

Ware River Public Access Management Plan Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Ware River Watershed?

- The Ware River watershed refers to over 60,000 acres (96 square miles) of private and public lands in eight towns that naturally drain to the Roger H. Lonergan Intake on Rt. 122 in Barre, through creeks, streams, and rivers.
- Along with the Quabbin Reservoir and Wachusett Reservoir, the Ware River watershed is part of the system that supplies clean drinking water to the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA), which treats and delivers the water to 3 million people in 51 Massachusetts communities.

What is the difference between DCR State Parks and DCR Water Supply Protection lands?

- The Department of Conservation of Recreation (DCR) has two divisions that manage its lands: the Division of State Parks and the Division of Water Supply Protection (DWSP). These Divisions manage their property for different purposes.
- Rutland State Park is managed by the Division of State Parks, while most of the DCR-owned land within the Ware River watershed (approx. 24,000 acres) is managed by DWSP. [See map.](#)
- No changes are being proposed for public access in Rutland State Park.

What is the purpose of Water Supply Protection land?

- DWSP lands are maintained for watershed protection, under regulation [313 CMR 11.09](#), in order to supply clean drinking water to the MWRA.
- The MWRA water supply system is one of a few water supplies in the country that qualify for a waiver from filtration requirements due to exceptional source water quality protection efforts. To maintain this waiver, DWSP and the MWRA must continue to meet strict federal and state standards for water quality and watershed protection.
- DWSP lands were purchased with drinking water supply and MWRA ratepayer monies, not general taxes; MWRA also pays for managing these lands. In addition, the MWRA ratepayers make annual Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) of over \$1 million to communities in the Ware River Watershed (see: <https://www.mass.gov/payment-in-lieu-of-taxes-pilot-program>).

What is the Ware River Watershed Advisory Committee?

- The Ware River Watershed Advisory Committee (WRWAC) is a legislatively formed advisory committee whose role is to advise DWSP on its policies and regulations regarding recreational activities, land use, environmental, and wildlife matters within the Ware River watershed.
- The WRWAC membership, set by the legislation ([MGL Chapter 92A 1/2, Section 14](#)), is made up of 17 representatives of the watershed communities and other state and local organizations. The committee meets on a regular basis with DCR (see: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/ware-river-watershed-advisory-committee-wrwac>).

What is a Public Access Management Plan?

- DCR has Public Access Management Plans for each of its watersheds to identify the ways the public may enjoy watershed lands without compromising DCR's water quality protection mandate. These plans describe what public access activities are allowed and not allowed, where they can occur, and any restrictions. These plans are generally updated every 10 years.
- The update of the existing [Ware River Watershed Public Access Management Plan \(2010\)](#) began at a WRWAC meeting in April 2018 and has been underway for about two years.
- The 2010 Plan will continue to be in effect until the updated Plan is finalized.

How is the public being engaged in the Public Access Management Plan update?

- In the fall of 2018, DCR issued a broad public survey (approximately 900 respondents) to understand the range of public users of Ware River watershed lands, along with their concerns and priorities.
- DCR also held more than a dozen meetings with WRWAC, towns, state and federal agencies, and a range of recreational user groups to collaborate on how best to address DCR's management goals while supporting compatible public access.
- Currently, the agency is reviewing the access plan, including comments received prior to proceeding any further in the process.
- Once the review of the plan has concluded, the process will proceed with robust public engagement, such as meetings with the public, stakeholder groups, and elected officials, as well as a public comment period.