

Ware River Watershed Advisory Committee Meeting
Thursday, June 23rd, 2022
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:

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: Ken Canfield, Dan Clark, Justin Gonsor, Brian Keevan

Members of the Public Present: Dennis Guberski, Dick Hutchings, Margo Petracone, Sarah Pray, Rusty Savignac, Frederick Schleef, Jeff Stillings

Meeting Minutes

Meeting Start Time: 7:02 PM

Approval of minutes from meeting on Thursday, May 19th, 2022

Dick Williams made a motion to accept the minutes from the Ware River Watershed Advisory Committee (WRWAC) meeting on May 19th, 2022. John Root seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

FY23 proposed forestry lots

Ken Canfield presented the proposed FY23 forestry lots for the Ware River watershed.

There are 3 individual proposed lot. Full details of these lots can be found online at:

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/collections/1ee7a33451ac4c87a51df6c871657159?item=1>

Public comments can also be submitted via the above website through August 13th. Each proposed lot can be found on the website and has a plan associated with it that details:

- Location of the lot
- Proposed goals of the cut
- General description of the lot
- Soil and wetland descriptions
- Subwatershed details
- Proposed silviculture
- Equipment to be used
- Cultural resources assessment
- Wildlife/NHESP description
- Environmental quality issues
- Access issues
- And much more

The first proposed lot, WR-23-7-1, is located mostly in the town of Rutland, except for 7 acres in the southwestern corner, which are in Oakham. The goal of the proposal is to expand the pitch pine/oak barrens on Whitehall Road. This type of habitat supports many threatened and endangered species. A member of the public asked if the T3 trail (a trail horses are allowed on) would be affected by the harvest. Ken answered that it may need to be shut down for safety reasons while the cutting occurs. It was requested that the cleanup after the harvest be done well enough that horses can begin using the trail again. Ken offered to walk the trail with someone from the trails sub-committee post-harvest and assess the cleanup effort. Potential impacts to other trails in the vicinity of the harvest were discussed. Ken commented that to his knowledge, T3 is the only authorized in the area. Brett added that although T5 is not a currently approved trail, it is in the area and set to be an approved trail when the public access plan is updated, which is currently in progress.

The second proposed lot, WR-23-23-2, is located almost entirely in the town of Hubbardston on Hale Fire Road. The goals of this proposal are to increase the diversity of tree species and age classes in this area, release young trees that were established after previous harvests, and reduce the amount of old field white pine. The lot consists of 142 acres but only about 25 acres of cutting will be done.

The third proposed lot, WR-23-26-3, is in the town of Rutland on Reuben Walker Road. The goal of this proposal is to release the young trees that were established after the previous harvest. A member of the public asked what time of year the harvest would most likely happen. Ken answered that it is a dry site so there probably will not be a limit on when they can/cannot harvest. It is important to make sure the equipment is not creating ruts across the landscape. Unfortunately, long frosts throughout winter are not as common as they used to be.

A member of the public asked about the moose population in the Ware River watershed, citing a recent car crash involving a moose. Ken answered that estimating their population is difficult. Currently, it is illegal in Massachusetts to hunt moose. A change in the law would first need to happen to allow for a moose hunt.

Brett asked what the upper limit for a clearcut is without getting approval from the DCR commissioner. Dan answered that anything over 5 acres needs commissioner approval, and with the approval, there is no upper limit.

A public tour of the proposed lots was scheduled for September 8th at 6PM. Everyone will meet at the DCR field office in Oakham, located at 278 Old Turnpike Road, Oakham, MA 01068.

For more general information on DCR watershed forestry visit their main website: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/dcr-watershed-forestry-projects>

Discussion of potentially forming a sportsmen/women subcommittee

The committee considered the merits of forming a sportsmen/women subcommittee, like the recent subcommittee's that were formed for trails and boating/water related issues.

The process for filling the rod and gun club representative positions on the committee were discussed. The primary member is not currently filled and the person who is the alternate representative, Bryan Waterman, is no longer active with the committee and lives out of state. Nominations come from rod and gun clubs in the watershed. The Barre Sportsman's Club, Worcester County League of Sportsmen, and any other rod and gun clubs in the area will be asked if they are interested in nominating representatives from their club to the committee. Ideally, each club would send multiple nominees to DCR, and DCR would pick from those lists who will be the primary and alternate members on the committee.

Multiple committee members (Mike Wood, Tom Hughes, Philip Warbasse, and Jeff Schaaf) expressed interest in forming a sportsmen/women subcommittee.

Mike Wood made a motion to form a sportsmen/women subcommittee. Tom Hughes seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Member Issues

Jeff Schaaf mentioned that he recently received a letter from the Barre Historical Society, nominating Margo Petracone to be their alternate representative on the WRWAC. Dick made a motion to accept Barre Historical Society's nomination of Margo Petracone as their alternate to the committee. Brett seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Dick Williams asked about a pond located near the Rutland Heights Hospital off Maple Avenue, where he is looking to get a dry hydrant installed. He is requesting approval from DCR. Dan talked about a regulation stating that, 'no one can draw water from the Ware River Watershed,' but was not sure if that applied to surface water only. A formal, written request should be submitted to DCR.

Dan Clark followed up on a question from the previous meeting. Dick Williams had asked about some picnic tables located between Routes 122 and 122A that are in disrepair, as well as a historic stone that appears damaged. It was determined that they are owned by MassDOT. They are also responsible for maintaining the grass and large stone in that area as well.

Meeting End Time: 8:10 PM

Upcoming WRWAC Meetings

- Thursday, September 15th, 2022, at 7 PM – Rutland Public Library, 280 Main Street, Rutland, MA 01543