

**Upper Delaware Council**  
**OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**  
**April 28, 2026**

Committee Members Present:	Jeff Dexter, Al Henry, Ginny Dudko, Aaron Robinson, Harold Roeder, Larry Richardson
Committee Members Absent:	None
Staff:	Laurie Ramie, Kerry Engelhardt, Stephanie Driscoll
NPS Partner:	Carly Marshall (Zoom)
Guests:	Bill Dudko

The UDC's Operations Committee held its monthly meeting on Tuesday, April 28, 2026. Chairperson Dexter called the meeting to order at 7:25 pm.

**Approval of the March 24, 2026 Meeting Minutes:** A motion by Henry seconded by Robinson to approve the 3/24 meeting minutes carried.

**Executive Director's Monthly Report:** Ramie reported that the April drawdown has been completed, and our account now sits at a little over \$215,000 for the remainder of the calendar year. She followed a new format for the 2025 Performance Progress Report. Compiling a full year's worth of activity required extensive research—totaling about 27.5 hours of work. It was completed on March 28 and submitted through Grant Solutions on March 30, just ahead of the March 31 deadline. The UDC received approval on April 22 for a modification to the Cooperative Agreement, adding \$5,000 for the water safety billboard campaign. The invoice from Adams Outdoor Advertising came in the very next day, and the funds were deposited on April 24, allowing immediate payment. The billboards are set to go live in mid-May. The expense is reflected on the financial abstract under the UDC column (not federal funds).

The Town of Hancock has appointed Jim Serio as UDC Representative. After previously serving on the council as representative and alternate for five non-contiguous years, we are happy to have him back. He has already joined the WU/RM Committee.

Ramie said despite a technical issue that prevented her from using Adobe InDesign, we reverted to QuarkXPress to get the Spring issue of "The Upper Delaware" completed. The newsletter was sent to the printer a week early, and in return, the printer delivered it two weeks ahead of schedule on March 30. Hopefully the InDesign issue will be resolved before the summer issue deadline (July 20, with an August 3 release).

There were five news releases issued, and a lot of effort tied to the Litter Sweep promotion. Ramie said the Callicoon Depot Earth Day event and litter sweep were completely derailed by bad weather, resulting in zero turnout. Radio Catskill played a big role as the Litter Sweep sponsor. They ran public service announcements, and conducted two live interviews (including one with herself and another with Driscoll). WJFF also reached out to DRBC's Amanda Khalil for an interview about the data centers presentation. We are actively collecting photos, identifying participants, and posting them on Facebook to ensure our litter sweep volunteers get recognition.

Ramie said the UDC is sponsoring a second session of the Citizens Emergency Preparedness Corps training scheduled for June 8 at the Tusten Town Hall Community Room. Registration is now open. Ramie also coordinated with regional emergency services partners—state police, homeland security, and county agencies—to help spread the word, reinforcing that this training benefits the entire community. Pennsylvania residents are welcome to attend, just keep in mind you have to select "Sullivan County" as the address when registering, since this is technically a NYS event.

Ramie and Dexter will be attending the Pike/Wayne Conservation Partnership's Legislative Breakfast on May 7 at 9am at the Delaware State Forest Resource Management Center in East Stroudsburg, PA. Upcoming festivals where the UDC will have a booth are listed in her report as well.

Ramie said an invitation was sent to Governor Shapiro on March 24 via both mail and an online request form to serve as the keynote speaker at the 38<sup>th</sup> Annual River Valley Awards Banquet. We haven't received a response yet, but requested one by April 30.

A closeout report is due within 60 days for the Sullivan Catskills Tourism grant the UDC received to fund part of the UDC's newsletter. Ramie set a personal deadline of May 13 to complete it. It must include performance metrics demonstrating the impact of the funding. One Technical Assistance Grant (TAG) project is complete, two are still in progress (due by August 21), and those will be publicized once finished.

Ramie reported that 5 out of 13 towns/townships have responded to our letter on stop-gap funding, totaling \$5,000 in contributions from Delaware, Highland, Lumberland, Lackawaxen, and Shohola. Westfall formally declined, while others remain unknown.

