

Ware River Watershed Advisory Committee Meeting
Thursday, November 17th, 2016
7:01 PM

Location: Franklin Wood Studio, 232A Main Street, Rutland, MA 01543 (Behind Police/Fire Station)

Members: (Members in **BOLD** were present)

Massachusetts Council of Sportsmen: Robert Carey, William Label

Alternate: Mike Moss

Worcester County League of Sportsmen: John Root

Alternate: Dave Papale

Trout Unlimited: **Jeffrey Schaaf (Co-Chairman)**

Alternate:

A Rod and Gun Club: Joe Cataldo

Alternate: Brian Waterman

Barre Selectboard: Martha Varnot

Alternate: Edward Yaglou

Hubbardston Selectboard: Thomas Bratko

Alternate:

Oakham Selectmen: Thomas Hughes

Alternate: **Phillip Warbasse**

Rutland Selectmen: **Charles R. Williams**

Alternate: Brett Russ

Barre Historical Society: **Margo Petracone**

Alternate: Peg Frost

Hubbardston Historical Society:

Alternate:

Oakham Historical Society: Wes Dwelly

Alternate: **Bill Mucha**

Rutland Historical Society: **Helen Viner**

Alternate: Tim Nahrwold

Massachusetts Wildlife Federation: Bill Westaway (Co-Chairman)

Alternate: Thomas Berube

Massachusetts Audubon Society: Martha Gach

Alternate:

Sierra Club: Matt Hopkinson

Alternate:

Upper Ware River Watershed Association: Donald Rich

Alternate: Edward Yaglou

General Public: Mark DuBois

Alternate: **Dave Small**

DCR Staff Present:

Herm Eck, Justin Gonsor

Members of the Public Present:

Bill Dobson, Dean Zuppio

Meeting Minutes

Meeting Start Time: 7:01 PM

Approval of Minutes of Meeting on September 15th, 2016

Dick Williams made a motion to accept the minutes from the WRWAC meeting on September 15th, 2016. Helen Viner seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Member Issues

Dick Williams mentioned that he has lately been hearing rumors of some public meetings being held regarding updates to the Watershed Protection Act and other watershed issues. He was concerned that the committee was not aware of those meetings that were being held. He requested that Jeff Lacy attend the next meeting to update the committee on the Watershed Protection Plan, watershed regulations, and to answer questions from the committee regarding zoning and open space in the Ware River Watershed (WRW).

Dick Williams asked if any town has come to DCR to try and reacquire property taken by eminent domain in the past. Herm Eck answered that there recently was a land swap completed with the town of Hubbardston that had taken years to complete. Also in Hubbardston, some DCR land was donated for affordable elderly housing several decades ago. Two parcels of land were also given to the town of Rutland for town well sites a decade or two ago.

There was discussion about the drought in Massachusetts and how Quabbin and the Ware River Watersheds would be affected. Herm Eck mentioned that Quabbin is currently just under 80% capacity; the lowest it has been since 2002 when the reservoir level got down to 75%.

Bill Mucha questioned why so much land was taken, seemingly far away from the river, in the Ware River Watershed. Herm Eck talked about the watershed protection values of keeping the land surrounding a river, stream, or tributary in an undeveloped state and how that can lead to increased water quality.

Herm Eck mentioned that Bill Pula, Regional Director of the Quabbin Reservoir, will be retiring on January 2nd, 2017. He has been the regional director since before the WRWAC was formed.

Bill Mucha asked for an update on the conservation proposal from MassWildlife to establish a timber rattlesnake population on Mt. Zion at Quabbin Reservoir. Dave Small answered that the state is currently forming a working group focused on soliciting public input. MassWildlife has submitted a set of names to Anne Gobi to form said committee.

Dick Williams mentioned that some trails have been created for and are being used by bicyclists at Rutland Heights. But, the area is set to be logged in the near future. The bicycling will have to stop when the project begins.

Bill Dobson asked about the status of trails in Rutland concerning public access besides the Mass Central Rail Trail and Mid State Trail. Herm Eck answered that T3 is closed to all but walking. T7 is still open. T6 is not currently on DCR public access maps. Permits can still be given out for specific access if need be. Margo Petracone mentioned that closing T3 is a big loss for equine riders as it is a connector to many other trails. The committee will be briefed and involved in the process when the Ware River Public Access Plan is next updated.

Helen Viner asked if there were any plans to get the prison camp area mowed to reclaim historic sites that are getting overgrown with vegetation. Dick Williams talked about wanting to see the area cleaned up as well. Herm Eck answered that mowing around historic sites can be tricky; hand cutting could be an option. The

cemetery was last mowed in 2015 and appears to be on an every other year mowing schedule.

Bill Mucha asked for an update on the moose count. Herm Eck answered that many miles of pellet count transects has been walked in the Quabbin and Ware River Watersheds over the past few years. Pellet counts seem to be coming back higher than average, but no solid numbers were talked about.

Dick Williams mentioned that turbine construction for the hatchery pipeline in Belchertown along Rt. 9 is close to being completed.

Dean Zuppio had a question about the dump trail. At the top of the trail, dirt/gravel was dumped by DCR about 10-15 years ago to fill in a swampy/wet area to keep to trail passable. He asked if it would be possible to get that area filled in again. Herm Eck will look into the request.

Dean Zuppio mentioned a new trail his club is working on off of Ware Road. They are looking to get permission from a restaurant to use their land. If they can't get that permission, he asked if they could cut across Rt. 122 (across from the gas station) where DCR owns a small open space. Herm Eck will look into the request if need be.

Meeting End Time: 7:59 PM

Upcoming WRWAC Meetings

- Thursday, January 19th, 2017 at 7 PM – Franklin Wood Studio, 232A Main Street, Rutland, MA 01543 (Behind Police/Fire Station)