

**Ware River Watershed Advisory Committee Meeting**  
**Thursday, April 12<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 (Co-Chairman)**

Alternate:

A Rod and Gun Club: Joe Cataldo

Alternate: Bryan Waterman

Barre Selectboard: **Martha Varnot**

Alternate: **Edward Yaglou**

Hubbardston Selectboard: **Thomas Bratko**

Alternate:

Oakham Selectmen: **Thomas Hughes**

Alternate: Phillip Warbasse

Rutland Selectmen: **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: **Helen Viner**

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:**

Ken Canfield, Dan Clark, Sara Cohen, Herm Eck, Justin Gonsor, Lisa Gustavsen, Leo Roy, John Scannell, Bernadetta Susianti

**Members of the Public Present:**

Tom Baldwin, Jon Boyle, Philip Brault, Gary Brigham, Leslie Choquette, Lexi Dewey, Bill Dobson, Molly Dominelk, Jamie Faucher, Lisa Ferro, Jenn Flanagan, Brian Forestal, Stephanie Frend, Chris Goodhine, Dennis Guberski, Cam Howe, Tim Howe, Eric Huard, Suzanne Huard, Joshua Jody, Judith Jones, Mason Jordan, Sumner Jordan, Becky Kalaghen, Denise Kellicker, Frank Kenneway, Paul Kreswick, Michael Leblanc, Michele Lemons, Darvin Madrigal, Ben Marien, Jonathan Marien, Brian McMahan, Colleen Melanson, Larry Miller, Nancy Monson, Chris Mulroy, Lauren Mulroy, Ed Novak, Andrew Petty John, Joshua Plisinski, Gilbert Pollen, Karen Potter, Michael Priffi, Tim Putnam, Steve Salvadore, Rich Sanborn, Cindy Schlener, Donna Severson, Alycia Smith, Connor Smith, Chris Stark, Glenn Tatian, Brian Trimby, David Violette, William Virousis, Diana Walther, Douglas Walther, Marianne Wojcicki, Tyler Wolanin, Ellen Yorston, Dean Zuppio

**Meeting Minutes**

**Meeting Start Time: 7:18 PM**

**Welcome and introductions**

DCR staff person Sara Cohen opened the meeting and acted as a facilitator and moderator for the evening. Throughout the meeting she tracked key issues, areas of agreement, questions that will need to be answered, issues that need to be dealt with, and the next steps moving forward.

DCR will open the meeting by describing some of their policies and regulations in regards to watershed protection. There will then be a discussion to review the existing trails, come to a common understanding on where they are located, and

what they are named. Existing problems with the trails and potential ways to address those concerns will then be considered.

John Scannell has been named the new director for the Division of Water Supply Protection (DWSP), replacing Jonathan Yeo.

A member of the public asked for information on WRWAC. John Scannell answered that the committee acts in an advisory role. The committee doesn't make any final decisions in regards to the public access plan.

### **Overview of DCR's watershed protection priorities and key next steps in watershed management process**

John Scannell reiterated that DCR-DWSP owns and manages watershed lands to protect metropolitan Boston's water supply. Each watershed has its own public access plan that outlines how DCR can allow, yet control, public use of the lands. This allows DCR to show to their regulators that the water supply is being protected.

John also reminded everyone that the public access plans get updated roughly every ten years. The intent is to update the Ware River public access plan in early FY19 (later this summer). In looking at the Ware River watershed (WRW) as a whole, most of the trails are located closest to the intake, where water leaves the watershed. As you get farther away from the intake, there tends to be less recreation and trail access. From a watershed protection standpoint, this doesn't make a lot of sense. DWSP would generally like to start over in the watershed; to look at what and where public access is allowed, and what makes sense going forward.

A member of the public commented that there are also many roads near the intake that cars and trucks drive on throughout most of the year and asked if that was a water quality concern. John Scannell answered that it is a concern and something that is constantly being looked at.

The process for how the public access plan is updated was explained. Generally, a public survey is first put out to get a sense of people's thoughts and concerns. WRWAC is also surveyed as part of this process. DWSP will also meet with individual user groups to address their specific concerns and desires;

snowmobilers, bicyclists, equestrians, etc. A draft version of the plan will then be completed and formally presented to the committee, followed by a public comment period.

A member of the public asked about how much of the drinkable water in Boston comes from the WRW. John Scannell answered that he didn't know the percentage offhand but talked about the ways in which water from the WRW is used. Water can be taken in from the Ware River to Quabbin Reservoir during certain times of year (winter/early spring) and when it won't affect the health of the river downstream. The Army Corps of Engineers also asks DWSP to take in water from the ware river for flood control from time to time. A member of the public commented that the Ware River diversion restrictions seem to line up with the times of year that can have the highest water turbulence and runoff. It takes a number of years for water in the WRW to get to Boston. The same aqueduct that moves water from the Ware River to Quabbin also transports water from Quabbin to Wachusett; an engineering marvel.

Large maps of the WRW were displayed around the room that detail existing forest road and trails, both authorized and unauthorized.

