



Upper Delaware Council

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UPPER DELAWARE COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

March 2, 2023

The Upper Delaware Council held its monthly meeting on Thursday, March 2, 2023. Chairperson Robinson called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and roll call followed.

In attendance: Town of Hancock- Fred Peckham (Zoom), Town of Fremont- Jim Greier, Town of Delaware- Harold Roeder, Jr., Town of Cochecton- Larry Richardson, Town of Deerpark- Virginia Dudko, Damascus Township- Jeff Dexter, Berlin Township- Alan Henry, Lackawaxen Township- Doug Case, Shohola Township- Aaron Robinson, Westfall Township- Michael Barth (Zoom), State of New York- Ryan Coulter (Zoom), Commonwealth of Pennsylvania- Tim Dugan, Delaware River Basin Commission- Beth Koniers Brown (Zoom), National Park Service- Lindsey Kurnath Absent: Town of Tusten, Town of Highland, Town of Lumberland. Staff in attendance: Executive Director- Laurie Ramie, Resources and Land Use Specialist- Kerry Engelhardt, Secretary- Ashley Hall-Bagdonas (Zoom). Guests: Nathan Reigner, Ph.D., Bill Dudko- Town of Deerpark Alternate, Alex Garcia-Maldonado- NPS (Zoom), Don Hamilton- NPS (Zoom), Karen Matsu Greenberg, Mike Poska. Media: Liam Mayo- River Reporter, Peter Becker- Tri-County Independent (Zoom).

Presentation: “The Tree of Outdoor Recreation” by Nathan Reigner, Ph.D., Pennsylvania’s Director of Outdoor Recreation: Robinson said we're privileged this evening to have a presentation by Nathan Reigner. He's quite an accomplished fellow, with a doctorate in social science, amazing track record of his experiences are in analyzing, planning for management, building collaboration to support outdoor recreation and he's traveled the world and to 60 National Park Units. Reigner has a Bachelor's degree in Anthropology and Sociology from Gettysburg College; a Master's of Science from Syracuse; and a Doctorate in Natural Resource Management from the University of Vermont. Dr. Reigner thanked Dugan for inviting him and introduced himself to the UDC as the Director of Outdoor Recreation for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Reigner's first PowerPoint slide was titled: Tending Pennsylvania's outdoor economy. This is geographically agnostic and he thinks the things discussed tonight play equally on either side of the river, the same way by region and locality, and the same way nationally.

Dr. Reigner started with a story. Back in the early 1960s two scientists G.L. Bultena and M.J. Taves were canoeing in the Boundary Water area in Minnesota trying to figure out what makes for a good angling experience. At night they went to camp and asked the anglers how their fishing was and they would say it's great but the scientists would say they noticed there was no fish and the angler said yeah but we saw the sunrise and there was an eagle that kept flying overhead all day and I had heavy things on my heart and I spent the day in the boat with my buddy and we talked them over and they are all good now and I had a great day of fishing. What this story tells Reigner is that there's more to fishing than catching fish. There's more to this outdoor recreation phenomena than the activities themselves. A hike is not about a walk. Yes, we walk to do it but a hike is about spending quality time with friends and family, learning and discovery, immersion in nature, champion accomplishment, about being a member of a community of recreationists. So, outdoor recreation is this process of being motivated to achieve certain benefits. Reigner said he's laying some ground work: there's more to fishing than catching fish. There's more to this outdoor recreation phenomenon than the activities. There's also more to managing and promoting and using outdoor recreation for our benefit than those of us who are involved in natural resources. Whether it be DCNR, Bureau of Forestry, Bureau of State Parks, NPS, U.S. Forest Service, or local County parks, those places and management of the resources are very important, foundational, and the Wellspring from which outdoor recreation follows but it also includes partners outside of government, advocacy groups, environmental groups, user groups, and it involves business industry itself. Industry in terms of designers, manufacturers, distributors, retailers, equipment, clothing gear, guides, outfitters, ski areas, mountain lodges, etc. involve the business of tourism. It also involves professional

services, a lot of designers, planners, consultants, accountants, and lawyers. Recreation is a system of government non-government business. Reigner said outdoor recreation isn't on or off, it exists along the spectrum. It can be built into our lives in all kinds of different ways. There are some activities that are mostly outdoor recreation like a wilderness backpacking trip and there are some activities that are virtually not at all outdoor recreation like doing your taxes but if you do your taxes at a picnic table outside maybe you're bringing a little bit of that benefit from outdoor recreation to the process.

