

Ware River Watershed Advisory Committee Meeting
Thursday, May 19th, 2022
7:00 PM

Location: Barre Town Hall, 2 Exchange Street, Barre, MA 01005

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:

Alternate: Bryan Waterman

Barre Selectboard: **Mike Wood**

Alternate:

Hubbardston Selectboard: Cindy Schlener

Alternate: **Dave Marsh**

Oakham Selectboard: Thomas Hughes

Alternate: Phillip Warbasse

Rutland Selectboard: **Charles R. Williams**

Alternate:

Barre Historical Society: **Dave Flick**

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: **Brett Russ**

DCR Staff Present: Dan Clark, Justin Gonsor, Herm Eck

Members of the Public Present: Tom Berube, Leslie Choquette, Dick Hutchings, Paul Kreswick, Margo Petracone, Brett Russ, Marianne Wojcicki

Meeting Minutes

Meeting Start Time: 7:06 PM

Approval of minutes from meeting on Thursday, March 10th, 2022

Dick Williams made a motion to accept the minutes from the Ware River Watershed Advisory Committee (WRWAC) meeting on March 10th, 2022. John Root seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Update from the trails subcommittee

Brett updated everyone on the trails subcommittee activities since the last WRWAC meeting.

They held a couple meetings. They have settled on a short-term plan to work with DCR to craft a memorandum of understanding (MOU). This will be in addition to the volunteer stewardship agreement with DCR that is also in the works.

The subcommittee is also looking to continue collecting map data and sorting out which trails are currently authorized/unauthorized.

Dave Flick has been working with the Barre Historical Society to define a model by which the trails subcommittee and historical society can identify key historical sites and access to them.

The subcommittee would like to hold a public meeting in the future but don't have specific plans on that just yet.

Long Pond Subcommittee – rules, recommendations, and discussion

Jeff Schaaf updated everyone on the Long Pond subcommittee activities since the last WRWAC meeting.

They held a couple meetings and have concluded that they favor not changing the Long Pond boating rules/regulations as they are currently written.

However, they did suggest capping the number of annual permits for large motors (larger than 25hp with a 4-stroke engine; larger than 20hp with a 2-stroke engine) to 80.

The subcommittee also encouraged signage at the Long Pond boat ramp to be updated with language saying, “Long Pond is open to boats with motors larger than 20 hp with a DCR permit from Memorial Day to the last day in September between 10am and 6pm. Pleasure boating and water skiing is allowed during those dates and hours. Boaters using Long Pond, including non-motorized boaters, should use caution when using Long Pond with other boaters.”

Mike Wood made a motion that the WRWAC supports the recommendations of the Long Pond subcommittee. John Root seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Herm Eck Retirement

Dan Clark acknowledged the upcoming retirement of Herm Eck, chief forester for the Quabbin/Ware region. He put in 38 years of service to DCR, and the MDC before it became DCR. Herm has been a presence at WRWAC meetings for many years. June 1st will be his last day.

Herm gave some parting words and spoke about his appreciation for the support WRWAC has given to the watershed forestry program over the years.

Multiple WRWAC members expressed appreciation for Herm’s expertise and professionalism over his career.

Dan mentioned that the plan is to post the chief forester position soon after Herm’s retirement and get the job filled as soon as possible.

Member Issues

Jeff Schaaf proposed expanding the scope of the Long Pond subcommittee to include all watershed access issues in the Ware River watershed (WRW). Dick made a motion to change the Long Pond subcommittee to the water access issues subcommittee. Mike Wood seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

A list of those who joined the water access issues subcommittee is as follows: Dave Flick, Rusty Savignac, Jeff Schaaf, Mike Wood. If anyone else is interested in joining they should contact Jeff Schaaf.

Rusty Savignac asked for clarification about the regulation regarding dogs at the Long Pond boat ramp. The regulation states that dogs must be under the control of their owner. While the sign at the parking lot reads, “dogs must be leashed.” Dan clarified that the current public access plan does not require dogs to be leashed, just that they be under the control of their owner. He added that the location in question can be confusing because multiple agencies have jurisdiction in the area. The boat ramp is owned/managed by the Office of Fishing and Boating Access. DCR-DWSP owns/manages in and around Long Pond. The Rutland State Park office is also in the immediate vicinity. The leash sign may have been put up by one of the other agencies. Dan will investigate the signage issue.

Dick Williams asked about picnic tables located somewhere between routes 122 and 122A. He wanted to know who oversees managing them as they are in bad/failing condition. Dan didn’t think they were DWSP’s picnic tables but will put in an inquiry with DCR-State Parks and ask them about it.

Brett brought up the West Rutland stone. It seems to have been damaged.

Dick brought up the Prison Camp. He visited the location recently and mentioned it appears to be in good condition. He mentioned the dead/dying red pines in the area. He also asked about the grant Jeff Stillings has been working on to fund cleanup and rehabilitation efforts at the prison camp. Dan added that Jeff’s group has shared some of their designs, signage ideas, and grates to put over dangerous holes. It appears that they will be spending the grant money before the end of the fiscal year.

Dick asked about an update on Anne Gobi’s efforts to get WRWAC membership updated via a legislative change. Jeff’s only update was that it is currently moving through the legislature.

Jeff brought up the idea of bringing back the Ware River Cleanup Day. It happened annually in past years. Volunteers would pick up trash in the WRW. DCR arranges for a pickup truck to be on site to transport away the trash and a ranger to open the gate and let the volunteers in. Dan added that every Earth Day DCR has an agency wide cleanup day across Massachusetts, this cleanup day could fit in with DCR’s Earth Day activities. The goal is to make it happen next year for April 2023.

Brett asked about where the road at the back of the Barre-Heath plot leads. Dan answered that it leads to an existing gravel pit. The road will also be used for future prescribed burns. Brett mentioned that there is a desire to connect Barre Falls to the Ware River rail trail. Dan responded that the idea could be discussed in the future.

Dave Flick commented that Margo Petracone will be filling the Barre Historical Society's vacant alternate position on the committee. The Historical Society just needs to send Dan an official letter indicating that they appointed/nominated Margo to that role. He is also going to reach out to the Rutland Historical Society to encourage them to fill their vacant roles on the committee.

Mike Wood asked about the possibility of creating a sportsmen/women subcommittee. The goal would be to have this subcommittee focus on hunting/fishing access issues in the WRW. Discussion about potentially forming that subcommittee will be on the agenda at the next meeting.

Dan commented that DCR will be presenting proposed forestry lots at the next meeting.

Rusty asked about the status of the Ware River Public Access Plan update. Dan answered that there has been no movement since the last meeting. DCR is currently communicating with the acting commissioner's office.

Meeting End Time: 7:45 PM

Upcoming WRWAC Meetings

- Thursday, June 23rd, 2022, at 7 PM – Rutland Public Library, 280 Main Street, Rutland, MA 01543