

**Ware River Watershed Advisory Committee Meeting**  
**Thursday, June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2017**  
**7:00 PM**

**Location:** Barre Old Town Hall, 2 Exchange Street, Barre, MA 01005

**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:

Hubbardston Historical Society: **Robin Langer**

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, John Scannell

**Members of the Public Present:**

Jassy Bratko, Deb Carbon, Anthony Craig, Bill Dobson, Stephanie Frend, Bill Halligan, Bob Hatch, Kathleen James, Susan Johnson, Denise Kellicker, Will Kirousis, Richard T. Konde, Jane Lynds, Mike Nogueira, Christine Palin, Barbara Piucci, Vincent Piucci, Mike Prifti, Ian Ryan, Steve Salvadore, Von Salvadore, Alycia Smith, Brian Trimby, Douglas Walther, Marianne Wojacki, Douglas Wylie

**Meeting Minutes**

**Meeting Start Time: 7:02 PM**

**Approval of Minutes of Meeting on May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2017**

Dick Williams made a motion to accept the minutes from the WRWAC meeting on May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2017. Helen Viner seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

**Trail Closure Update**

John Scannell updated the committee on trail closures and kiosk information in the watershed.

The language at all 5 of the Ware River Watershed (WRW) kiosks has been updated as of June 21<sup>st</sup>. Wording related to horses spreading giardia and/or cryptosporidium has been removed. The maps now state that the potential for introducing pathogens from horse or human fecal waste is a threat.

The “recreational use map” from the 1988 Ware River Watershed Access Plan was presented. On this map horseback trails are located on roads and there is no T3, T5, T6, T7, or T8 trail on the map. The “designated horseback riding routes” map from the 2000 Ware River Watershed Access Plan was presented. On this map

T3, T5, T7, and T8 appear; but not T6. The “designated horseback riding routes” map from the 2010 Ware River Watershed Access Plan was presented. T6 is still not on this map. At some point in the past T6 was labeled with MDC signage in the field. Those signs were recently removed by DCR staff. A map was presented which superimposed WRW access roads, the rail trail, mid state trail, and various designated T trails. T3 is currently closed; it was closed in May of 2015 in conjunction with the Student Conservation Association (SCA). The status of T6 was discussed. It has never appeared as an approved trail on any official maps. This issue could be addressed when the Ware River Public Access Plan is updated.

A member of the public asked if there has been an increase in water quality related to recent trail closures. John Scannell answered that water quality is not specifically measured where trails occur and that trail erosion is an important factor. A member of the public commented that he felt erosion in the watershed was much worse in the 1980’s when ATV’s became popular.

There was discussion about potentially posting online the map that was presented earlier at the meeting which detailed where the T trails are located in relation to WRW access roads. That map appears to be more user friendly than the current “designated horseback riding routes” map from 2010 that is currently on the website.

A member of the public asked if there would be an effort to restore the section of T5 which was recently logged. Another member of public mentioned that the trail is fine; he recently walked it.

A member of the public commented that T3 is used as a connector trail to help riders avoid using the road and interfering with car traffic. He felt that multiple berms could be created along the slope to mitigate erosion concerns. The SCA will be completing a 10-day hitch in the WRW in July but it was unclear what their schedule and trail work plans entail. A member of the public asked if user groups could help with getting the T3 trail issues fixed and reopened. The committee nominated Tom Bratko to be the liason between the horseback riding group and DCR. Jeff Schaaf asked if there was any way DCR could meet with organized horseback riding groups to discuss volunteering their time in regards trail work. John Scannell answered that he will look into the possibility of holding that

meeting. Jeff Schaaf requested that someone from DCR email Tom Bratko with an answer and copy Jeff on any correspondence.

A member of the public asked for an explanation from DCR as to why their reaction after seeing evidence of erosion seems to be to close a trail rather than work with the user groups who use the trail to mitigate the problem. John Scannell mentioned that he hopes there will be more collaboration with organized user groups as part of the upcoming Ware River Public Access Plan update.

A member of the public asked for information on portable bridges that have been placed in the Watershed. Herm Eck answered that 4 have placed; two spots along the west branch of the Ware River, one off Twin Hill Road, and one off Brigham Road.

Jeff Schaaf asked for a timeline on the Ware River Public Access Plan update. John Scannell answered that the Quabbin Public Access Plan update should be finished by early fall. The Ware River Public Access Plan update would begin shortly after Quabbin's update is completed. Generally, the first public piece of the update is a written survey completed by interested stakeholders.

A member of the public commented that although T6 may not have ever been on an official map, it has been used by horseback riders and has had MDC signage on it for many years. Jeff Schaaf asked if there is the possibility of adding T6 as a designated horse trail before the Ware Public Access Plan update. John Scannell was unsure at the moment but will get an answer to the committee. Brett Russ stated that T6 appears on a map from the 2000 Ware River Public Access Plan as a designated bicycle route. He felt that it may have been a clerical error and was disappointed that the MDC signs were recently removed from T6.

### **Watershed Protection Zones – A Discussion**

Bill Dobson gave a presentation to the committee in regards to Watershed Protection Zones in the WRW. He presented three maps of the watershed related to buffer zones: a MassDEP map which uses 400 ft. buffer zones, a NEMBA map which uses 200 ft. buffer zones, and a WsPA map which uses both 200 and 400 ft. buffer zones. He stated that 35% of the land area in the watershed falls under a buffer zone according to these maps.

