

WOODLANDS PARTNERSHIP of NORTHWEST MASSACHUSETTS

A Mission of Natural Resource-Based Economic Development, Forest Conservation, & Municipal Financial Sustainability

MEETING NOTICE

The Executive Committee
of the **Woodlands Partnership of Northwest Massachusetts**
will meet on **Wednesday, January 14, 2026 from 4:30 - 6 p.m.**

This is a virtual meeting via Zoom. Members of the Board and public are welcome to attend.
Please email Agent Lisa Hayden to request a Zoom link at any time: lhayden@newenglandforestry.org

Agenda

1. Call to order – Board Chair Dicken Crane
2. Brief Agent update on consultants' progress, report drafting & emerging themes to be outlined in state-funded National Heritage Area feasibility study:
 - DRAFT: Story of the varied upland forests & watersheds of NW MA and the movement of people and goods through this rugged landscape past, present & future; a more complete picture of the pivotal role of this place and its diverse Indigenous Peoples and immigrants in the shared history of colonization and birth of the American nation; shaping a resilient future for all who care for and depend on these forests and rivers and the ecological benefits they provide, through stewardship, education and sustainable rural community development.
 - Key findings from consultants' research
3. Committee discussion of Heritage Area theme & inter-related governance questions: consider voting on recommendations to Board:
 - I. Identify *Local Coordinating Entity* (LCE):
 - a) Should the WP Board, or an affiliated non-profit arm of WP to be created, be the LCE?
 - b) Should a new entity, potentially with expanded Indigenous membership, and/or potential to add new towns or other partners, become the LCE of an NHA?
 - II. Consider Board governance and potential participation of sovereign Indigenous communities who may be interested – *Potential options*:
 - a) Recommend adding a WP Board seat for Western Massachusetts Commissioner on Indian Affairs (voting or liaison, TBD)
 - b) Expand WP Board membership to tribal/Indigenous communities with ancestral homelands in NW MA (Ohketeau Cultural Center, Ashfield-based, Nipmuc/k-centered non-profit has board seat); other communities include federally recognized Stockbridge Munsee Band of Mohicans, state-recognized Nipmuc/k, & Odanak, now based in Canada (Abenaki)
 - c) WP working group and Agent invite Indigenous communities to meet to explore how NHA could be structured, simultaneously with the public feedback process of reviewing the draft feasibility report in 2026.

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III. Distribution of potential funding (state or local match to federal NHA funding is required):

Should WP Board adopt a Vision statement now for how funding is anticipated to flow?

Potential options could include:

- a) Base % to LCE for administration & operations (core staff);
- b) Equal proportions (25% each) to the LCE (WP), and to 3 identified Indigenous communities;
- c) Invite each Indigenous community to share a program or need to be funded by a future NHA that the WP or LCE would include and make a priority in the report (i.e., tribal forester or stewardship role for Indigenous lands as one identified need), or,
- d) Another equitable distribution TBD.

IV. Review map & WP geographic footprint in light of potential NHA – *Potential options:*

- a) Consider by-laws process to expand after interest by several border towns to join the WP (Hancock, Hinsdale & questions from Dalton, Plainfield residents); County participation, state endorsement needed?
- b) Should the current 21-town footprint be the starting point for the report – with options to expand geographic region to interested towns in the future outlined under “Alternatives”?

4. Agent updates: Finalizing new state contract budget underway with PT website support; WP table at Canopy Forestry Forum at UMass March 5; spring tree-planting location needed; Board officer elections to be held at June Annual Meeting if needed

5. Any item(s) not anticipated within 48 hours

6. Public comment

7. Adjourn

Executive Committee members: Dicken Crane – Windsor (Board Chair); Art Schwenger – Heath (Board Vice Chair); Alain Peteroy – Franklin Land Trust (Clerk); Chris Cozzaglio – Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (Treasurer); Rhonda Anderson – Ohketeau Cultural Center; Russ Richardson – Massachusetts Forest Alliance; Robert O’Connor – MA EOEEA