His role in DCNR is relatively new in Pennsylvania. There is a Director of Outdoor Recreation in New York working in NYSDEC, Laura DiBetta. Her role is different from Reigner's but they are both about recognizing systematic connections and trying to establish an entity within government that can help service outdoor recreation as a social phenomenon that delivers us benefits. The system extends beyond government and lives in partnerships, and as part of our lives that we can have every day, all the time.

The tree of outdoor recreation grows in the Upper Delaware Valley and it bears us a lot of fruit and many different kinds of fruit, it's like a fruit salad; It bears economic benefits, it bears community benefits, health benefits and environmental benefits. Outdoor recreation infrastructure is green infrastructure. There's stormwater management, temperature regulation, habitat connectivity and air and water purification. Reigner said we're beginning to recognize the role that outdoor recreation plays as green infrastructure through framings like a return on environment study that measures the values we derive from environmental resources including outdoor recreation resources and tries to frame them in terms of a return on investment approach, just like many other Industries do.

Outdoor recreation gives us health benefits. It keeps us active and helps our bodies be strong and healthy. Even passive outdoor "forest bathing" leads to stress reduction and mental health benefits. We take all of those health benefits from the individual level and package them together and we have improved public health, reductions in chronic diseases, and healthier populations overall. It helps with mental well-being and reduces stress and induces happiness. Individual benefits aggregate to create public health benefits. Reigner said social well-being is important and one he feels we don't talk enough about that follows from outdoor recreation and it begins with a little bit of a critical observation that we live in a time of division, and a time of algorithms further specifying the information we get. If we look at large-scale settlement patterns we see people choosing where to live based on criteria. There are fewer and fewer forces that bring us together as a society- outdoor recreation connects us and builds a sense of shared community.

Parks, outdoor recreation spaces, green spaces, rivers, trails- these are places where we should be able to go and are going for the same reasons, time with friends and family, connection to nature, challenge and accomplishment, learning and discovery. When Reigner is driving down a forest road, on a trail, or on a river others wave to him and say hello. That doesn't happen when he's in downtown Harrisburg or when he's driving down the highway and in those little symbols, we all feels those moments of social connection or the acknowledgment that we are in fact a member of a recreating community and in these places we can be together. Wallace Stanger, a historian of the American West, said "...National parks are the best idea we ever had. Absolutely American, absolutely democratic, they reflect us at our best."

Reigner said working in government if he can't get figures to show up on a spreadsheet then he can't get it to show up in a decision and he can't make his point. If we are talking about the importance of social well-being how do we get "absolutely American, absolutely democratic and reflecting at our best" to show up on a spreadsheet? They're working on it. He provided data from the U.S Bureau of Economic Analysis; part of the U.S Department of Commerce and this data exists for every state. In Pennsylvania, our outdoor industry generated \$14 billion worth of value for our GDP in 2021. That accounts for 1.6% of our economy. Pennsylvania's has a large and diverse economy. That number is actually 152,000 jobs in outdoor recreation in the Commonwealth and we are the sixth largest outdoor recreation economy in the country. Reigner said \$14 billion makes a greater contribution to the Pennsylvania economy than mining, quarrying, oil and gas extraction combined. It adds about four times the value to Pennsylvania's GDP as agriculture, forestry, commercial hunting and commercial fishing combined. Reigner stressed he's not making a bigger/better argument, he's asking us to join in a thought experiment. Think about how much time we spend talking about oil and gas extraction, how many structures there are inside of government and outside of government supporting the agriculture industry. Now think about what outdoor recreation could be doing for our economy if we paid that much attention to it; if we supported it like any other industry in our economy and when we look inside of that \$13.6 billion, we see a relatively diversified outdoor economy. 28.1% is in retail trade

(\$3,837.8 Million), that's where the outdoors touches us mostly as individual participants and particularly as local recreationists. Manufacturing is second (13.3%) and he would guess New York's numbers are relatively similar since our economies and our geographies aren't all that different. Next is accommodation, food service (12.5%) and arts, entertainment (10.4%). These are the travelers who come into the states, and participate in outdoor recreation.

