

Ware River Watershed Advisory Committee Meeting
Thursday, November 5th, 2015
7:00 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: Burt Frost

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:

Ken Canfield, Herm Eck, Lisa Gustavsen, Justin Gonsor

Members of the Public Present:

Lydia Barter, Wilson Dobson

Meeting Minutes

Meeting Start Time: 7:02 PM

Approval of Minutes of Meeting on September 17th, 2015

It was determined that the September minutes should include two letters that were sent to the committee between the May and September meetings. The first letter was sent by Wilson Dobson and the second was sent by Jonathan Yeo on behalf of DCR-DWSP.

The minutes from the WRWAC meeting held on September 17th, 2015 were unanimously approved as amended to include those two letters.

Rail Trail Update

Herm Eck mentioned that no signs regarding leash laws have been put up since the last meeting.

Herm Eck addressed hunting along the rail trail. A section of the trail does go through MA Division of Fisheries and Wildlife owned land. DCR is planning to put up signs that state that there should be no shooting down or across the rail trail.

Tom Bratko asked if DCR puts up signs along the rail trail to notify people that hunting occurs in the area. Herm Eck answered that in the past, general warning signs were put up that stated hunting occurs in the area during hunting season,

but didn't give specific dates. Dave Small mentioned that all state land open to hunting needs to have signage saying as much.

Lisa Gustavsen updated the committee on a minor change to the 5 Ware River kiosks. A short posting was added to remind people to wear hunter orange. The sign machine at Quabbin has been down but is now up and running. There is a plan to put up more educational signs along the rail trail in the near future.

Lisa Gustavsen also alerted the committee that the "dogs must be on a leash" sign along the rail trail was not put there by DCR-DWSP. There was discussion over who actually put up the sign.

A committee member suggested that any signage regarding hunting or leash laws be placed at rail trail access points; not just at kiosks. Dick Williams suggested a kiosk be put up at the Wachusett Greenways parking lot. It was determined that the rail trail hunter signage and leash law discussion should be continued at the next meeting.

DCR-DWSP did put up signage after the November meeting. Herm Eck provided a few pictures that can be seen below:



Muddy Pond



Park Brook



RR stn



Rutland State Park



White Hall



Bridge



Parking area where the midstate trail crosses Rt. 122 in Rutland

Ware River Cleanup Day Discussion

Jeff Schaaf talked about the Ware River cleanup day that happened back in October. Lots of trash was removed and the plan is to have the event again next year.

Skid Steer Update

Herm Eck updated the committee on a new piece of equipment called a track steer machine that was purchased through state grant money. A video was shown of the steer machine in use at Wachusett eradicating an autumn alive infestation. The machine is able to cut back dense woody debris and mulches it on the spot. It could be used to reclaim field edges that have been encroached upon by forest succession and invasive species.

Dick Williams mentioned that he wished the machine would be available to the Ware River year round. Dave Small agreed with the sentiment. Jeff Schaaf asked if there was a plan to purchase more of these track machines. Herm Eck answered that they are negotiating the purchase of additional machines.

Herm Eck estimated that over the past 30 years, roughly 40 acres have been lost in the Ware River watershed due to field encroachment. The track machine gets used across the state, not just at the Ware River watershed.

A committee member noted how quickly invasive species are able to regenerate after being cut back. Dave Small talked about how the machine can break down woody debris so that in future years the vegetation can be cut back with a simple tractor or brush hog. Further, the machine needs to be cleaned and inspected to be sure plant materials aren't transported from site to site.

Dave Small made a motion to write a letter of support for purchasing an additional track steer machine by DCR. The motion was unanimously approved. Dick Williams will draft the letter.

Brett Russ asked about when the last time a prescribed burn was used to control invasive plants on watershed land. Herm Eck answered that the last time was probably 20+ years ago near the Barre Falls Dam. Other factors are that there are very few burn bosses in the state and the perfect conditions to burn can be hard

to come by. Ken Canfield talked about how burning to control invasive plants isn't always effective; some communities are fire dependent while others are not. Jeff Schaaf asked for clarification on whether or not there are any immediate plans for a controlled burn. Herm Eck answered that there are no definitive plans, but that there is interest for the future.

Member Issues

Dick Williams followed up on the Rutland land use issue that was talked about at the September meeting. He drafted a letter on behalf of the WRWAC recommending that the town of Rutland return property back to the DCR that was given to the town by the MDC back in 1966. The land was given to the town with the understanding that the land be used for water purposes only. The town currently has plans to build a solar field on the property. Dick Williams made a motion to send the letter to DCR. The motion was unanimously approved.

Tom Bratko inquired about how DCR tracks the land they sell. Lisa Gustavsen mentioned that DCR's legal team in Boston would be involved in a land use issue like the one in Rutland.

Tom Bratko was looking for clarification on the T3 trail closure. He mentioned that while the trailhead is closed where it meets the rail trail, the other end of the trail is still open. If T3 is indeed closed, he recommended that all trailheads be closed and signage put up. Lisa Gustavsen mentioned that it has been difficult keeping trail closure signs up as many have been torn down. DEP conducted a field inspection last month and they were shown some of the unauthorized trails, bridges, etc. The plan is to collaborate with the conservation commission to help in restoring these areas once the unauthorized trails have been closed.

Ken Canfield talked about a recent change to the FY15 proposed lot along Coldbrook Road. DCR has gotten permission from Oakham Highway Department to harvest the red pine stand in that area. The landing will be in the red pine stand to provide better access from Coldbrook Road.

Matt Hopkinson missed the September and November WRWAC meetings but submitted a comment regarding dogs on the rail trail via email. His comment is as follows: The method of dog hygiene described using plastic bags etc. works well in an urban situation but I'm not sure it's appropriate for this location, seeing that

it requires handy plastic bag dispensers and trash cans. Trash cans need to be emptied. I have seen another technique known as the “Golf Method”. I had a photo of a sign showing this but can’t locate it just now. Basically the dog owner grabs a handy stick, swings it at the offending object, causing it to sail into the woods, out of harm’s way. You’d be surprised how many people will look for an opportunity to try this out (regardless of who’s dog did it), and we may find ourselves with a cleaner trail than any other approach. Putting up signs to that effect would satisfy bullet points 2 and 3.

Meeting End Time: 7:48 PM

Upcoming WRWAC Meetings

- Thursday, January 21st, 2016 at 7 PM – Franklin Wood Studio, 232A Main Street, Rutland, MA 01543 (Behind Police/Fire Station)