He read from a document that DCR submitted to MassDEP on April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2017 titled, “Compliance and Enforcement Strategy Concerning Unauthorized Trails” which states: “DWSP has also developed protection zones to help prioritize compliance activities and sometimes to incorporate into Public Access Plans for differentiated access restrictions. In 2016 DWSP used the Watershed GIS System to create five intake protection zones in the hydrologically-complicated Ware River Watershed. These zones break the entire watershed up into roughly five mile travel distance zones starting at MWRA’s Shaft 8 Intake on the Ware River. This map updates previous versions of WRW zones.”

He presented a draft map of the Shaft 8 Intake that details trails, tributaries, and buffer zones. On this map the watershed is broken down into 5 different watershed protection zones; zone 1 being closest to the intake and zone 5 being the farthest away. He mentioned that all of the authorized and unauthorized trails in the watershed, except one, are within Zone 1. He also stated that this map has 85% of watershed land under buffer zones. He claimed that some of the tributaries listed on the map are not actually tributaries anymore. He expressed concern that this map will be used to deny trails and/or public access in the future.

John Scannell stated that as managers of the watershed DCR is required to produce a Watershed Protection Plan for each of the watersheds on a 5-year rotating basis; this is separate from the Public Access Plan. The most recent Watershed Protection Plan is set to be written by June of 2018 and will cover all 4 watersheds. He mentioned that the Watershed Protection Act of 1992 set 200-400 ft. buffer zones around tributaries, which was put in place by the state legislature. The act prohibits the following:

- alteration, filling, and grading
- changing of run-off characteristics in a manner likely to degrade water quality
- alteration of bordering vegetation wetlands
- any activity that could degrade water
- destruction of state property, including historic artifacts and natural materials.

The upcoming Watershed Protection Plan update will look at creating protection zones within the WRW based on proximity to the intake, which is how the

Quabbin and Wachusett watersheds are currently managed. Horseback riding is not an allowed activity at either the Quabbin or Wachusett watersheds.

Intake Protection Zone #1 would include areas with source water flow of 0-5 miles from the intake; absolute highest priority for source water protection. Zone 1 contains 7,275 acres of DWSP Watershed Land (30%). Intake Protection Zone #2 would include areas with source water flow of 5-10 miles from the intake; extremely high priority for source water protection. Zone 2 contains 8,922 acres of DWSP Watershed Land (36%). Intake Protection Zone #3 would include areas with source water flow 15-20 miles from the intake; very high priority for source water protection. Zone 3 contains 4,908 acres of DWSP Watershed Land (20%). Intake Protection Zone #4 would include areas with source water flow of 20-25 miles from the intake; still high priority for source water protection. Zone 4 contains 3,145 acres of DWSP Watershed Land (13%). Intake Protection Zone #5 would include areas with source water flow of 25+ miles from the intake; lower priority of the five intake protection zones for source water protection. Zone 5 contains 349 acres of DWSP Watershed Land (1%). John Scannell noted that MassDEP regulates all water supplies within the state. Their water supply regulations set regulatory protection zones. In addition, DCR has their own standards and regulations regarding tributaries. MassDEP and Massachusetts Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program also have their own Protection Zone and Priority Areas maps.

A member of the public asked if any additional access restrictions are being put in place as part of the upcoming Quabbin Watershed Public Access Plan update. John Scannell answered that besides banning the use of drones, most policies should remain unchanged.

A member of the public asked about where to find up to date water quality information. John Scannell answered that DCR produces annual water quality reports for their watersheds; they are available online. Brett Russ stated that analyzing 13 years of water quality data has shown a general increase in quality. In areas where quality has not increased, public access has not been cited as a cause.

### **Schedule Public Tour of Ware River Watershed FY18 Proposed Forestry Projects**

A public tour of the FY18 WRW proposed forestry projects was scheduled for Thursday, July 27<sup>th</sup> at 6PM. Everyone should meet at the DCR Oakham Field Office at 578 Old Turnpike Road, Oakham, MA 01068 where the tour will start.

You can view the detailed lot proposals on DCR's Watershed Management Forestry Projects website: <http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/water-res-protection/watershed-mgmt/forestry-projects.html>.

### **Member Issues**

Helen Viner updated the committee on a recent project at the Prison Camp Cemetery. A survey was conducted on the property and 59 gravesites were found and flagged, some that were previously unknown. She asked about the possibility of DCR erecting a fence around the cemetery and placing markers at the known gravesites. She would also like to see the site maintained annually going forward; raked and mowed. There is still around \$1,000 in funds left over from the survey project. Helen will look into the cost of materials for a fence and then coordinate with Herm Eck on potential construction and maintenance.

Dick Williams made a motion to have Justin Gonsor contact WRWAC members who haven't shown up to the last 3-4 meetings to inquire if they are still interested in staying on the committee; with the goal to increase participation among members. Phillip Warbasse seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

**Meeting End Time: 8:42 PM**

### **Upcoming WRWAC Meetings**

- Thursday, September 14<sup>th</sup>, 2017 at 7 PM – meeting location TBD