Outdoor recreation jobs aren't just low-wage service sector jobs. Reigner referenced a linear regression model from a study from Brookings Institute, of 662 small and medium-sized Rural and Industrial communities in the American Midwest. Each blue circle reflects a small and medium-sized rural and industrial community in the American Midwest, no different than rural and industrial small and medium-sized communities in Pennsylvania or New York. The charts are two sets of twins. There is quality of life on the x-axis; these are our driving variables and quality of business environment. The response variables to those are population growth and employment growth. What these charts show us that our communities with high-quality of life are experiencing population growth and reductions in unemployment, so not only do we have more people but we also have more jobs. Communities with high-qualities of business environment are experiencing population loss and no greater percentage of their population being employed. Dr. Reigner said quality business environment is measured in terms of regulatory relief, tax relief, low prevailing wages, and low industrial and commercial real estate costs. When people who live in these communities with high quality of life are asked "why is your quality of life so high?" they say because they have easy access to high quality outdoor recreation, the architecture of their downtowns has been preserved and revitalized, and we filled that space for contemporary cultural services which Reigner said he thinks is code language for breweries, cafes, specialty retail, art galleries, festivals, music spaces, etc. We also know that these places with high quality life are attractive both to visits and to live. These are the places that have younger on average populations. These are the places within migration rather than out migration. If the tree of recreation bears us all of these different kinds of environmental fruit what are we doing in the Commonwealth to try and support this? Reigner said they are trying to fertilize the soil, they are trying to defend the tree from pests, and trying to harvest the fruit systematically and trying to distribute it around the Commonwealth equitably. To do that, they are establishing an Office of Outdoor Recreation supported by a Statewide coalition to strengthen our outdoor economy. They are coordinating a small team that can help knit together all of the elements of government that can support the outdoor industry like any other industry and that can ensure for example as a trail is developed the businesses serving that trail come online at the same time. They're developing the workforce they need to grow that economy over the next 30 years and ensuring that the recreation system they develop reflects the needs today and the needs that we're going to have in 2050. Roeder said he feels a lot of what Dr. Reigner shared is reflected in these very areas along the river. You see downtown regeneration in towns like Callicoon and Narrowsburg of people coming to utilize the areas they like in the country and that's dollars coming into our town/ships. There was a short question and answer period.

Approval of February 2, 2023 meeting minutes: A motion by Henry seconded by Ginny Dudko, to approve the February 2, 2023 meeting minutes carried.

Public Comment on the Agenda: None.

Committee Reports: There were no questions regarding previously distributed minutes: Water Use/Resource Management, Feb. 21st (Dudko), Project Review, Feb. 28th (Richardson); and Operations, Feb. 28th (Robinson).

Status Reports

Delaware River Basin Commission: Koniers Brown reported that DRBC is having their 1st Quarter Business meeting on 3/8 at 10:30 via Zoom.

They issued their latest Notice of Applications received on Friday, 2/23. Those include recently received applications from sponsors of projects that need approval under section 3.8 or section 10.3 of their Delaware River Basin Compact, and all projects received go under review by Commission staff in consultation with other agencies. Public hearings may be required and will be announced when they are being heard. The next public hearing would be in advance of their second quarter business. She mentions this because they have received an application from the Sun NG Kittatinny RV, LLC for an operated campground facility known as Project FIMFO that she knows has been of interest here.

Their advisory committees are continuing to meet mostly virtually. The Water Quality Advisory Committee meeting is 3/23 at 9:30; the Regulated Flow Advisory Committee meeting is 4/26 at 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. and a joint

meeting of DRBC Monitoring Advisory and Coordination Committee along with Partnership for the Delaware Estuary, Science and Technical Advisory Committee, will meet on Wednesday, 5/17 at 11:00 a.m.