Ramie said we have spent just over \$4,000—mostly on the 525 t-shirts for the Upper Delaware Litter Sweep and raised about \$1,450 in donations, including \$500 each from DRBC and the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway. With carryover funds from the previous year, we currently have a small remaining balance of about \$162 but are temporarily in the red due to a \$260 supply purchase on the UDC's credit card. We are expecting a \$2,000 donation from UDC Lumberland Representative and Sullivan County Legislator Nadia Rajszyk's Sullivan County Discretionary funds however, individual donations to the UDC remain at \$10,300 year-to-date.

Henry said we should look into taking a portion (around \$50,000 maybe) out of the UDC's Vanguard account and put it into a high-yield savings account. It would benefit us to get a higher return out of that money. He will look into options for that. He will also follow up with the Chatlos Foundation, as Ramie said that we submitted an application on July 7, 2025 and still haven't heard a yes or no. Henry suggested selling the Upper Delaware Litter Sweep t-shirts with Jeff George's artwork since they've been so popular this year. Ramie and Engelhardt said it would be hard to keep an inventory, and we aren't really a retail store. Henry asked how much we pay for the t-shirts. Driscoll said around \$7.25. Henry said if we sell one t-shirt for \$15, we're making something. Ramie said we don't technically sell any t-shirts, we ask for a donation. Henry said we should increase the price to \$20 and bring them to festivals. Ramie said we are not allowed to bring t-shirts to some events like the Riverfest in Narrowsburg, since they sell their own t-shirts. Henry said it was an idea to make more money. We could put the artwork on a hat, too.

#### New Business

**Draft NPS/UDC Cooperative Agreement & UDC 2027 Work Plan:** Ramie said that these documents need to be submitted for federal review by May 22. Marshall worked backward from that date to build a schedule that would allow committee review first, then consideration by the full Council at the May 7 meeting, with the possibility of an electronic vote afterward if any final changes become necessary. The Cooperative Agreement itself was generated by the NPS, while the 2027 Work Plan was developed by the UDC. There are portions of the CA that are “non-negotiable,” especially because they come from federal templates and requirements. In particular, the first nine pages of the agreement contain the sections that are subject to revision. Ramie said the Work Plan has to follow a very specific format because it becomes the framework for the future Performance Progress Report at the end of the agreement year. It is difficult to be planning for 2027 while still in April 2026, but the timeline is driven by the amount of approval and execution time needed for the federal contract process.

Henry said the repeated use of the term “recipient” throughout the cooperative agreement is an issue. He strongly objects to that terminology, arguing that it is both demeaning and confusing. The agreement should refer directly to the “Upper Delaware Council” instead of “recipient,” especially because the agreement is supposed to represent a cooperative relationship between the NPS and the Council. The same word (recipient) was later used in a different context to describe recipients of Technical Assistance Grants, which made the language even more confusing. His recommendation is that every reference to “recipient” involving the Council should instead use the organization's actual name, while the TAG section should use “subrecipient” terminology where appropriate. Marshall said the wording came from a standard NPS template and was very similar to prior agreements. She acknowledged that the comment about distinguishing “subrecipients” in the TAG section was a valid point worth reviewing. Henry said the agreement language did not feel respectful or professional. The UDC is not merely a “recipient,” but rather an active partner in a cooperative agreement with the federal government.

Henry raised concerns regarding a section stating that the Upper Delaware Council “will also provide financial assistance” to affected states and municipalities for the preparation of laws, plans, and ordinances. He argued that the Council does not actually do that in practice and certainly does not have the funding capacity to make such

commitments. He suggested changing the wording from “will” to “may”. Others in the room generally agreed that “may” was safer language.

Henry said another issue he found is contradictory wording related to the geographic scope of authority under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and the corridor boundary. One section states that authority applies “within or outside the federally administered area,” while another section says nothing in the agreement would apply to lands outside the corridor boundary. The language feels inconsistent and confusing, especially because the corridor itself is considered the federally administered area in this context. He said the Cooperative Agreement needs a much more careful read-through before anyone signs off on it. Still, he said the criticism was directed more at the template language than at staff. Ramie thanked Henry for the detailed review and asked him to share his annotated notes afterward so she could work through the concerns.

No comments were made on the 2027 Work Plan. Ramie said the work plan follows the same timeline as the cooperative agreement because it functions as an attachment to it. There is still time to offer comments before the May 7 full Council meeting, where both documents will continue to be reviewed.