**Ensure common understanding:**

- **Review existing trails, including key connector trails**
  - A member of the public talked about the Mass Central Rail Trail and the improvements that DCR allowed to be made to the trail that has resulted in more people recreating in the area.
  - Margo Petracone talked about an event in 1998 where several key trails (T-trails) in the WRW were walked with DCR staff and agreed upon as approved horseback riding trails. Trail markers were then placed on those trails; roads were not marked with T signs. There is confusion over T6 as it does not appear on the most recent (2010) horseback trail map.
  - A member of the public asked about T3, which is an authorized trail that was closed last year due to erosion. He would like to see a plan in place to restore the trail and have it reopened. He stated that T3 is an important connector trail.
  - A member of the public asked for clarification on the mid-state trail regarding what uses are allowed. John Scannell clarified that the

portion of the mid-state trail on DCR property is hiking only (bicycling down Pine Plains Road is allowed as well). Brett Russ commented that the mid-state trail is also a key connector trail and he would like to see it opened to multi-use non-motorized travel. A member of the public commented that they would like to see it opened to horseback riding.

- **Clarify names and locations on maps**

- The public was encouraged to view the large maps of the WRW on the walls and use sticky notes to paste comments on the maps regarding specific trails. DCR staff will be reviewing those comments.

**Take stock of existing problems:**

- **Water quality/erosion concerns**

- Ken Canfield talked about T3 and why it was originally closed. He mentioned erosion issues but also highlighted the multiple unauthorized trails that branch off of T3. There are so many illegal offshoots that it has become difficult to tell where the original T3 actually was.
- John Scannell talked about some of the criteria to take into account when evaluating a trail: proximity to a resource, slope of the landscape, soil type, water flow dynamics, etc. Criteria for what DWSP considers a good trail will be assessed and made clear in the new public access plan. This will make it easier to evaluate existing and proposed trails going forward.

- **Recreation concerns**

- Tom Bratko asked about the water quality concerns related to mountain biking and horseback riding. Brett Russ clarified the question, asking where on the spectrum of risk would horseback riding or mountain biking be. John Scannell answered that from a watershed protection standpoint, any human activity can pose a potential impact. DWSP has a responsibility to limit risk to protect the water supply and ensure that water quality remains high. Human waste, animal waste, erosion, and excess nutrient loading were given as examples of impact. The cutting and use of unauthorized trails was also given as a reason for concern.
- Tom Bratko asked about motor boats being allowed on Quabbin reservoir. John Scannell noted that boats have been allowed on Quabbin going back to the 1950's, but that it was not a watershed

protection decision. The goal is to keep the activity controlled and monitored in a way that limits risk. A good deal of concern from public access stems from the volume, repetition, and location of a particular use.

- T6 was discussed. It doesn't currently appear on any maps as an approved trail. There was debate on whether or not it was an approved trail in the past but simply never made it onto a map officially. Multiple members of the public and committee would like to see it as an authorized trail in the new public access plan. There was public discussion about the unauthorized trail closest to T6, whether it was a road or not. Ken Canfield indicated that it was a skid trail.
- A member of the public asked about a set of new bridges that are planned to be installed throughout the WRW; she would like to see horseback riders allowed to use those bridges. The bridges off of Fisher Road and the rail trail were mentioned as important connector trail locations. John Scannell added that no decisions have yet been made on who might be allowed to use those bridges. The bridges would first need to be evaluated from a safety standpoint. Margo Petracone asked when the decision on those bridges would be made. As the process proceeds, the committee will be kept in the loop.
- A member of the public stated that a few gates throughout the watershed pose dangerous situations (Blake Road and Wood Road) to horseback riders that need to go around the gates; he wants to see the issue addressed. One gate was mentioned that has a pipe sticking out of it. A set of gates that were constructed high enough to keep out ATVs but low enough to allow horses to safely step over were talked about. Some of those gates have gotten washed out and are now too high for horses to get over. Tom Bratko noted that Herm Eck and his staff are planning to address these issues.
- It was asked that the square signs that are located on some of the authorized trails be rounded off to get rid of the sharp edges.
- A member of the public asked if bicycles are allowed on the T-trails; he would like to see them allowed if they aren't. John Scannell answered that bicycles are not allowed on the T-trails but changing that policy could be discussed as part of the public access plan update. The intent is to produce better, less confusing maps and

- signage for the public going forward as well. Brett Russ added that bicycling is allowed on most, if not all, forest roads in the watershed.
- A member of the public commented on seeing a lot of illegal ATV/dirt bike usage in the watershed and worries that it can't be stopped by simply putting up physical barriers. She questioned whether trails should be created to sustain those illegal uses. John Scannell talked about the difficulty of monitoring and enforcing access on such a large tract of land. A member of the public commented that one way to discourage ATV/dirt bike use is to allow more multi-use (bicycling, horseback riding, etc.) throughout the watershed to get more eyes and ears in the field to view and report violations.
  - Dave Small commented on why some trails are not multi-use and only allow a specific activity. He noted that some user groups like to have their own set of trails and talked about conflicts that can occur between different user groups on multi-use trails. If more areas are opened up to multi-use, those conflicts can be more likely to occur. Tom Bratko added that in his experience, he has seen very little user conflict between groups in the watershed; most people have been courteous.

