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Water Resources Plan to Help Guide River Basin

The completion of an intense, four-year process to outline a policy direction for the use, protection, and enhancement of the Delaware River Basin's water resources through the year 2030 was celebrated on September 13.

Finalization of the "Water Resources Plan for the Delaware River Basin" document represents the beginning of an important new stage: implementation.

“Today we celebrate a visionary plan that reflects the investment of countless hours of discussion and creativity among many individuals from throughout the Delaware River Basin who responded to our governors’ 1999 challenge,” remarked Carol Collier, executive director of the Delaware River Basin Commission (DRBC).

“However, much work lies ahead as we now strive to develop strategies and take action to realize the goals laid out in that plan over the next 30 years,” she added.

The ceremonial signing event held on the Christina Riverfront in Wilmington, DE kicked off a Sept. 13-15 conference titled, “Watershed Summit on the Delaware: Making the Connection”, sponsored by the DRBC and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The Water Resources Plan is a goal-based framework that will serve as a guide for all governmental and non-governmental stakeholders whose actions affect water.
Upper Delaware Profile: Ben Johnson

When it comes to his personal life and his role as Town of Tusten Supervisor, Ben Johnson believes in projecting ahead.

Johnson served 20 years as a New York State Police trooper - 18 of them stationed at the Narrowsburg barracks - before deciding to embark on a different path. “Regardless of how much I enjoyed what I was doing, when I retired, I was young enough to want to try something new,” the 41-year-old Johnson says.

One priority in weighing his options was the Pond Eddy native’s desire to stay in the river valley.

Despite being a political novice, his new mission turned out to be taking on the top public official’s job in the Town of Tusten.

Johnson had great respect for the contributions made by his predecessor (and fellow retired state trooper) Richard B. Crandall. Knowing that Crandall wished to step down after his third term, Johnson sought his counsel about what the position entailed while mulling over his own future.

With his unopposed 2003 election, Johnson transitioned from law enforcement to a new arena of public service.

“Dick is a very hard act to follow. When I see what he got accomplished in a short amount of time, I’m amazed. I’m also grateful that he kept such good records, and for the good communication that we have between the various boards and town employees,” he says.

Johnson’s studious on-the-job training approach included taking time to read through every filing cabinet and storage box in the Town Hall to familiarize himself with previous and ongoing town projects.

Projecting ahead is Johnson’s guiding principle in managing Tusten’s affairs as well. Every decision has a potential long-term effect that should be considered.

“With town government, you have to look so far into the future. That’s the biggest challenge,” Johnson says. “I’m enjoying it so far. There’s a lot of responsibility and diversity that goes along with it. Mentally, it challenges you to work.”

On his radar screen now is the pursuit of preventive maintenance measures for water and sewer so that the tax base can sustain these infrastructure services. The highway department is undertaking important drainage surveys of low-lying parts of the Narrowsburg hamlet. Johnson would like to make town office space more efficient and is searching for grants to assist the Tusten Historical Society in expanding its volunteer operations.

In addition to the part-time supervisor’s position, Johnson is employed as Parts Manager at Narrowsburg Motors, fortuitously located within walking distance of the Town Hall.

The Eldred Central School graduate obtained associate’s degrees in 1983 from Orange County Community College in criminal justice and insurance, which was also his father Albert’s career. Mother Elizabeth, a registered nurse, lives in Pond Eddy. Johnson’s two brothers and sister also reside in Sullivan County.

“They all went somewhere and then came back. A lot of places have great fishing, hiking, hunting, and scenery individually, but I don’t think you’re going to find any place that has all of those together in close proximity like we have here,” Johnson says appreciatively.

When he completed State Police training after working with the Monticello Police Department for one year, Johnson considered posts in Los Angeles and Miami-Dade before opting to stay local. He was assigned to the Ferndale headquarters and Roscoe barracks before becoming the Member-in-Charge responsible for the operation of the Narrowsburg barracks, which covers five western Sullivan towns.

Johnson’s 18-year tenure there “is an extremely long time to stay in one place”, and reflects the mutual satisfaction felt by Johnson and the communities he served.

Johnson and his wife of seven years, Kathleen Hankins, who co-owns Narrowsburg Motors, are freshwater scuba divers who enjoy traveling. His two sons, John, 14, and Ben, 11, live in Rochester and visit regularly, especially to fish with their dad.

