

**Ware River Watershed Advisory Committee Meeting**  
**Thursday, September 18, 2025**  
**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: Vincent Kotowski

Alternate: **Dennis Guberski**

Barre Selectboard: **Mike Wood (vice chairperson)**

Alternate:

Hubbardston Selectboard: **Cindy Schlener**

Alternate: Dave Marsh

Oakham Selectboard: **Thomas Hughes**

Alternate: **Phillip Warbasse**

Rutland Selectboard: **Darren Ross**

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: **Eric Van Reet**

Alternate:

Massachusetts Audubon Society: Martha Gach

Alternate:

Sierra Club: Matt Hopkinson

Alternate:

General Public: Mark DuBois

Alternate: Brett Russ

**DCR Staff Present:**

Ken Canfield, Dan Clark, Justin Gonsor

**Members of the Public Present:**

Sean Blood, Ellen Carpenter, Kathryn Ford, Lisa Killick, Nick Killick, Barbara Piucci, Duane Pray, Moussa Siri, Jim St. Laurent, Caylee Watts, Kelley Watts, Steve Wentzell, Marianne Wojcicki

**Meeting Minutes****Meeting Start Time: 7:05 PM****Approval of minutes from meeting on July 10, 2025**

Tom Hughes made a motion to accept the minutes from the Ware River Watershed Advisory Committee (WRWAC) meeting on July 10, 2025, with edits. Phil Warbasse seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

**Presentation of FY26 proposed forestry lots**

Ken Canfield, chief DWSP forester, presented the proposed FY26 forestry lots to the committee. A summary of his presentation and the 3 project proposals is as follows:

- DCR DWSP FY26 Harvest Proposals process details
  - Months long process – outline in [Land Management Plan](#) (LMP)
  - Designed to achieve DWSP forest diversity/resiliency goals
  - Mapping, measuring, write-up by forester
  - Internal review by staff
  - Public review and comments
  - Variable timeframe after approval
- WR-26-5
  - Rutland; Crawford Rd, west of Long Pond
  - 8-acre footprint
  - White pine/hardwood
  - One 4.9 acre opening and one 1 acre opening
- WR-26-16
  - Oakham; west of Coldbrook Rd, north of Pine Plain Rd (Rt. 122 end), surrounded by ACOE property
  - 36-acre footprint
  - White pine/oak, mixed hardwood, oak/hardwood

- 15 acres in openings 0.2-2.0 acres, 5 acres of thinning in between openings
- WR-26-45
  - Hubbardston, east of Evergreen Rd near Brigham Pond
  - 13-acre footprint
  - White pine, white pine/oak, white pine/hemlock
  - 6 acres in openings 0.25-4.9 acres, 4 acres of thinning in between openings
- To view an interactive map showing past and current FY26 proposals you can scan the QR code or visit the [DWSP Forestry Projects Page](#).



- This website also features a link to the public comments form, general info about DWSP forestry, contact information, and links to other DCR sites.
- For any additional watershed forestry related questions or inquiries Ken can be reached at [Kenneth.canfield@mass.gov](mailto:Kenneth.canfield@mass.gov) and at 857-274-7090.

The public comment period was discussed. It is a 45-day comment period which began on September 2 and runs through October 16 for the current proposals.

The importance of preserving the T3 trail during/after forestry work is completed was discussed. The project near T3 has bid out and been sold so far. It should be completed within the next two years.

### **Discussion about draft changes to the WRWAC proposed by the Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources**

Jeff Schaaf detailed the draft changes to the WRWAC proposed by the Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources.

Roughly six years ago WRWAC members officially proposed adding some new groups to be represented on the committee as well as dropping groups that have disbanded over the years and/or are no longer active. The proposal has never made it out of committee in the legislature. Jeff was recently contacted by Senator Peter Durant's office to let him know that the

Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources has made some edits to WRWAC's initial proposal.

The initial WRWAC proposal asked for the addition of three groups to the committee: a snowmobile group, a mountain biking group, and an equestrian group. The joint committee is suggesting adding three additional groups: a local environmental protection/conservation group, the Environmental League of Massachusetts, and the Massachusetts Rivers Association.

There was discussion among the committee regarding concern that the newly suggested environmental group's representatives would be able to attend meetings consistently enough. There was discussion about the potential of adding language to the bylaws that allow for the removal of a group that doesn't attend enough meetings.

Jeff will relay the committee's thoughts and concerns to the joint committee.

