



**WATER SUPPLY CITIZENS
ADVISORY COMMITTEE**
to the Mass. Water Resources Authority

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Department of Conservation and Recreation
Division of Water Supply Protection
Office of Public Outreach
251 Causeway Street, 9th Floor
Boston, MA 02114

RE: Public comment on the 2017 Draft of the Quabbin Reservoir Watershed System Public Access Management Plan Update

Dear Commissioner Roy,

The Water Supply Citizens Advisory Committee (WSCAC) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the 2017 Quabbin Public Access Management Plan Update.

WSCAC is formally contracted as the water supply citizen's advisory committee to the MWRA which provides water to 2.5 million people in the metro Boston area and to Wilbraham, Chicopee and the South Hadley Fire District 1 through the Chicopee Valley Aqueduct. Since 1977 WSCAC has advised the MWRA Board of Directors on water resources management and watershed protection. The committee produces formal written comment on environmental reviews, and makes programmatic recommendations to the MWRA, DCR's Division of Water Supply Protection and other relevant state agencies.

As noted in the beginning of the Quabbin Reservoir Public Access Plan Update, the Quabbin Reservoir is one of the largest single purpose water supply reservoirs in the world. The reservoir has a filtration waiver from MassDEP due to the high quality water made possible by the significant watershed protection program funded by the MWRA and administered by DCR's Division of Water Supply Protection in partnership with MWRA staff.

The Plan Update provides a clear and thorough explanation and description of the Quabbin water supply system and its primary goal—maintaining a high quality drinking water supply.

The Plan effectively addresses the balance of meeting state and federal regulatory laws while acknowledging the general public's desire to use watershed lands for specific recreational uses. As Table 3 on page 13 notes, public access policies for other large unfiltered water supplies provide fewer recreational opportunities than DCR/DWSP which allows hunting, boating, bicycling, and shoreline fishing.

There will always be requests for new or expanded recreational uses on watershed lands. DWSP—along with their legislatively mandated citizen advisory committees—prudently evaluates each request to determine the specific activity’s effect on water quality and the ecological health of the watershed. The Plan Update includes policy descriptions that are clear and explanations that effectively communicate the necessity of each policy. For instance, clarifications of the Night Access Policy, the Group Activities Policy, and the Boat Seal Requirement for all private boats serve the public by providing additional information about policy rationales—including security. We appreciate the continuation of the DWSP policy to prohibit off-trail single-track mountain biking while allowing biking in designated areas throughout the watershed.

We support the policy that prohibits the use of drones on the Quabbin Reservoir Watershed without a permit. Unrestrained use of drones by the public is a safety issue that affects other visitors and can negatively affect wildlife.

We support the two new full time ranger positions at the Quabbin Reservoir. In addition to monitoring activities over a very large area, rangers provide the important role of educating the public on why rules and regulations are necessary on the watershed. We fully support the ability of rangers to issue written warnings and citations for violations. We appreciate the inclusion and clarity of Table 7, which documents the types and amounts of the violations found on the watershed. Although educating the public is an important component of effective management, WSCAC contends that repeated violations call for stronger actions, such as ticketing.

WSCAC suggests that the Final 2017 Quabbin Reservoir Watershed System Public Access Management Plan be available at the Quabbin Visitor Center for public distribution. As noted in the Plan Update, DWSP has an ongoing responsibility to public outreach and education. WSCAC supports increased funding for programs that involve watershed towns, residents and the general public in the stewardship of the land and water resources at the Quabbin.

In summary, WSCAC supports the Plan Update and the conservative approach DWSP exhibits in its management role of the Quabbin Reservoir and watershed.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment. Please contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Executive Director, WSCAC