

**Ware River Watershed Advisory Committee Meeting**  
**Thursday, March 20, 2025**  
**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 (vice chairperson)**

Alternate:

Hubbardston Selectboard: **Cindy Schlener**

Alternate: **Dave Marsh**

Oakham Selectboard: **Thomas Hughes**

Alternate: **Phillip Warbasse**

Rutland Selectboard: **Darren Ross**

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: **Eric Van Reet**

Alternate:

Massachusetts Audubon Society: Martha Gach

Alternate:

Sierra Club: Matt Hopkinson

Alternate:

General Public: Mark DuBois

Alternate: **Brett Russ**

## **DCR Staff Present**

Dan Clark, Justin Gonsor, John Scannell

## **Members of the Public Present**

Erik Baldwin, Sean Blood, Gary Brigham, Richard Gaffney, Tim Gribbens, Kathy James, Denise Kellicker, Paul McNeil, Dave Morin, Ed Novak, Richard Sanborn, Rusty Savignac, Moussa Siri, Marianne Wojcicki, Dean Zuppio

## **Meeting Minutes**

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

### ***Approval of minutes from meeting on January 30, 2025***

Thomas Hughes made a motion to accept the minutes from the Ware River Watershed Advisory Committee (WRWAC) meeting on January 30, 2025. Phillip Warbasse seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

### ***Discussion regarding potential reopening of Reuben Walker and Prison Camp Roads***

Jeff Schaaf asked if DCR had come to a decision regarding reopening the Reuben Walker and Prison Camp roads. John Scannell answered that no decision has been made or review completed. There was discussion on if this specific roads issue is separate or part of the biennial review process. Jeff thought it was a separate issue, noting a discussion of the road closures was conditional on the committee's support for the public access plan update and thought an answer was forthcoming. Dennis suggested scheduling the next meeting 2-weeks out to get an answer from DCR. Cindy asked when DCR could have an answer. John thought an answer should be possible within a couple months.

Turkey season was discussed. The season starts on April 28. Multiple committee members were in support of asking for an answer from DCR before that date. It was stated that reopening the roads to vehicles would give better access to hunters during the turkey hunting season, specifically to a MassWildlife Wildlife Management Area (WMA).

Dennis made a motion to schedule the next WRWAC meeting roughly a month out with the goal to get an answer from DCR regarding reopening

the roads. Darren Ross seconded the motion. During discussion, the motion was amended to hold the next meeting roughly 2-weeks out. The motion was unanimously approved and next WRWAC meeting scheduled for April 17<sup>th</sup> at the Rutland Library, pending reservation of the room.

Mike Wood spoke of letters of support for reopening the roads from multiple watershed town select boards. There was some confusion on which towns have submitted letters to DCR/WRWAC in support of the reopening the roads and who the letters were sent to.

Details surrounding Reuben Walker and Prison Camps roads and the access they provide were discussed. Whether one of the roads was more important in opening than the other was also discussed. It was mentioned that for general public access, Reuben Walker Road could be more important but for hunter access, Prison Camp Road could be more important. It was stated that Reuben Walker Road provides access for trout fishing as well. Mike Wood also mentioned that both roads provide additional access for older individuals or those with mobility issues. These are part of the reasoning for why WRWAC is requesting both roads be reopened to vehicles.

There was discussion about provisionally reopening the roads for turkey hunting season (to permitted turkey hunters) and then reevaluating the road closures after the season. Cindy expressed support for this idea.

There was discussion around why the roads were initially closed to vehicles and the hesitation to reopening them back up. The gate closures represented an effort to limit vehicle access and pollution in the watershed when the public access plan was last updated. The update process started prior to 2020, was delayed due to the pandemic, and then finalized in 2023.

### ***Suggestions for biennial review topics***

Brett proposed three topics on behalf of the trail's subcommittee for the biennial review:

1. Reestablishing the connection from the lower part of the T7 trail back to Army Corps. land.
2. Complete the Stone Road connection, just north of Barre Falls Dam, that heads west towards Riis Farm.

3. Signage suggested at a dangerous crossing on Rt. 62. (It was determined that this was a town road, and the signage would not be under DCR's purview.)

A continuation of this agenda item will occur at the next meeting on April 17.

### ***Trails subcommittee 2024 report***

Due to technical difficulties with technology at the library this item had to be postponed until the next meeting on April 17.

### ***Member Issues***

Cindy asked about the upcoming logging operation that was spoken about at the last meeting. She was looking for reassurances that the Montgomery Road cart path is not degraded by the logging operation. Dan Clark will pass along the request to the foresters.

Dennis complimented DCR on the current condition of trails in the WRW. He recently was on the trails and spoke with a DCR ranger who was doing trail improvements.

Phillip Warbasse asked about a site in Oakham that abuts watershed property. The town is in the process of leasing some of this land for a lithium battery storage facility. He stated that although it is prohibited by Oakham bylaws, the permitting process is working its way through the state system. John Scannell mentioned that he will have his staff investigate the issue.

Mike Wood had heard a report that watershed rangers were at Long Pond checking people's fishing licenses. It was confirmed that this is part of the ranger's duties.

Dan Clark alerted the committee to some recent/upcoming activities in the WRW:

- Water is currently being transferred from the Ware River to Quabbin, approaching a billion gallons so far this season.
- There is a potential upcoming project that the Wachusett Greenways group has submitted. The proposal is to reroute a section of the Mass. Central Rail Trail to make it ADA compliant. It is the section that crosses Whitehall Road at the entrance to Whitehall State Park.

DCR has approved the proposal, and the Greenways group is now applying for a funding grant.

Dennis mentioned that sections of Whitehall Road need to be repatched.

Darren Ross requested an educational tour of the WRW intake building for committee members. Dan answered that he will coordinate a visit with MWRA and get back to the committee as soon as possible.

Mike Wood mentioned that he is organizing an upcoming youth pheasant hunt, and he would like to host it at the Heath area site along Rt. 62. The sportsman's club would stock the pheasant. There is limited parking at that location on the street and he was hoping the watershed gate could be opened for the event to allow people to park safely. The event will be in September. Mike will submit a formal request with Dan or John.

***Meeting End Time: 7:59 PM***

**Upcoming WRWAC Meetings**

- April 17, 2025; 7pm – Rutland Council on Aging, 53 Glenwood Road, Rutland, MA 01543