In the meeting packet you have the weekly Hydrologic Conditions Report for our basin. It has been wet and a little cold with 7.5 inches of precipitation in the upper basin last week. The report shows the combined storage in the New York City reservoirs, which is around 92.5% combined capacity and flows are normal across the upper basin, including in the main stem Delaware River.

DRBC is hiring. They have an opening for a Community Engagement Specialist. If you know anyone that might be interested in that role, please pass that information on to her. This is a grant supported temporary position so it's contingent on future funding from grants.

They are putting their tabling and event schedule together for the year so if you have any events in the spring or summer you would like DRBC to be a part of please share and pass those along.

NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation: Coulter reported that he and staff were at the Long Eddy river access site last week to look at the concept plan to make it more user-friendly. Possible tree removal work will need to be done. The site is about two hours from any of DEC's headquarters so they need to work out a maintenance agreement. That has been in the works for some time.

In a few weeks the fisheries unit will start stocking trout in the lower regions like Westchester and Rockland counties. They tend to be ice-free this time of year.

PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources: Dugan appreciates the council allowing Reigner to speak. As you can tell, Reigner's presentation is pretty polished. As Reigner mentioned he is in a new temporary position that's not fully confirmed. He's been building support and spreading the message that many states do have a similar person or department in their state structure in Office of Outdoor Recreation. They are really optimistic and hoping as they go through the budget process into new administration that they will get more concrete information on the full office put in place. It certainly has a lot of viability and a lot of value to the commonwealth.

Based on discussion, Ramie will send an appreciation letter to Reigner for his presentation, offer thanks for his participation in WJFF Radio Catskills' The Local Edition newscast to promote his appearance before the UDC, and copy PA DCNR Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn to express the UDC's support for retaining this Director of Outdoor Recreation position.

Dugan said the budget season is coming in the Commonwealth. He made his annual note on a short list that goes to the secretary's office that the Upper Delaware Council is still seeking their operational funding as was planned and promised in 1988.

Trout season is coming up, as Coulter mentioned. The Fish and Game Commission has begun directing trout stocking programs.

Their fire season is also right around the corner. Not far after that would be their spongy moth f/k/a gypsy moth Spring season. One thing to keep in mind is that the commonwealth will have an intense spray program. Their final acreage numbers aren't known yet but there will probably be a lot of private landowners spraying as well. Mid-May is when you might see a fair number of aircrafts in the region. Shohola had a fair amount of defoliation in the region. They made it about 3/4 of the way up Pike County. They always hope for a wet, cool Spring to keep the fires down, and it kills off the caterpillars naturally.

Dugan brought in extra Bureau of Forestry pocket planners in December per a request from a member of the public. He will follow up on the PA Deer Count numbers.

National Park Service-Upper Delaware: Kurnath provided an update on a discussion that happened during the WU/RM meeting about the Spill Coordination Response plan that NPS has been working on. Staff has continued working on the project led by Keith Winslow. They received the grant in 2020 and the EPA, Coast Guard, State and local agencies are all continuing to work on that framework together and are on track based on the initial

deliverables. The most recent update came in December, when the EPA and NPS service staff spent time in the Upper Delaware, developing Geographic Response Plans (GRPs). GRPs is a site-specific strategy for the initial response to a spill of oil or oil products and water. That GRP will give guidance for the responders in the event of a spill with the idea that it significantly reduces the time needed to make decisions during that initial response. Their goal is to provide a response that's fast and effective, and also make sure that they're protecting sensitive resources. Winslow is also looking where the protected mussels are in the river and they are doing assessments. Future phases are likely to include a tabletop exercise and also a full-scale, live, in-person scenario exercise to test the plan itself, and then to provide the responding agency handoff training. Kurnath said some of the need for identifying the site-specific capabilities and gaps is because through this money NPS has access to, they can actually give that money back out to local communities and form the support. For example, during these exercises, they identify that a particular dispatch operation or some other response unit doesn't have the right technology or training, the hope is that some of this money will then go back into the communities to increase their capabilities to respond to an incident that happened. They've also identified major gaps that would lead to our inability to implement a plan and have some extra money embedded in this project to address some of those biggest gaps. It might feel like the planning effort is taking a while but part of that is this very intentional, strategic identification of the biggest gaps where an infusion of additional resources in the form of training and technology that can make the biggest difference.