Johnson is a member of the Tusten Settlement Association, Beaver Brook Rod & Gun Club, Bear Swamp Hunting Club, and St. Anthony’s Church of Yulan. He has been Tusten’s alternate representative to the Upper Delaware Council since 2003.

“The UDC helps us stay on top of a lot of the issues that are important to the town and the river valley,” Johnson says. 

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Upper Delaware Scenic Byway Dedicates Signs

Recognizing the integral contributions of the New York State Department of Transportation and Senator John J. Bonacic, the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway, Inc. (UDSB) officially dedicated its highway signage at a July 15 ceremony held at the DEC Mongaup Public Access along Route 97 in the Town of Lumberland.

"We are celebrating today the completed installation of the first 50 route marker signs along the byway corridor. These identification signs may now be seen in eight municipalities covering three counties as tangible evidence to all travelers that the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway is alive and well," UDSB Chairperson Larry H. Richardson proclaimed.

Sen. Bonacic, who provided grant funding for the fabrication of the logo panels, said, "This is a continuation of improvements in the evolution of the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway. It will bring tourism and economic vitality to the region."

Orange County Legislator Wayne Decker credited intermunicipal cooperation for the byway's success to date.

"If ever there was a project that was regional and crossed political boundaries, it is the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway," Decker said.

The 2002 designation of portions of Route 97 as a state scenic byway came as no surprise to most.

"In 1948 when I moved here," remarked Town of Delaware Supervisor William Moran, "I saw a sign in Port Jervis saying this was the most beautiful highway in New York State. Fifty-six years later, it still is."

A map brochure that will highlight points of interest along Route 97 is currently being developed. For information on other activities of the volunteer organization, visit www.upperdelawarescenicbyway.org.*

DELAWARE RIVER LIFE PROCESSION:
Getting into the environmental spirit of the 14th Annual Riverfest held July 25 in Narrowsburg were, from right to left, Braman Arts Conservatory instructor and board member Colette "Flower" Ballew of Damascus, Pa.; Lynn "Wild Boar" Effert of Mileses, NY; fish float puller Don Downs of Long Eddy, NY; and his granddaughter, Katie Otersen, age 5 1/2, of Morristown, NJ. The Conservatory organized costume workshops in advance of a May 1 parade in Callicoon prior to their Narrowsburg appearance. Riverfest is sponsored by the Delaware Valley Arts Alliance and Narrowsburg Chamber of Commerce. (Photo by Laurie Ramie)

MARKING THE WAY: Among those celebrating the completion of the first phase of Upper Delaware Scenic Byway signage along NYS Route 97 on July 15 were, from left to right, UDC Chairperson Nadia Rajs, Town of Delaware Supervisor William Moran, Town of Cochecton Supervisor Sal Indelicato, Town of Lumberland Supervisor John LiGreci, Town of Tusten Supervisor Ben Johnson, Sullivan County Legislature Chairman Chris Cunningham, Sullivan County Legislator Kathleen LaBuda, Upper Delaware Scenic Byway, Inc. Chairman Larry H. Richardson, NYS Assemblywoman Aileen Gunther, U.S. Congressman Maurice Hinchey's aide Julie Allen, NYS Senator John J. Bonacic, Upper Delaware Scenic Byway Secretary-Treasurer Peter Osborne, and Orange County Legislator Wayne Decker. (Photo by Laurie Ramie)
resources in the 13,539-square-mile Delaware River Basin.

It is the product of a process initiated in September of 1999 when the governors of the four basin states and federal agency directors signed a resolution challenging the Delaware River Basin community to develop a unified vision for the management of the basin's water resources.

A 36-member, consensus-based Watershed Advisory Council, including representation from the Upper Delaware Council, was formed to work with DRBC staff and committees on the plan.

At a March 17 meeting in Narrowsburg, one of five public sessions held throughout the basin to introduce the draft plan, DRBC's Carol Collier stressed, "This is a plan for and by the residents of this basin."

UDC Executive Director Bill Douglass said that grassroots buy-in will be necessary to optimize the plan's effectiveness. "The basin plan only provides guidance. It is going to depend on the counties and municipalities to carry out the implementation," Douglass said.

The plan offers a framework within which existing and new programs can be incorporated and coordinated. It is also meant to lead to new areas of research and study.

