

Ware River Watershed Advisory Committee Meeting
Thursday, November 16th, 2017
7:00 PM

Location: Rutland Free Public Library, 280 Main Street, Rutland, MA 01543

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

Massachusetts Council of Sportsmen: William Lebel

Alternate: Mike Moss

Worcester County League of Sportsmen's Clubs: John Root

Alternate: Dave Papale

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

Alternate:

A Rod and Gun Club: Joe Cataldo

Alternate: Bryan 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:

Gary Brigham, Bill Dobson, Lee Dougan, De Guberski, Marianne Wojcicki, Dean Zuppio

Meeting Minutes

Meeting Start Time: 7:01 PM

Approval of Minutes of Meeting on September 14th, 2017

Dick Williams made a motion to accept the minutes from the Ware River Watershed Advisory Committee (WRWAC) meeting on September 14th, 2017 with edits. Helen Viner seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

Ed Yaglou abstained from voting because he did not attend the September meeting.

Update on new Quabbin and Ware River Regional Director

John Scannell updated the committee on the vacant Quabbin and Ware River Regional Director position. He has heard that a candidate is being moved forward but that the timeline for filling the position is undetermined.

Jeff Schaaf read aloud a letter he has drafted on behalf of the committee that will be sent to DCR Commissioner Leo Roy recommending that a permanent Regional Director be hired as soon as possible. The letter will also be sent to Representatives Anne Gobi, Donald Berthiaume Jr., and Kimberly Ferguson.

A member of the public felt that the committee should be more involved in the hiring/interview process for the new Regional Director. There was discussion on whether or not the committee should be that involved in the process. Jeff Schaaf

mentioned that DCR did solicit input from the committee prior to the interview process for the Regional Director.

Comprehensive Land Management Plan (CLMP) – update

John Scannell updated the committee on the status of the CLMP. The public comment period ended on October 20th. DCR-DWSP is currently addressing the most recent comments they have received. Once that step is finished, the completed plan will be sent to DCR Commissioner Leo Roy for final approval.

Tom Bratko asked if many comments were received. John Scannell answered that there were not many written comments submitted; possibly around a half dozen.

Dick Williams reiterated that he would like to see more DCR staff take part classroom education at local schools.

Quabbin Public Access Plan – update

John Scannell updated the committee on the status of the Quabbin Public Access Plan. Similar to the CLMP, the public comment period ended on October 20th. All comments have been addressed and the completed plan will soon be sent to the DCR Commissioner for final approval.

Dick Williams asked about the three-phase power line opening located off Rt. 9 in Belchertown; where the power is going. He would also like to see any trees that hang over those power lines to be adequately cut back. John Scannell mentioned that National Grid maintain their own right-of-way openings.

Ware River Public Access Plan – update

John Scannell briefed the committee on the upcoming update to the Ware River Public Access Plan. The process is scheduled to start around July of 2018 and should be completed during CY2019. One of the first steps will be to put out a public survey to solicit input before the plan is written.

Tom Bratko questioned whether it would be possible to have committee members take part in the process of actually writing the plan, as opposed to having the plan be presented to the committee at a public meeting after it has been written. He would like to see an official protocol inserted into the plan on the process of adding new trails to the system or closing existing trails. John

Scannell answered that he can recommend that a meeting be scheduled with committee members before the plan is written to get their input on any specific issues they would like to see addressed.

Jeff Schaaf reiterated that he would like to see the committee involved in the update process before the plan has been written and the public survey gone out. Tom Bratko added that he would like a WRWAC representative to be present at the first planning meeting for the update. Brett Russ agreed that stakeholder engagement and transparency is paramount to the process.

Ed Yaglou suggested that committee members review the current 2010 Ware River Watershed (WRW) Public Access Plan to come up with specific changes/recommendations they would like to see addressed when the plan is updated. Jeff Schaaf requested that this be an agenda item at the next meeting. Justin Gonsor will send committee members the website address to the plan. It can be found at:

<http://www.mass.gov/eea/docs/dcr/watersupply/watershed/2010wareaccessplan.pdf>.

A member of the public commented that he would like to see the writers of the plan sit down with different interested user groups beyond the committee to get their input before the plan is written. There was discussion about which user groups are represented directly on the committee. The committee was set by the legislature. The legislation has set the representative groups that form the committee.

Brett Russ asked if there is a reason why the plan could not be fast-tracked and completed sooner. John Scannell answered that the Quabbin Public Access Plan needs to be finalized before work can begin on the Ware River Public Access Plan. The Quabbin plan will possibly be signed off by the DCR Commissioner before the end of the year.

