

**Quabbin Watershed Advisory Committee Meeting**  
**October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2017**  
**7:30 PM**

**Location:** DCR Quabbin Visitor Center, 100 Winsor Dam Road, Belchertown, MA 01007

**Members Present:** Tom Barnes (North Worcester County Quabbin Anglers Association), Tom Berube (MA Council of Sportsmen), Tony Brighenti (North Worcester County Quabbin Anglers Association), Jerry Eves (Trout Unlimited), Larry Gates (Quabbin Fisherman's Association), J.R. Greene (Friends of Quabbin, Inc.), Ralph Lapinskas (General Public), Tom Lautzenheiser (MA Audubon), Jane Peirce (Swift River Valley Historical Society), Bill Pula (MA Wildlife Federation)

**DCR Staff Present:** Justin Gonsor, Lisa Gustavsen, John Scannell, Jonathan Yeo

**Public Attending:** Lexi Dewey, Ray Harbaugh, Jon Lariviere, Brad Miner, Will Shattuck, Clayton Sydla, Larry Tucker

**Meeting Start Time: 7:31 PM**

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

Bill Pula made a motion to accept the minutes from the QWAC meeting held on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2017. J.R. Greene seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Jane Peirce abstained from voting as she did not attend the September 11<sup>th</sup> meeting.

**Draft Quabbin Reservoir Watershed System Public Access Management Plan Update 2017**

Lisa Gustavsen presented an overview of the draft version of the 2017 Quabbin Public Access Management Plan (QPAMP) to the committee.

The main purpose of the plan is to explain regulations, policies, and procedures related to public access and its management within each drinking water supply watershed managed by the Division of Water Supply Protection (DWSP). The plan

also outlines on-going control and monitoring mechanisms used to mitigate possible negative impacts from general and specific public access activities. Quabbin's first public access plan was published in 1988; the first update occurred in 1998, the second update in 2006, the third update is currently ongoing. A working group of internal DWSP staff was formed in 2015 to draft the current update.

The plan recognizes that there is an inherent conflict between water supply protection and public demand for access to these resources. Any human activity on or near water supply source waters can introduce disease-causing agents or pollutants to the water supply. DWSP factors into its management that the source water protection program provided for MWRA's water supply must meet strict state and federal oversight rules, regulations and guidelines as it services one of the few unfiltered drinking water supplies in the nation. There is recognition that the reservoirs and the land surrounding them are valuable environmental resources of the Commonwealth that are attractive to watershed residents and the general public. Therefore, DWSP, whose primary responsibility is water supply protection, views its public access management plans as a blueprint for determining the levels of access that may be reasonably allowed without risking water supply safety, security, or re-directing of DWSP resources.

Legislation regarding unfiltered water supplies was discussed. A 1986 update to the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) required drinking water supplies that utilized surface water to be filtered. An exemption to this expensive requirement could be obtained through a filtration waiver if a water supplier could prove to the EPA that it satisfactorily protects the water and keep it suitable for drinking without this treatment. The DCR/MWRA system is one of five large U.S. cities that are unfiltered: Boston, New York, San Francisco, Portland (OR), and Seattle. Currently, DCR meets the Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) 'measures of success' to maintain the filtration waiver through its watershed protection programs, one of which is the public access plan. Jonathan Yeo stated that, in general, the Boston and New York systems allow more public access in comparison to the Seattle, Portland, and San Francisco systems.

The public input process for the plan was detailed. In 2016 DWSP utilized an online survey tool to collect public comments. Fliers were distributed to towns, libraries, advisory committees, and user groups. Social media, including town and

agency facebook pages, were used. The 23 question survey was available for 41 days: 8/31/2016-10/10/2016. 692 people took the survey. Most people and organizations were supportive of the resources and activities that are allowed while a smaller subset of comments advocated for activities that are currently prohibited.

Under the public access plan, Quabbin is divided into 6 management areas (which are managed slightly differently). The names and details of those areas are as follows:

1. **Quabbin Park** – Approximately 3,000 acres at the southern tip of Quabbin Reservoir that is generally open to the public.
2. **Quabbin Reservation** – Over 45,000 acres of land that was part of the original land taking, including the reservoir islands, bounded by and within state routes 9, 202, 122, and 32A.
3. **Off-Reservation** – Approximately 10,000 acres of land outside the bounds of the Quabbin Reservation.
4. **Quabbin Reservoir** – The 24,000 acre surface of the reservoir itself, excluding the islands.
5. **Regulating Ponds** – Two large ponds of close to 700 acres; Joe O’Loughlin Pond at gate 31 and Pottapaug Pond at gate 43.
6. **Off-Watershed Ponds** – South Spectacle, Bassett Pond, and Peppers Mill Pond are three smaller ponds that total 130 acres.