Its integrated approach includes five key areas for desired results:
- An adequate and reliable supply of suitable quality water to sustain human and ecological needs through 2030;
- Managing the system of waterway corridors to reduce flood losses, improve recreational experiences, and protect, conserve, and restore riparian and aquatic ecosystems;
- Integrating water resource management considerations into land use planning and growth management while recognizing the social and economic needs of communities;
- Strengthening partnerships for the management of water resources among all levels of government, the private sector, and individuals sharing an interest in sustainable water resources management; and
- Providing opportunities to enhance appreciation and commitment to the protection, improvement, and restoration of the basin's water resources.

To download a copy or obtain more information about the "Water Resources Plan for the Delaware River Basin", please visit the DRBC’s web site at www.drbc.net or call (609) 883-9500.

Water Resources Plan Guiding Principles

1. Water is a precious and finite natural resource, one that is essential to all life and vital to ecological, economic, and social well-being.
2. The disparate distribution of water resources among watersheds poses a challenge to equitable allocation and use.
3. Prudent water management requires a commitment to ecological integrity and biologic diversity to ensure a healthy environment; to a dynamic economy; and to social equity for present and future generations.
4. The most effective way to eliminate pollution is to prevent it from occurring.
5. Integrated management is crucial for sound results.
6. Improved land management is essential for improving the condition of water resources.
7. Individually and collectively, we are responsible for the stewardship of our water resources through their judicious use and management.
8. Existing legal structures and laws provide the framework in which management decisions are made.
9. Decision-making should give due consideration to the policies and requirements in existing laws and the legal rights of persons and entities potentially affected by water management decisions.
10. Authority to make integrated management decisions shall be derived from existing law as applicable, and may entails modifying or enacting new law(s).
11. Legal structures should be utilities that facilitate managing water resources within entire basins, watersheds, and aquifers, rather than on the basis of political jurisdictional boundaries, while continuing to respect the sovereignty of states and their political subdivisions.
12. In water resources management, preferable actions are those that are structured to accommodate and be consistent with preservation and enhancement of ecological integrity, sustainability, feasibility, and resilience to natural variability.

"Water Resources Plan for the Delaware River Basin" Introduction
Lackawaxen’s Clarence James Has 100 Years of History to Share

As a fifth-generation resident of Lackawaxen Township who also married into one of the township’s founding families, Clarence James wasn’t exactly surprised when he was asked to take on the volunteer role of Township Historian.

"Since I was one of the oldest residents, they naturally picked me right away quick for information," James says.

But that was some 20 years ago. On October 11, 2004, James marks his 101st birthday - and he’s still dispensing historical anecdotes with enthusiasm and charm.

Independent enough to live alone, maintain his immaculate 14-acre property, operate a boat launch and cabin rental business, and drive short distances (occasionally in his original 1931 Model A Ford), James has a lifetime of memories to share. Finding an open ear can be difficult though.

"It's surprising when you get to be 100 years old, how few people are interested in listening to you tell something. So many tell me, 'It's a shame that Clarence's stories haven't been recorded because when he goes, an awful lot of history will go with him,'" James says.

He was born in 1903, the second youngest child of Floyd and Mary Jane (Malvin) James, who also had four daughters.

"I'm the only one in the family left," James reflects.

The family operated a farm where Gig Rosemergy's garage sits, about five miles from where James resides on Westcolang (an Indian name for "Lake on Top of the Mountain") Road.

James attended the one-room Bohemia Union School through eighth grade.

"Mrs. James H. Beard, our teacher, used to put me up on a recitation bench near her desk to tell stories to the rest of the students. For history lessons, she'd say, 'Stand up, Clarence.' I'd get through the whole damn lesson of history, names and all. I didn't like school much but I was crazy about history," he says.

James learned how to profit from living in a lake resort area, such as by selling rattlesnake hides to tourists for $1 a piece.

"Toots" was full of country spirit. "We used to go ice skating all the time and he was a good hunter. He could do bullseye work with a shotgun," he says.

At age 16, he began working and has never really stopped. Besides farming and lumbering during the winters, James worked with his grandfather, Lafe, doing carpentry. His first "public job", as he puts it, was working as a lineman for the Lackawaxen Telephone Company.

"The phones operated on batteries then, not electric," he points out. "Since I was a climber, I then got a job with PP&L (Pennsylvania Power and Light). This was around 1926 but I was only there for a year and a half. My mother was going crazy because she thought I was going to get electrocuted. They didn't have the communications then with the men to know when to cut the power off."

