

Ware River Watershed Advisory Committee Meeting
Thursday, May 10th, 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 (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:

Dan Clark, Herm Eck, Justin Gonsor

Members of the Public Present:

Mark Fauteux, Denise Kellicker, Cindy Schlener, Marianne Wojcicki, Dean Zuppio

Meeting Minutes

Meeting Start Time: 7:02 PM

Approval of minutes from meetings on Thursday, March 15th, 2018 and Thursday, April 12th, 2018

Dave Small made a motion to accept the minutes from the Ware River Watershed Advisory Committee (WRWAC) meeting on March 15th, 2018. Tom Bratko seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved. Dick Williams, Martha Gach, and John Root abstained from voting because they didn't attend the March meeting.

Dick Williams made a motion to accept the minutes from the WRWAC meeting on April 12th, 2018 with edits. John Root seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved. Robin Langer abstained from voting because he didn't attend the April meeting.

FY19 ware river watershed forestry lot proposals

Herm Eck presented three FY19 ware river watershed forestry projects proposed for harvest to the committee. Detailed descriptions of each lot can be found online at: <https://arcg.is/S95mi>.

The 1st lot proposed is named WR-19-19-1. The largest patch is located east of Granger Road at Rt. 62. The rest of the patches are scattered south down Granger Road and Old Worcester Road. 10.3 acres are projected to be cut. This proposal targets several patches of red pine plantation that are succumbing to an

invasive insect. Removal and salvage of red pine in order to increase native species diversity has been a goal of DWSP for many years. These will be red pine removal regeneration cuts. The larger patch will be a clearcut, and may require commissioner approval if the cut is to be over 5 acres. The other stands will be patch cuts of less than 2 acres. The understory is dominated by sapling and pole sized trees of many species. The rail trail will not be closed during logging. Stone walls are present within the lot, but no foundations or cellar holes are known. If applicable, DWSP will follow any additional recommendations from DCR's archeologist regarding protection of sensitive sites. MassWildlife's Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP) have determined that certain state-listed sensitive species or habitats may exist within the northern section of the lot proposal area. The Division of Water Supply Protection (DWSP) will coordinate with NHESP and follow recommendations to protect these species during the proposed harvest.

Brett Russ asked for more information on the 3 silviculture techniques listed: intermediate, prep/establishment, and regeneration cuts. Herm Eck answered that an establishment cut will result in enough sunlight reaching the ground floor to develop regeneration and increase seedling success. Regeneration cuts would create larger openings in the forest canopy than establishment cuts resulting in even more sunlight hitting the forest floor and providing enough space for seedlings to develop into mature trees. Intermediate cuts, usually called thinning, are generally done in younger stands. The idea is to reduce the number of lower quality trees growing in stand with the aim of quickening the development of the remainder.

Cindy Schlener asked if logging is restricted during spring to protect nesting birds and other forms of wildlife. Herm Eck answered that forestry operations only tend to consider state-listed species. The hope is that wildlife in general should benefit from the forestry program prioritizing species and age class diversity. He added that the field mowing schedule does take nesting birds into account.

Dick Williams asked how often NHESP update their priority habitat bubbles for listed species. Herm Eck thought they had the option to update every few months or so, but that their reports get created every 5-10 years. Brett Russ asked about what a typical NHESP study looks like. Herm answered that a species can be documented in various ways for a particular area. Biologists will then

review the area to determine if it has the appropriate habitat for said species. A priority habitat bubble could then be drawn around that piece of land.

Brett Russ asked if there are any rules regarding what size stream requires a bridge to be built over it. Herm Eck answered that there is no statewide regulation but that DCR generally requires that a bridge be built over any stream with water in it; intermittent streams do not always require that a bridge be built. The types of bridges that get built can vary and it is the logger's responsibility to provide them.

The 2nd lot proposed is named WR-19-19-2 and is located northwest of Granger Road where it intersects with Adams Road. This proposal covers 63.5 acres and is dominated by large, low quality, "old field" white pine. These stands are even aged and have little species diversity and overstory. Removing patches of overstory white pine will create a new age class of seedlings/saplings with a more diverse species composition. Within the white pine stands, 5-10 openings will be established, totaling 10-15 acres. One up to 5 acre opening will be established in the white pine hardwood stand. Another 2-2.5 acre opening will be established in the low quality white pine in the southwestern corner of the lot adjacent to Granger Road. Several 0.5-1 acre openings will also be created. There are some bluffs and steep slopes on the lot but there are enough benches that most of the lot can be accessed. A DCR verified vernal pool is present in the central part of the lot. The pool will be buffered according to DWSP policies and Massachusetts forestry best management practices. Similar to lot 19-19-1, stone walls are present within the lot, but no foundations or cellar holes are known. Cavity trees and potential/existing nest trees will be retained where possible. No rare species or habitats are listed within the proposed lot. The stream located on the proposed lot will be sampled for turbidity at three locations; upstream of the crossing, at the crossing and far downstream. Sampling will be conducted prior to active logging work to establish baseline, during logging work and post work for 12 months.