Member Issues

Jeff Schaaf recently learned that the Massachusetts Wildlife Federation, a group currently represented on the committee, is disbanding. Bill Westaway was their primary member and Tom Berube was their alternate. What constitutes a

quorum was discussed. The committee previously set their quorum as needing 8 groups to be present and represented at a meeting; 7 will now be required.

Helen Viner noted that Tim Nahrwold will no longer be the alternate member for the Rutland Historical Society; he is stepping down. Justin Gonsor will take him off the member list and mailing list.

Brett Russ asked if it would be worthwhile to see if there is legislative interest in reevaluating the membership groups on the committee; possibly adding or removing groups. There was discussion about formulating a specific proposal to give to the appropriate legislators. Jeff Schaaf would like to see this issue as an agenda item at the next meeting.

Helen Viner asked for an update regarding fencing around the prison camp cemetery. She is looking for some simple posts and chains to be put up around sensitive areas; not around the entire cemetery. Herm Eck answered that there should be some chain available, but granite posts might be harder to come by. No work could happen in that area until the spring of 2018. Herm will look into the issue.

Tom Bratko asked for an update on the logging operations in the Ware River; the project in Hubbardston specifically. Herm Eck answered that bids on that job are due in two weeks. He is unsure if anyone will put in a bid or not for that lot.

Tom Bratko mentioned his meeting with Herm Eck regarding opening/fixing the 'side gates' discussed at the previous meeting. The gate on Kitchen Fire Road could be left open at all times except from Thanksgiving through New Years. Adjusting the gates so that they are no higher than 15" off the ground is also possible. The timeframe on when that would happen will depend on winter temperatures and conditions.

Tom Bratko made a motion that the committee drafts a letter to DCR asking that they temporarily open the so-called "T6 trail" for use by bicycles, horses, and foot traffic before the Ware River Public Access Plan is updated. The letter would be sent to Quabbin interim director John Scannell, cc'ing Jonathan Yeo and other local legislators. Margo Petracone seconded the motion. The motion was discussed. Margo Petracone stated that she walked T6 with former Senator

Brewer prior to the year 2000 and was told that it would be an official horseback riding trail. There was discussion on where “T6” is actually located and if it was ever a legal trail. John Scannell noted that “T6” is not a legal trail and that any decision to open it would be done through the public access planning process. There was discussion about where bicycles are allowed in the WRW; they are currently allowed on DCR roads and the rail trail. The motion was voted on and passed 9 to 1; Helen Viner opposed the motion.

Brett Russ brought up the term prescriptive rights which describes if an activity has been in use for a certain amount of time with the landowner’s knowledge, then that usage becomes an allowed right. John Scannell answered that the statute in question applies to private property, not public lands.

Dick Williams asked about how many hours of brush cutting was done in the WRW in 2017 with the new skid steer. Herm Eck answered that although there was a decent amount of brush cutting done in the WRW, the new skid steer was mainly used at Quabbin this past year.

Dick Williams asked if there have been any moose sightings lately in the WRW. Herm Eck answered that he hasn’t seen any in the past 8 or 9 months, but he has talked to hunters who have been seeing their signs. Pellet counts indicate that there is a healthy population in the area.

Robin Langer asked about the status of the 4 new bridges set to be constructed in the WRW. Herm Eck answered that the bridges have been delivered to the appropriate locations but not yet installed. John Scannell noted that depending how the bridges are constructed DCR will need to investigate access issues regarding which user groups will be allowed to use the bridges. They will be located at Twin Hill Road, Brigham Road, Lackey Lane, and Rice Road.

Ed Yaglou expressed appreciation for the article that recently appeared in the Barre Gazette about the Barre-Heath logging operation across from Rt. 62. The article detailed the thought process and plan behind the project. DCR Forester Ken Canfield wrote and submitted the piece.

A member of the public asked if there is a plan to mitigate the erosion issue on the T3 trail. He mentioned that outside groups have offered to help DCR fix the

issue for free. John Scannell noted that DCR will look at involving outside groups regarding trail maintenance as part of the Ware River Public Access Plan update next year.

Jeff Schaaf reminded the committee that the 20th Anniversary Recognition Event of the forming of the WRWAC is scheduled for Thursday, December 14th at 7PM at the Barre Town Hall, 2 Exchange Street, Barre, MA 01005.

Helen Viner made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Dick Williams seconded the meeting. The motion was unanimously approved.

Meeting End Time: 8:29 PM

Upcoming WRWAC Meetings

- Thursday, January 11th, 2018 at 7 PM – Rutland Free Public Library (downstairs), 280 Main Street, Rutland, MA 01543