**Discuss potential ways to address concerns through on-site adjustments and/or relocation uses to alternative areas of the watershed**

A member of the public asked if it would be possible in the future to create a pilot program for a new recreation activity not currently in the public access plan, without waiting every ten years for when the plan is formally updated. John Scannell answered that there is a broad framework in place in the current plan for approving new activities between formal updates; that process should be specified and defined more clearly in the new plan.

A member of the public commented that they would like to see a protocol put in the new plan in regards to maintenance/mitigation of existing trails going forward. John Scannell agreed and talked about his desire to lay out that process. DWSP is looking to be more open to involving user groups in the maintenance of trails.

A member of the public proposed a total evaluation and assessment of all the trails, both authorized and unauthorized, in the watershed.

Jeff Schaaf asked about DWSP putting together a set of criteria on what they consider to be a good/sustainable trail. The committee would need the criteria before discussing shortcomings of past trails or evaluating potential new trails to the system. A member of the public added that DCR already has a trail guidelines and best practices manual; no need to re-create it. It can be found online at <https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2016/08/tf/dcr-guidelines.pdf>.

A member of the public commented that if recreation is pushed more towards areas away from the intake, adequate parking would need to be built and taken into consideration at any new access points. Parking lots will also need to be large enough to accommodate horse trailers, snowmobile trailers, and other large vehicles. Another member of the public asked if DCR would be building new trails in the areas farther away from the intake. John Scannell answered that there are a number of unauthorized trails in that section of the watershed that could potentially become approved trails in the new access plan. This would get around cutting a whole new trail system.

A member of the public asked about snowmobile access; he would like to see smaller 'quiet zones'. Currently there are 'quiet zones' throughout the watershed where snowmobiling is not allowed. These areas were designated years ago in conjunction with the committee and DCR.

A member of the public suggested adding a best practices section in the new access plan in regards to how different user groups should interact with one another: snowmobilers and horseback riders; horseback riders and bicyclists, etc. It could act as a safety and etiquette manual for users. Brett Russ added that the public needs to collaborate and makes DCR's job easier if the public desires more public access; complaining and raising low priority requests only hurts the cause.

Ed Yaglou asked about how many acres are in the WRW as well as how many employees work in the area. The watershed encompasses 24,000 acres and there are 6 people on staff for that section. John Scannell added that DWSP will be addressing the formation of partnerships regarding trail maintenance when the public access plan is updated. A member of the public stated that he believes there is a large group of people that are willing to volunteer their time to help/maintain trails in the watershed and urged DCR to take advantage of their



services. John Scannell reminded everyone that there will be a Ware River cleanup day on Saturday, April 28<sup>th</sup>. The date will line up with DCR's larger Park Serve Day which gives residents the opportunity to volunteer at DCR properties across the state to help parks prepare for the upcoming summer recreation season. DCR will help organize trash bags, water, and snacks for the day as well as publicizing the event on their website. Past clean up days have resulted in 3-4 truck loads worth of trash being removed from the watershed. Everyone will meet for 9AM at the DCR Oakham Field Office located at 578 Old Turnpike Road, Oakham, MA 01068.

### **Review next steps**

It was suggested that user groups come up with safety and etiquette manuals regarding best practices when encountering different user groups on trails. DWSP could then help publicize those manuals.

Tom Bratko would like an answer by the next meeting regarding a letter that was sent to DCR on behalf of the committee. The letter asked why T6 was closed, why it remains closed, and if it could temporarily be reopened before the public access plan is updated. There was discussion on whether or not it was incorrectly removed (clerical error) when the 2010 map was created.

A member of the public stated that the process in DCR's maintenance plan to become an official organization that maintains trails can be difficult and cumbersome. She is hoping that DWSP can simplify the process in their public access plan.

Jeff Schaaf suggested scheduling a meeting in May to further this trail discussion. The next meeting focused on trails is scheduled for Thursday, May 24<sup>th</sup> at 7PM. The tentative location is the Barre Town Hall located on 2 Exchange Street, Barre, MA 01005. Tom Bratko suggested DCR come to that meeting prepared with a set of trail criteria; what makes a good trail, where trails should be located, what makes a sustainable trail, etc. If possible, the committee would to be sent a copy of the trail criteria in advance of the May 24<sup>th</sup> meeting. It was also suggested that DCR come prepared to this meeting with a draft proposal that lays out a road map and timeline going forward regarding trails and the public access plan update.

It was requested that DWSP's map of the authorized and unauthorized trails be posted online. It will be posted and can be found at:  
[https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2018/04/13/WRAC\\_TrailMtgMap2018.pdf](https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2018/04/13/WRAC_TrailMtgMap2018.pdf)

**Meeting End Time: 9:14 PM**

**Upcoming WRWAC Meetings**

- Thursday, May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018 at 7 PM – Rutland Free Public Library (downstairs), 280 Main Street, Rutland, MA 01543
- Thursday, May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2018 at 7 PM – Barre Town Hall (tentative location), 2 Exchange Street, Barre, MA 01005