A member of the public asked when cutting would actually take place on this lot. Herm Eck answered that the lot is still in the proposal phase. If the lot makes it through the review process, the earliest it could be marked would be this fall, and the earliest harvesting could start would be this winter. The cutting permits typically run for two years and must be completed within that timeframe.

The 3rd lot proposed is named WR-19-20-3 and is located on Harding Hill. It is part of the Young Forest Focus Area that was identified in the 2017 Quabbin/Ware Land Management Plan (LMP). The goal of this proposal is to create a large (20-25 acres) patch of young forest. Young forest provides important habitat for many species of plants and animals and is generally in short supply in the forests of the northeast. The entire lot is old pasture land. At least one seasonal stream will have to be crossed. It is just north of the edge of the mowed field. A good crossing spot has been located in the field. The objective on this lot is to establish large patches of young forest. The intent is to create 25 acres of young forest through two harvests conducted 3 years apart. The first harvest will be a clearcut of 10-15 acres adjacent to the mowed field. The second harvest will be a 10-15 acre clearcut adjacent to the initial cut 3 years later. Approval from the commissioner will be required. Individual or patches of overstory trees will not be retained for the sake of aesthetics. There are streams, seeps, stonewalls, and a possible vernal pool, as well as topography, that will lead to some overstory trees being retained in buffer and filter strips and some irregularity in the shape of the patches. If the landing at 5 corners on Coldbrook Road is used, there are several cellar holes/foundations in the area that will need to be avoided and protected. Existing barways will be used where feasible and harvest layout will protect walls as much as possible. No rare species or habitats are listed for the proposed area.

A member of the public asked about which species would benefit from creating this type of habitat. Herm Eck mentioned whip-poor-wills, warblers, and mammals such as the New England cottontail. Dan Clark added that this habitat type provides benefits to a variety of both common and rare species.

Cindy Schlener asked if seeds of particular species are introduced to an area post-harvest. Herm Eck answered that is not generally done. It is anticipated that seeds should be able to distribute organically across the harvest area.

Dick Williams asked about wood chips. He mentioned that the value of chips has gone down compared to the past and feels that more facilities should be using chips as a source of heat and energy. Herm Eck agreed that it can be hard to accomplish good forest management if there aren't markets for some of the poorer quality wood products.

A tour of the proposed forestry projects for the Ware River watershed was scheduled for Thursday, June 21st at 6PM. Everyone should meet at the Oakham DCR field office located at 5789 Old Turnpike Road, Oakham, MA 01068. The tour will take approximately 1-2 hours. Please be prepared to walk on rough terrain.

Discussion of possible changes to legislature regarding Ware River Watershed advisory committee

Jeff Schaaf alerted the committee that the Upper Ware River Watershed Association, which has representation on WRWAC, has been disbanded.

Jeff Schaaf distributed a draft letter to the committee in regards to adding new groups to WRWAC. The committee discussed, edited, and finalized the letter, which will be sent to Senator Anne Gobi.

The goal is to remove two groups from the committee that have disbanded since WRWAC was formed, as well as to add three new groups to the legislation. The two groups to be removed are the Massachusetts Wildlife Federation and the Upper Ware River Watershed Association. The three groups to be added are a representative from a local SAM (Snowmobile Association of America) affiliated snowmobile club, a local equestrian group, and the New England Mountain Bike Association (NEMBA).

Dick Williams made a motion to approve the wording in the letter as edited. Brett Russ seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Upcoming Student Conservation Association (SCA) Ware River Trail Work

Dan Clark informed the committee that a crew from the SCA will be coming out to the Ware River watershed on May 21st for a 10-day hitch. One of their main projects will be to work on rerouting T6 with the goal of reopening it in the near future. A second project idea is to have them install crosses at the prison camp cemetery.

Jeff Schaaf commented that he recently received a letter from DCR commissioner Leo Roy confirming that T6 is set to be reopened once the trail rehabilitation work is completed.

Member Issues

Dick Williams asked if DCR has ever considered putting up solar fields on parts of their property in Rutland; he would like to see it done in some instances. Dan Clark answered that general protocol has been to limit infrastructure on DWSP lands in favor of natural vegetated cover. Tom Bratko stated that he is not in favor of solar farms on watershed land. Different styles of solar arrays were discussed.

Jeff Schaaf mentioned that the ware river cleanup day was a success. Over 20 volunteers showed up and over 50 bags worth of trash were collected and removed from the watershed.

Meeting End Time: 8:42 PM

Upcoming WRWAC Meetings

- Thursday, May 24th, 2018 at 7 PM – Barre Town Hall, 2 Exchange Street, Barre, MA 01005