During a subsequent stint as a driver at a girls' camp, James was hired to paint the house of his future wife, Louemma Holbert, which is now his residence. The Holbert family dates back to approximately 1760 in Lackawaxen Township.

"It's a shame that Clarence's stories haven't been recorded because when he goes, an awful lot of history will go with him," James says. They survived some rough times, including a crash and boy, 1 remember what trouble it was to keep bread on the table," James says. They survived some rough times, including no indoor plumbing for the first 10 years of their marriage. But James says that "Toots" was full of country spirit.

"We used to go ice skating all the time and she was a good hunter. She could do bullseye work with a shotgun," he says.

He and Louemma, who died in 1974 after...
UDC Highlights Quarterly Activities

Upper Delaware Council highlights from mid-June to mid-September 2004, not covered elsewhere in this issue, include:

DEGREE ANNIVERSARY

Executive Director William E. Douglass represented the UDC in Washington, D.C. at a Sept. 22 Congressional briefing by the U.S. Geological Survey on "50 Years of Cooperative Water Management in the Delaware River Basin," marking the anniversary of the 1954 Amended Supreme Court Decree that established the current allocation of water to New York City and the four basin states.

SUMMER ISSUE FOLLOW-UPS

- The U.S. Senate Environment & Public Works Committee in June approved legislation directing the federal government to pay its 20% share of the Delaware River Basin Commission's annual budget; however, the bill has not been signed into law. The DRBC is implementing portions of its FY 2005 Services Reduction Plan to cope with the funding shortfall.

- To satisfy objections by Lackawaxen, PA business owners to an intended 30-day closure of the Roebling Bridge after Labor Day for further deck repairs, the National Park Service agreed to an alternative to close the historic bridge for just three days on Sept. 13-15 to apply a sealant which should protect the deck for five years.

- The UDC expressed concern to the Orange County Legislature over the failure of the Kiryas Joel Final Environmental Impact Statement to address impacts of the proposed water pipeline withdrawals from 30 miles of the Delaware River.

PA to Award Environmental Excellence

Applications for a new 2004 Governor’s Award for Environmental Excellence must be received by 4 p.m. on Oct. 22. The award will honor Pennsylvania businesses, individuals, municipalities, agribusiness and non-profit organizations that show a commitment to develop and build environmental stewardship and economic development in PA. Projects must have been implemented between Jan. 1, 2003 through July 31, 2004. For a description of eligible projects and application guidelines, please contact Chuck Rennard at the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, Office of Energy and Technology Development, 400 Market St., 15th Floor, Harrisburg, PA 17101, phone (717) 772-8909 or visit the agency's web site at www.dep.state.pa.us (click on Awards).

River Cleanup Collects Tons of Trash

Kittatinny Canoes’ 15th Annual On and Under the Delaware River Cleanup waged its annual war on river litter July 19-22 with 270 volunteers canoeing, wading, snorkeling, and diving to cover 70 underwater and shoreline miles from the Ten Mile River access in New York to the Delaware Water Gap in New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

The volunteers collected a total of 11.87 tons of trash. This included 214 tires, 195 lbs. of aluminum cans, and 6.39 tons of scrap metal. While that sounds like a lot, the numbers were slightly lower than last year’s and participants commented on how relatively clean they found the river. Most of the refuse now being retrieved is older tires that are being uncovered slowly by ice jams and strong river currents, as well as household trash in a certain section of the river corridor. Kittatinny Canoes provides the canoes, transportation, campsites, breakfast and a barbecue dinner each day for its river cleanup army.
In Memoriam ...
Peter Melnyk, 78

Former Upper Delaware Council representative to the Town of Lumberland, Peter Melnyk, died on August 30, 2004 at Bon Secours Community Hospital at the age of 78.

The Glen Spey resident began serving with the UDC in 1988 as alternate to the late Supervisor Tom Hill through 1990. He re-joined the UDC in 1996 as second alternate, became first alternate in 1997, took over as the town’s representative in August of that year, and fulfilled that role through the end of 1999.

Peter was a member of the Lumberland Environmental Committee and Zoning Board of Appeals before being elected to the Lumberland Town Board in 1990, serving for two terms as a councilman.

He was a former president of the Lumberland Lions Club, chairman of the town’s Democratic Club, vice-president of the Lumberland Senior Citizens Club, and a parishioner of St. Volodymyr Ukrainian Catholic Church.

Peter taught American History and literature in European high schools before embarking on a five-year stint as host of his own radio program in New York.