**Discussion of WRWAC letter in opposition to the Oakham Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) site**

The committee discussed the letter that was drafted stating the committee's opposition to the Oakham BESS site. The letter was read, and edits were discussed. The final version is as follows:

"Ware River Watershed Advisory Committee (WRWAC)  
c/o Jeffrey Schaaf  
P.O. Box 36  
Wheelwright, MA 01094

September 18, 2025

Governor Maura Healey  
Massachusetts State House  
Office of Constituent Services  
24 Beacon St., Room 280  
Boston, MA 02133

Re: 180 MW Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) proposed for  
Oakham, MA

Dear Governor Healey:

The members of the Ware River Watershed Advisory Committee acknowledge that Battery Energy Storage is another tool in the Green Energy collection and that BESS installations are vital to stability of the power grid.

However, we submit that a 180 MW BESS proposed for this forested wetland location in the rural town of Oakham is environmentally inappropriate, on a contaminated site bordering the DCR MWRA watershed, where a possible lithium battery fire would have the potential to contaminate the water supply of Boston and 53 communities and the three municipalities served by the Chicopee Valley Aqueduct.

As lithium battery fires cannot be easily extinguished, toxic smoke from a lithium battery fire will require evacuation of residents and businesses for several days of uncontrolled burning, and lasting contamination will adversely affect the surrounding area. Environmental contamination will prevent residents and businesses from returning until cleanup has restored to safe levels.

Less obvious is the magnitude of a large industrial construction project in this remote rural area. The noise and disruption generated by a project of this magnitude would be audible for miles and last well beyond a year. The wetland hollow would be logged and stripped of vegetation. The soil would be replaced with rock and gravel, compacted, leveled, and then topped with acres of reinforced concrete to support each of 296 42-ton Tesla battery units. Storm water during the yearlong construction and the impervious surface after construction has been completed will flow downgrade directly into the surrounding DCR Ware River Watershed, potentially to the nearby Quabbin Reservoir Shaft 8 Ware River Intake.

The end of the useful life for a typical BESS is about ten to twelve years. It is expected that the owners could abandon the site. No bond provision will adequately provide protection against fire contamination, nor will it provide adequate funding for future decommissioning when the site is abandoned.

There is no likelihood of any entity ever decommissioning the site, which would have to begin with the removal of 296 dead 42-ton Tesla battery

units. Each of the units would need to be trucked away individually, due to Mass Highway load limits. True decommissioning of the site would then require removal of the acres of concrete and impervious material, and restoration of the site to its natural condition.

The EFSB has authority to grant the petitioner, Rhynland Energy LLC as Moraga Storage LLC, constructive relief from the Oakham zoning bylaw specifically prohibiting standalone BESS which was adopted unanimously during the June 2022 Oakham Annual Town Meeting. The zoning bylaw has been approved by the Attorney General on January 4, 2023.

The members of the Ware River Watershed Advisory Committee voted on July 10, 2025, to support the Town of Oakham in their opposition to this project.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeffrey Schaaf  
Ware River Watershed Advisory Committee, Chair”

Dennis Guberski made a motion to approve the letter. Dave Flick seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Mike Wood thought that the Barre selectboard had drafted a formal opposition letter to the project but recently learned that the town had not drafted that letter. He will get back in touch with the selectboard to ask for them to draft an opposition letter. Dave Flick commented that the Barre council (planning board) is working with the Oakham council regarding this issue.

There was discussion on whether a potential contamination or chemical spill on the BESS site would flow into DWSP lands.

There was discussion about a potential sister project in the town of Barre.

The state’s Energy Facilities Sitings Board was discussed. More information can be found on their website: [Energy Facilities Sitings Board](#).

## **Member Issues**

Mike Wood commented that he heard MassWildlife is set to designate 30% of their lands as a 'reserve.' Reserves areas would be managed differently than lands designated otherwise. He asked if DWSP has a similar initiative in the works. Dan Clark answered that DWSP has had discussions about potentially designating some of their lands as 'reserve' as well. He clarified that hunting and trapping is allowed on land designated as a reserve. Commercial forestry would be limited on a reserve. No reserves have been designated on DWSP land yet. It was mentioned that the push for agencies to designate reserve lands is related to Massachusetts House Bill 1048: An Act Relative to Increased Protection of Wildlife Management Areas ([Bill H.1048](#)). It was requested that discussion of the house bill and reserve lands be on the agenda for the next WRWAC meeting.

Mike Wood asked if logging could occur inside wetland buffer zones. Ken answered that DWSP does not harvest in wetlands although other state lands can allow for the harvesting of trees in a wetland.

Mike Wood spoke on behalf of the sportsman's subcommittee. They would like to submit access requests for the biennial review. Dan asked that WRWAC formally write and present a single document with all requested access changes along with their justification. It was requested that this item be on the agenda at the next meeting.

## **New Business**

N/A

**Meeting End Time: 8:25 PM**

## **Upcoming WRWAC Meetings**

- Thursday, November 20, 2025, 7PM: Rutland Public Library, 280 Main Street, Rutland, MA 01543 (downstairs; large meeting room)