Their Administrative Officer and Community Planner position are still open through tomorrow. If anyone is interested, please reach out to Kurnath.

Lastly, an email was sent out requesting help looking for housing for NPS seasonals from May 1st to September 4th and potentially to the end of September. Please reach out to Ingrid.Peterec@nps.gov if you know of any leads.

UDC Executive Director's Report: Ramie noted the March calendar. We have several deadlines coming up, which includes our spring newsletter that goes to the printer on 3/20. Ramie also has to renew our SAM registration, which is the vehicle we use to be eligible for Federal funding and taken to apply for anything or receive funds. The end of the month will be the end of the second quarter and we will need to submit our funding applications for the rest of the fiscal year, which Kurnath graciously arranged that we can do both quarters simultaneously as we did the first 2 quarters, so we'll be receiving the \$150,000 to close it out through 9/30 which is less paperwork on both ends. Ramie appreciates that opportunity rather than doing it quarter by quarter.

Jennifer Garigliano from NYC DEP asked if she could return to give us an update on the status of the pending Delaware Aqueduct shutdown. That presentation is set for 5/4.

We have our Third Annual Upper Delaware Litter Sweep that will be coming from April 22 through the 30th, and we will shortly be getting out some publicity about the different sponsorship opportunities as well as trying to round up volunteers who go out there and clean our roadways.

Ramie shared an obituary for Diane Banach that Bill Dudko brought to her attention. She was the alternate for Westfall Township during Al Bowers' term as representative, and she served for 6 years from 1995 until 2001. She passed away on February 18, at the age of 87. It mentioned the Upper Delaware Council in her notice and that she was also a zoning code officer for Westfall. Ramie will include this notice in the newsletter as she does about any such news we receive of former or present board members.

New Business

Draft letter to U.S. Congress and Senators: UDC Federal Funding Restructuring Proposal: Robinson asked the committee to take time to review the draft letter Ramie prepared to U.S. Congress and Senators regarding the UDC Federal Funding Restructuring Proposal. The committee went around the table with suggestions for edits. Ramie will amend the draft and send to UDC attorney Jason Ohliger, Esq., for a written opinion concerning any lobbying perception before finalizing and sending the letters.

Approval of a Vanguard Brokerage Account Organization Resolution: After discussion from the council, it was decided that Ramie will pursue opening of a Vanguard Brokerage Account to include submission of the UDC's approved Organization Resolution certifying the authorized signatories through the 3/2 meeting minutes. Once open,

she will electronically transfer the agreed amount of UDC unrestricted funds into the interest-bearing investment account as approved by the Operations Committee. A motion by Henry, seconded by Dexter, approves Executive Director Laurie Ramie, UDC Bookkeeper Mike Poska, CPA, and the three officers- Chairperson Aaron Robinson, Vice-chairperson Virginia Dudko, and Secretary/Treasurer Al Henry as authorized signatories for the Vanguard Brokerage Account carried, with Peckham abstaining.

Substantial Conformance Recommendation 2023-01: Kevin Rozza, Lackawaxen Township: A Motion by Henry seconded by Case to approve the substantial conformance recommendation draft letter to NPS regarding UDC 2023-01: Kevin Rozza, Lackawaxen Township carried unanimously.

Other: None.

Public Comment: Robinson noted that the UDC is going after a lot of pursuits at the same time, and it's a lot of work for a staff as well as members. We can't do it alone and we need every member to kick in something.

Adjournment: A motion by Greier, seconded by Ginny Dudko, to adjourn the meeting at 8:38 p.m. was carried.

*Minutes prepared by Ashley Hall-Bagdonas 3-16-2023
Recording available upon request*