representatives will be scheduled for the spring season.

Brett Russ asked for a rough sense/guideline on how far away an activity needs to be from the intake. John Scannell answered that it is a general idea at this point and that no hard numbers have yet been set.

Martha Gach asked for clarification on the upcoming meetings DCR is planning to schedule with the user group representatives. Dan Clark answered that meetings are being planned for spring to meet with the same user groups DCR met with a few months back to get more feedback and make sure everyone is on the same page before the new plan is written.

A member of the public asked how the user group representatives were selected and if they could be listed somewhere publicly, specifically their name and contact information. Dan Clark reminded everyone that the committee and general public at a previous WRWAC meeting decided which groups, and who would represent each group, would meet with DCR regarding the access plan update. Those representatives can and should report back to their user group community on the substance of said meetings. These user group meetings are not open to the general public.

A member of the public who owns land that abuts the watershed asked if there are any proposals for development off River Road. John Scannell answered that there are no development proposals on watershed property in that area.

Jeff Schaaf asked if a summary of the public survey results would be ready for presentation to the committee by mid-March. Dan Clark answered that it shouldn't be a problem.

Brett Russ asked if multiple user groups could collaborate with DCR together at a single meeting in the future to distill their interests/themes into a common set. Dan Clark agreed that it would be beneficial at some point to have all the user groups together, but noted that certain groups had requested to meet individually in the past. It was determined that the specifics for the next round of user group meetings should be discussed at the next committee meeting scheduled for March.

A member of the public asked how the first draft of the plan will be created. Dan Clark answered that a working group will be formed within DCR-DWSP of key

personnel to begin developing the plan and crafting language after all input and feedback from surveys and meetings have been digested. John Scannell added that the initial timeline called for the first draft to be completed by September or October. If the plan is finalized before the end of the year new regulations could go into effect on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020.

### **Member Issues**

Jeff Schaaf updated everyone on the legislative changes being proposed for the committee; dropping the groups represented on the committee that have since disbanded and getting them replacing. Anne Gobi will be filing the bill by the end of the week and doesn't anticipate any difficulties with it.

Dick Williams commented on the forestry operation off Rt. 9 at the Quabbin watershed to praise the project. He would like to see that level of quality forestry done at other sites as well. He also spoke about the benefits of burning wood chips for energy/heat, noting how impressive Quabbin's wood chip boiler system is.

Dick Williams talked about a recent meeting he attended in Rutland about the benefits of using solar panels. He was shocked at how clean the technology is and would like to see DCR put up solar panels on their buildings or other appropriate sites. Matt Hopkinson added that DCR has multiple depleted gravel pits that are flatland and would seemingly be a great spot to construct solar panels. He would like to see legislation investigated on whether or not this type of usage is prohibited on watershed lands or not.

Dick Williams noted that he is planning to talk with Anne Gobi about getting a sunset clause put into the current anti-trapping state law regarding beavers.

Brett Russ commented on his review of the civic engagement plan and thought there had been discussion about allowing a designated committee member to be in the room during the writing of the access plan, attending internal meetings, etc. John Scannell answered that the hope is through the committee and user group collaborative meetings, that there will be a common understanding of what will be in the plan before DCR internally puts it on paper.

Dick Williams made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Dave Small seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

**Meeting End Time: 7:44 PM**

**Upcoming WRWAC Meetings**

- Thursday, March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2019 at 7 PM – Rutland Free Public Library (downstairs), 280 Main Street, Rutland, MA 01543