**River Management Plan Amendment Proposal Advisory Opinion by Tom Shepstone:** Ramie said that the advisory opinion had originally been requested by May 1, but Tom Shepstone had completed it earlier after agreeing to give an advisory opinion on April 6. The report had only been distributed that afternoon with the meeting packets, so most people likely had not yet had sufficient time to study it closely. Shepstone first provided a draft to Robinson and herself for review, as Robinson had served as the primary point of contact to explain the Shohola Township resolution’s intent and topic background. After reviewing the first draft, she and Robinson submitted comments, and the version before the committee is a revised second draft. Engelhardt said on page two, Shepstone included the inflation comparison exercise showing what the original \$300,000 federal contribution from 1988 would equal in present-day dollars. However, there was a mathematical inconsistency in how the state contributions were calculated. The document suggested that the inflation-adjusted amount would equate to approximately \$837,000 federally and then incorrectly divided that figure when discussing state shares. Engelhardt clarified that if the federal share rose to approximately \$837,000 in current dollars, the state portions would need to be proportionally adjusted as well — roughly \$279,000 from each state — rather than the lower figure shown in the paper. Committee members agreed that correction should be made before forwarding the document to the full Council so members would not become confused by numbers that did not align.

Henry questioned whether the River Management Plan (RMP) should someday be amended through an addendum process instead of a full-scale revision. He referenced a past NPS document from around 2014 that discussed the possibility of developing an addendum to the RMP. He recalled previous conversations with former UPDE Deputy Superintendent Sean McGuinness, who had suggested exploring whether updates could be handled through a supplemental addendum rather than reopening the entire plan. This was not to replace the current funding-focused amendment effort, but rather to create a possible pathway for future corrections or modernization efforts without triggering a massive revision process. Robinson brought up one of the major themes in Tom Shepstone’s paper: the warning against broadening the amendment discussion beyond funding. Shepstone specifically advised against diluting the current effort by mixing in unrelated issues that could invite much wider scrutiny and controversy. Henry said the addendum suggestion was intended only as a future possibility for addressing inconsistencies or outdated sections of the plan, not as part of the immediate funding amendment initiative. Others agreed that the current focus should remain narrow and strategic. There was also discussion about whether an addendum process itself would require approval from all participating municipalities, similar to the original RMP adoption. Robinson said the RMP is fundamentally an agreement between the towns, townships, and partnership agencies, with the UDC itself being a product of that agreement. Would any formal addendum need to go back to every municipality for sign-off, much like the original plan did? Henry that no one was suggesting making unilateral changes immediately, but rather exploring whether there might be a practical mechanism for addressing smaller issues without launching a full major revision process. Several members strongly endorsed Tom Shepstone’s recommendation that the Council stay laser-focused on the fiscal issue alone.

A motion by Henry was made to forward the advisory opinion to the full Council for consideration at the May 7 meeting, contingent upon correcting the financial figures, seconded by Dexter. During discussion on the motion,

Ramie emphasized the importance of carefully rereading the document before wider distribution in case there were any additional inconsistencies or wording issues that had been overlooked. The motion carried unanimously.

Henry suggested inviting Tom Shepstone to provide a half-hour presentation to the Council and the public, stating that many current town/township officials and community members do not understand the origins of the RMP, the controversy surrounding it, or how the organization evolved into its current form. Shepstone would be uniquely qualified to explain that history because of his direct involvement in the original planning process. Robinson agreed; preserving those firsthand accounts has real historical value. Richardson said Shepstone helped write the RMP, making his recollections especially important. It might be worthwhile someday to compile prior discussions and historical materials into a consolidated file for newer members who want to understand how the organization reached its present position. Ramie said that Shepstone had made it clear he no longer attends evening meetings because he considers himself “semi-retired”. Henry said perhaps a Zoom presentation could work instead, since he would not have to drive anywhere. The group generally agreed it was worth asking, especially because they felt the educational value would be significant. Englehardt said that Shepstone appears in the Project Review Workbook training video discussing the origins of the RMP, so there is already some recorded institutional history available.

Ramie said that Shepstone has not yet submitted an invoice. She isn’t sure whether his work can properly be paid using federal Cooperative Agreement funds or whether it would need to come from separate UDC funding. The work might be construed as related to fundraising, which could complicate federal reimbursement eligibility. Marshall clarified that the issue was probably less about fundraising and more about making sure the NPS did not accidentally pay twice for the same type of service. If the NPS itself needed to seek legal guidance or solicitor review regarding amendment procedures, there could be restrictions on duplicative expenditures using federal funds. However, she indicated that Shepstone’s work did not appear to fall into that problematic category because he was functioning as a planning consultant offering an advisory opinion, not as legal counsel.