The goals of the plan were stated as follows:

- To properly manage a public resource used as a source supply of drinking water
- To protect drinking water resources from public access impacts
- To protect historic and prehistoric sites within the watershed
- To improve and protect long-term ecosystem health and biological diversity within the watershed
- To assure that public access is safe and appropriate to DCR/MWRA’s water quality and regulatory goals.

DWSP will conduct periodic reviews to evaluate the plan in general, as well as any policy concerns or conflicts that arise. Review will be coordinated through the Quabbin Reservoir Watershed Advisory Committee during their regularly-

scheduled meetings, and will include a public input component. The plan goes through a full update process every 10 years.

The plan takes the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) into account. Facilities and signage are continuously updated. Quabbin takes part in Masswildlife's white-tailed deer hunt for paraplegic hunters. Service animals are allowed in areas where dogs are prohibited.

Various public access activities in the plan were summarized and clarified. Those activities are listed below:

- **Shore fishing**
  - Allowed during the designated fishing season on existing trails between gates 8-16 and gates 22-44, excluding the baffle dams.
  - Night access allowed with permit at certain gates for shore fishing.
- **Boat fishing**
  - Allowed for fishing purposes on Quabbin Reservoir during the designated fishing season from three boat launch areas (BLA's) with restrictions.
  - Private boats must meet size and boat seal requirements.
  - Rental boats are available
  - The program is a legacy of the 1950's; is closely controlled and does not threaten public health.
- **Bicycling**
  - There are 47.6 miles of designated bicycle routes on DWSP lands in the Quabbin Reservoir watershed.
  - Allowed only on existing paved and designated internal roads.
  - Single track trail/off-road bicycling is not allowed.
- **Snowmobiling**
  - Prohibited throughout most of the DWSP watershed system.
  - Limited access is allowed on designated, marked roads only within off-reservation lands.
  - Policy has been clarified to designate specific off-reservation roads and the snowmobile public access map has been updated.
  - These specific roads were developed in collaboration with local snowmobile club input.
- **Night Access**

- Night access for pedestrians allowed through certain gates with DWSP permit during designated fishing season.
- Allowed without a permit on the Swift River below the Y Pool, if access is from Route 9, and on Peppers Mill Pond, provided that access is limited to the immediate banks of the Swift River, Y Pool, or Peppers Mill Pond only.
- Due to security reasons, access to the Swift River, Y Pool, and Route 9 parking area is prohibited between 11PM and 4AM.
- Night access may be denied during times of heightened security of alerts.
- **Group Activities**
  - Quabbin reservoir lands, especially within Quabbin Park, are a desirable scenic backdrop for many group activities, such as weddings, memorial services, organized hikes, and tour buses.
  - DWSP policy has been clarified to address the increasing frequency of group access activity requests by stating numbers of people or vehicles requiring a permit. Examples include:
    - Group activities are allowed without a DWSP-issued permit for groups of up to 25 individuals and 10 cars or motorcycles. DWSP requests a courtesy call to the Visitor Center at 413-323-7221 to avoid group conflicts.
    - A DWSP-issued permit is required for any group of more than 25 individuals or 10 cars or motorcycles.
    - Group activities of greater than 100 individuals or 40 cars or motorcycles shall be subject to additional review, including possible requirements for an accompanying watershed ranger detail.
    - Any access by bus requires a DWSP-issued permit.
    - Ceremonies, such as weddings and memorials, are limited to 75 people or less.
- **Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) aka Drones**
  - Recent technological advances have made civilian use of UAVs an increasingly popular activity.
  - The unregulated use of UAVs can cause security concerns, public safety and enjoyment problems, and interfere with wildlife.
  - The use of UAVs is prohibited on the Quabbin Reservoir Watershed System without a DWSP-issued permit specific to a designated

- location/time, for designated purposes, with a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) registered UAV, and operated under FAA rules.
- DWSP will review permit applications for affiliated research projects on a case-by-case basis, provided such proposals do not interfere with security, wildlife functions, or public safety, privacy, or enjoyment.
- This is a new policy developed due to the rapidly expanding technologies that enable widespread participation in this activity.
- In 2017, seven criminal citations for drone use at Quabbin have been issued by the Massachusetts State Police.