His success in radio led to a brief run on television as a variety show host, as well as director, producer, agent, and crew member for a Newark, NJ-based broadcast studio.

D&H Canal Transportation Heritage Council Debuts Web Site

A new source of information about the Delaware and Hudson (D&H) Canal Heritage Corridor has been made available by the D&H Transportation Heritage Council in the form of a rack card brochure and a web site at www.dhthc.com.

The brochure card lists locations, web addresses, and phone numbers where one can discover more about historic sites and recreational trails along the bi-state canal’s 108-mile-long route. The D&H Canal and Gravity Railroad connected the coal fields of Pennsylvania with the markets in the Hudson Valley.

Beginning in Carbondale, PA and ending near Kingston, NY, it was built in just three years during the 1820s. There are several wonderful museums that chronicle D&H history along the route.

Many sections of the D&H towpaths, where mules once treaded pulling canal boats, have been transformed into public recreational trails.

The D&H Transportation Heritage Council consists of various public, private and non-profit agencies and organizations committed to promoting appreciation and preservation of the historic resources of the D&H Canal and Gravity Railroad system.

New Subscribers and Address Changes Welcomed

If you have friends or colleagues who would be interested in receiving our free newsletter, we will be happy to add them to the mailing list. Please also advise us of any address changes to help update our records. Return this notice to the Upper Delaware Council, P.O. Box 192, Narrowsburg, NY 12764, call (845) 252-3022 or e-mail udcramie@hvc.rr.com.

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Fall 2004 7 The Upper Delaware
UDC Awards 10 Technical Grants

The Upper Delaware Council (UDC) has awarded $25,301 in Technical Assistance Grants for 10 projects that will further goals and address needs identified in the River Management Plan for the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River.

The latest grant round brings the cumulative amount to $542,992 that the UDC has given to its member municipalities since 1988. In all, 153 projects have been funded through the Technical Assistance Grants (TAG) program.

Combined requests by the 10 applicants this year totaled $33,350, competing for a $25,000 funding pool, to which $301 was added by the UDC through its Sept. 2 vote.

TAGs are available for research, planning, and studies conducted by the UDC's eight New York towns, three Pennsylvania townships, and their encompassing river corridor counties. They can provide seed money for a municipality to embark on a project without having to dip into local tax dollars. Wayne County, Pa.'s four townships of Berlin, Buckingham, Damascus, and Manchester would be eligible to participate if those townships joined the Council.

2004 Recipients

Town of Lumberland, NY – $4,831 to prepare minor zoning law revisions and a supplement to the Comprehensive Plan, and to conduct two training sessions on the administration of land use regulations that will be open to all NY and PA Upper Delaware communities.

Town of Delaware, NY – $3,986 to review and update the Comprehensive Plan to serve as a foundation for the town's land use policies.

Town of Lumberland, NY – $3,136 to prepare a digitally-enhanced compilation of historical marker sites and assess them according to their topic, condition, and accessibility.

Town of Tusten, NY – $3,049 to survey and prepare a restoration plan for the Lake Erie dam and spillway in the Hamlet of Narrowsburg.

Town of Cochecton, NY – $2,643 to update boundary definitions of zoning districts using Geographic Information Systems capabilities of the Sullivan County Division of Planning.

Town of Highland, NY – $2,625 to develop a town website to promote historical, cultural, recreational, and economic aspects of the town as well as to make available copies of local laws, ordinances, and the Town Comprehensive Plan to the on-line public.

Shohola Township, PA – $2,131 to create a plan to develop a historic walking trail at Rohman Park which will preserve and interpret a number of historic resources on this township property, including a portion of the Shohola Glen amusement park and switchback railroad.

Town of Fremont, NY – $1,104 to develop a GIS-based tax parcel mapping system for the town to connect with Sullivan County's GIS system.

Town of Deerpark, NY – $1,000 to print bound, color copies of the town's new Zoning Law for public distribution upon request.

Town of Deerpark, NY – $796 to update and print the Town of Deerpark informational brochure and map.

For additional information, contact UDC Senior Resource Specialist David B. Soete at udcsoete@hvc.rr.com or (845) 252-3022.*

DAG ON THE DELAWARE: The Delaware River Foundation hosted its 4th annual educational forum on river issues August 10 at West Branch Angler's Resort. Above, Foundation President Jim Serio addresses the attentive audience of 111 people. (Photo by David B. Soete)