Marshall said that before any amendment process could formally proceed, the NPS would need to determine what procedural path was legally required for updating a management document like the RMP. The NPS was not opposed to updating the plan, but wants to ensure the correct process was followed. Henry expressed frustration with the possibility of introducing solicitors or more formal legal review too early in the process, arguing that the RMP already prescribes how revisions are supposed to occur and that the amendment discussion remains preliminary.

**UDC River and Shoreline Clean-up Grant Applications:** Ramie said the sole application received was from the Town of Deerpark. This situation actually worked out favorably from a budgeting standpoint because the Council had already placed a cap on how much grant funding it was willing to distribute this cycle. With only one applicant, the requested amount fell below that ceiling. Deerpark traditionally estimates for labor, supplies, and disposal costs, but actual expenses almost always end up being lower than projected because staffing levels or work hours ultimately differed from the original assumptions. Ramie asked the committee to endorse preparation of a formal resolution for the May 7 full Council meeting. A motion by Henry seconded by Robinson to award the Town of Deerpark River and Shoreline Clean-up Grant application through a resolution to the full council, carried. The maximum possible grant amount would be \$4,318 and funding was already programmed into the UDC budget.

G. Dudko said that the town’s cleanup efforts regularly includes the Hawks Nest, where litter accumulation remains a persistent problem. Deerpark has consistently managed to clean up that area as an important public service. Henry asked the NPS to explore funding opportunities specifically for a Hawks Nest cleanup initiative. The area has become essentially a “trash pile” and ordinary volunteers simply cannot safely handle the conditions there because of the steep embankments and dangerous terrain. B. Dudko said much of that area is private property. New York State itself has tried to obtain permission even to repair portions of the wall. Henry said the NPS should at least explore the possibility. He argued that the NPS has access to larger funding pools and may have special programs or mechanisms that could potentially address the issue. A motion by Henry to ask the NPS to explore possible funding and mechanisms for a Hawk’s Nest cleanup effort, seconded by Dexter, carried.

**Pike/Wayne Conservation Partnership May 7 Legislative Breakfast Flyer:** The UDC’s flyer designed by Engelhardt is included in the packet. Ramie said this format is different than previous years where each organization designed and received a poster board for state representatives to view as they walked around the room. This year, they went with a more cost-effective flyer version in the same template. This breakfast is on May 7 at 9:00 a.m. at

the Delaware State Forest Resource Management Center in East Stroudsburg, PA. Ramie and Dexter will ride together from the UDC office.

**Delaware Valley Jobs Corps Center Partnership for UDC Landscaping:** Driscoll said she reached out to the program manager at Delaware Valley Jobs Corps Center, Gina Patire, about partnering for landscaping in the UDC's front garden. Patire sent her a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) this week that she e-signed and returned to get the work started. With this program, the UDC will supply the plants and tools and the Jobs Corps students will supply the labor. The students need a certain number of credits, and this work will count toward that. She's excited to be partnering with the local Jobs Corps to get the landscaping done. She did it last year and does not have the time to do it again this year. Ramie added that we in the past have outsourced landscaping from a local gardener that is quite expensive. This offers us a low-cost option to maintain the front garden space and benefit student education.

**Summary of Pending Bills 4/28/26:** A motion by Henry to pay the monthly bills in a normal fashion, seconded by Roeder, carried.

**Financial Statement 4/30/26:** Included in the packet for review.

**Other:** None.

Old Business

**Personnel Subcommittee: Executive Director Performance Appraisal Due:** Henry asked if the Personnel Subcommittee could meet at 6:00 p.m., prior to the full council meeting on Thursday, May 7. Present Personnel Subcommittee members agreed to meet then for the Executive Director's annual performance appraisal.

**Records Management Update:** Driscoll said she has a meeting on Friday, May 8 with UPDE's Community Planner Carly Marshall at NPS headquarters to discuss records management and can report back after that.

**Other:** None.

**There was no Public Comment.**

**Adjournment:** A motion by Roeder seconded by Henry to adjourn the meeting at 8:32 p.m. carried.