Wording on the Quabbin boat seal (QBS) program is included in the plan. The program was initiated to ensure that boats launched at Quabbin have been properly decontaminated to minimize the threat of aquatic invasive species (AIS) getting into the reservoir. If AIS get into Quabbin or other lakes and ponds they can take over and disrupt the natural balance, degrade water quality, and interfere with recreation activities such as fishing. All private boats must have an intact QBS to be eligible for launching on the reservoir. Seals can be obtained through either a cold weather quarantine (CWQ) or full boat decontamination.

Quabbin/Ware River Watershed Ranger statistics were discussed. For FY17, the rangers tallied 18,926 visitor contacts. Of those contacts, 410 violations were noted. 399 verbal warnings were given, 2 written warnings were given, and 9 citations were issued. The ranger's strategy in most cases has been to explain our rules and regulations through communicating with people to achieve compliance, rather than through issuing fines or warnings.

Tom Berube questioned how many annual group events of over 200 people happen at Quabbin. Two events were mentioned; the Walk of Champions and a cycling event around Quabbin. John Scannell noted that requests for other large events do come in from time to time and may be turned down due to potential impacts to the water supply and larger events being a drain on staff resources.

Tony Brighenti reaffirmed his support in DWSP not allowing dogs, ATVs, and horseback riding at Quabbin.

Bill Shattuck asked if sugar maple tapping is still allowed at Quabbin. Lisa Gustavsen answered that the wording and details on maple tapping can be found in the comprehensive land management plan; it still occurs as it has in the past, via permit.

Larry Gates clarified the wording on a specific boat motor size exception regarding clean burning four stroke motors on page 44 of the plan. The statement should read, "Cleaner burning 25 hp, four stroke motors are allowed for boats rated 40 hp or more to encourage replacement of two stroke motors and support four stroke motors."

Jane Peirce stated the Swift River Valley Historical Society's (SRVHS) support for the plan and noted their specific comments on the plan:

- Add additional information to the historical section on page 3 of the plan. SRVHS suggest inserting this italicized sentence after, "...formerly occupied by the four Western Massachusetts towns of Dana, Enfield, Prescott, and Greenwich. *2,500 residents of those towns were forced to relocate, and all buildings, structures and cemeteries were removed from the Valley to make construction of the Reservoir possible.*"
- Appreciation for the comparison of other major unfiltered drinking water supplies' public access policies.
- **Snowmobiling:** In addition to allowing that snowmobile operation with sufficient snow cover has little impact on soils and vegetation, the policy should specify that snowmobiling is not permitted when there is not sufficient snow cover to protect underlying soils and vegetation.
- **Wildlife and bird watching:** SRVHS understand that there have been incident(s) of photographers using boats to transport clients, which results in harassment of waterfowl. They see nothing in the plan that addresses this egregious violation. In addition, the discussion section implies that watercraft may be used for wildlife and bird watching, which is inconsistent with the boating policy (fishing only). Clarification is needed, and strong prohibition against wildlife harassment should be included here as well as in sections addressing boating and UAVs.
- **Smoking:** The plan includes only one mention that visitors are merely asked to "limit" smoking and extinguish embers properly (page 18). Given the profound risk to water quality if a fire should start in the watershed, SRVHS recommend a policy to protect against such an occurrence.

Larry Tucker expressed appreciation for the leadership of DCR, their personnel, and QWAC. He thanked the committee in their fairness when considering public access requests.

Tony Brighenti made a motion that QWAC supports the 2017 Quabbin Public Access Management Plan. Bill Pula seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

John Scannell noted that the public comment period will remain open until October 20<sup>th</sup>; those comments will be addressed in the final plan. The DCR commissioner will give final approval of the plan.

### **Member Issues**

Larry Gates commented on the annual fishing area report. For 2017 he would like to see a breakdown on the condition of the rental boats, motors, and props and a comparison on the amount of money spent on maintaining the boats, motors, and equipment from year to year.

Larry also commented on the problem of heavy fog on the water during some mornings in the fall. He feels that all boats should have adequate lighting in compliance with regulations or not be allowed to launch on the reservoir.

J.R. Greene questioned why the vacant Quabbin regional director position has not yet been filled. J.R. made a motion that QWAC send a letter to DCR commissioner Leo Roy that the committee would like to see the director position filled as quickly as possible. Tony Brighenti seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved. Jane Peirce volunteered to draft the letter and Tom Berube will sign and mail it.

**Meeting End Time: 8:33 PM**

### **Upcoming QWAC Meetings:**

- Monday, January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2018 at 7:30 PM – DCR Quabbin Visitor Center, 100 Winsor Dam Road, Belchertown, MA 01007