

Ware River Watershed Advisory Committee Meeting
Thursday, September 15th, 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: **Margo Petracone**

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

Members of the Public Present: Mark Fauteux, Dennis Guberski, Vincent Kotowski, Paul Kreswick, Duane Pray, Sarah Pray, Mike Priffi, Rusty Savignac

Meeting Minutes

Meeting Start Time: 7:02 PM

Approval of minutes from meeting on Thursday, June 23rd, 2022

Dick Williams made a motion to accept the minutes from the Ware River Watershed Advisory Committee (WRWAC) meeting on June 23rd, 2022. John Root seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

September 8th forestry tour follow-up

Jeff Schaaf updated the committee on the public forestry tour that Ken Canfield hosted on September 8th in the Ware River watershed (WRW).

8 people showed up for the tour, which is higher than in the previous couple years. The group visited the proposed lot that will go through the T3 trail.

WRWAC legislation update

Jeff updated the committee on the WRWAC legislation update.

He recently spoke with state senator Anne Gobi. She told him that the hope is to get it completed by the end of the year during the informal session, as it didn't make it through during the formal session. It seems to have been held up in the 'rules committee' as well.

At the recent sportsmen/women subcommittee meeting, nominations for the open rod and gun club seats on the committee were reviewed. Dave Marsh made a motion to approve Vincent Kotowski as the primary representative, and Dennis Guberski as the alternate representative, from a rod and gun club to the WRWAC. Dick Williams seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Dave Marsh made a motion that the committee supports adding wording to the legislation update that the commissioner shall approve new nominees to the committee within 60 days. Once the 60 days is up, they would be automatically

added to the committee unless vetoed by the commissioner. John Root seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Status update on filling of chief forester position

Dan Clark updated the committee on progress filling the chief forester position for Quabbin/Ware River that was recently vacated when Herm Eck retired.

The position has been posted, interviews were held during the previous week, and internal deliberations are currently happening.

Ware river public access plan update

Dan briefed the committee on where the Ware River Public Access Plan update is at.

The public input/meeting process was upended in 2020 due to covid. Forward movement has recently been made on the plan and a meeting was held with the new DCR commissioner, Doug Rice, to bring him up to speed on updating the plan. The hope is to have a draft plan ready for public review before the end of the calendar year.

Brett spoke about plans that the trails subcommittee has. Being a collective voice for multiple user groups, the subcommittee would prefer to conduct their own public input process from recreational stakeholders before reviewing the updated draft plan.

A member of the public suggested that DCR provide their proposed changes to the current public access plan to WRWAC. The committee and individual subcommittees could then discuss those changes and come up with their recommendations. Dan will ask John Scannell about providing WRWAC a copy of the draft plan before the group meets to give feedback on it to DCR.

The public access plans are officially updated every 10 years. Although, there will be language written into the plan that allows for the opportunity to present changes to the trails network on a yearly basis. The 10-year update timeline starts after a plan is finalized/approved. So, the next time the Ware River Public Access plan is formally updated will probably be 2023, depending on when the current update is finalized.

Mike Woods commented on the recently formed sportsmen/women subcommittee. Since they were only formed this past year, they weren't around to give feedback

to DCR when DCR was meeting with user groups years ago before the access plan update was halted.

Prison camp structures report: conditions and recommendations

A member of the public updated the committee on recent activities of the Rutland Historical Commission regarding the Rutland Prison Camp. State senator Anne Gobi help procure funds to preserve the prison camp.

The historical commission has allocated/spent some of those funds on paint to cover graffiti, fences, steel gates, signs, and grading/leveling at the site was done. The historical commission is finalizing a list of all the work that was done and will be sending it to DCR. Pictures of the old building and informational kiosks are also set to be installed. The fences, gates, and signs still need to be installed as well. There is more work/preservation to do be done and more funding needed.

The historical commission investigated safety records at the prison camp. Their search indicated that the police/fire departments haven't been called to the site at all over the past 4 years.

Member Issues

Dick Williams asked about the wood chip boiler at the Quabbin administration building. Dan commented it wasn't run last year due to staffing issues. The plan for the upcoming winter is to use the wood chip boiler for heat.

Trash issues at the prison camp were mentioned. Jeff Schaaf suggested focusing the next Ware River cleanup day in that area.

Dennis asked if there were any plans to cut back the golden rod with a brush hog up in the Oak Hill area, ideally before pheasant season starts. Hunting dogs can't make it through the area under current conditions. Dan answered that the area is a site reclaimed by DCR in 2019. Part of the reclamation agreement was the MassWildlife would maintain the field going forward. He reached out to MassWildlife, and their concern is that it is now too thick to get through it with their equipment. Negotiations are ongoing. The solution may be that DCR goes in with heavy equipment to cut the vegetation back and then MassWildlife could then take over ongoing management.

Brett spoke about the trail's subcommittee and some other their recent progress/ideas. The first phase of the subcommittee is related to advocacy and figuring out recreational and historical access issues important to different user

groups. They'd like to do some public engagement and come back with recommendations to WRWAC. They'll share their progress with DCR as they go. The second phase of the subcommittee is related to their work as stewardship coordinators. A draft MOU needs to be generated, passed on to DCR, and ultimately finalized. In the meantime, there currently are trails in the watershed that are legal, but also in need of maintenance. The subcommittee would like to propose a couple high priority trail maintenance projects at the next WRWAC meeting. The hope is that these projects would provide both recreational and water quality improvements.

Mike Woods updated the committee on the sportsmen/women subcommittee. They met once and drafted a set of principles/concerns/hopes for the future regarding watershed access. They are as follows:

1. Continued access/vehicle access inside gates that have traditionally/historically been open to the public. One reason for this is to accommodate an aging population and those with limited mobility.
2. Continued access to MassWildlife management areas and waterways.
3. Coordinate with other user groups to avoid conflicts on multi-use trails. Safety being of the utmost importance to all watershed users.
4. Continued access to the prison camp during hunting seasons. Other users should be made aware that hunting happens in the area. They support MassWildlife stocking the area as they have in the past.

Vincent Kotowski, newest member to WRWAC representing a rod and gun club, joined the sportsmen/women subcommittee.

Rusty brought up the recent construction/paving that was done at Long Pond. He appreciated the ramp that was installed and noted that it was well done. He asked what the pier between the two ramps is for. Dan answered that he isn't sure but will investigate it.

Meeting End Time: 8:10 PM

Upcoming WRWAC Meetings

- Thursday, November 17th, 2022, at 7 PM – Rutland Public Library, 280 Main Street, Rutland, MA 01543