



Upper Delaware Council

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UPPER DELAWARE COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES September 2, 2021

The Upper Delaware Council held its monthly meeting via Zoom on Thursday, September 2, 2021. Chairperson Dexter called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. and roll call followed.

In attendance: Town of Hancock- Fred Peckham, Town of Fremont- Jim Greier, Town of Delaware- Thomas Dent, Town of Cochetcon- Larry Richardson, Town of Tusten- Susan Sullivan, Town of Highland- Jim Gutekunst, Town of Lumberland- Nadia Rajs, Town of Deerpark-David Dean, Damascus Township- Jeff Dexter, Berlin Township- Alan Henry, Lackawaxen Township- Doug Case, Shohola Township- Aaron Robinson, State of New York- Bill Rudge, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania- Tim Dugan, Christine Dettore. Staff in attendance: Executive Director- Laurie Ramie, Resources and Land Use Specialist- Shannon Cilento, Secretary- Ashley Hall-Bagdonas. Absent: Westfall Township- Michael Barth, Town of Delaware- Thomas Dent, Delaware River Basin Commission- Kristen Bowman Kavanagh, National Park Service- Superintendent- Joe Salvatore. Guests: Gregory R. Wrightstone, Cody Hendrix- NPS Community & Land Use Planner, Don Hamilton- NPS Natural Resources Chief, Ginny Dudko- Town of Deerpark Alternate, Andy Boyar- Town of Highland Alternate. Media: Liam Mayo- River Reporter, Peter Becker- Tri-County Independent.

Virtual Presentation: “Global Warming: The Cold, Hard Facts” by Gregory R. Wrightstone, executive director of the CO2 Coalition. Wrightstone delivered his PowerPoint presentation called “Global Warming: The Cold, Hard Facts” which is available upon request by contacting UDC staff. He claimed that CO2 is beneficial to the Earth and the current efforts to reduce CO2 emissions are misguided. Wrightstone contended current climate science officials cherry-picked facts to suit their narrative and that increased levels of CO2 were responsible for a number of historical benefits. “Warmer weather led to peaks in human civilizations, while colder weather led to dark ages and to the burning of witches. The rising CO2 levels had led to an agricultural boom over recent centuries and the earth is thriving and prospering.”

In a discussion period that followed, Hamilton asked, “Why do you think it is that only 3% of reputable scientists agree with your point of view, and 97% of reputable scientists believe that climate change is occurring, that it’s primarily driven by human activity, and that it’s a serious threat to humanity?” Sullivan asked, “What organizations do you work for, or are affiliated with and is he is profiting in any way from the fossil fuel industry?” Boyar asked Wrightstone whether the agricultural boom he cited could be better explained by advances in agricultural practices than through rising CO2 levels; saying, “If you’re accusing people of cherry-picking, you have done a mighty fine job yourself.”

Approval of August 5th Meeting Minutes: A motion by Rajs seconded by Boyar, to approve the August 5th, 2021 meeting minutes carried.

Public Comment on the Agenda: None.

Committee Reports: There were no questions regarding the following meetings: August 17th Water Use/Resource Management, August 25th Project Review, and August 25th Operations.

Status Reports

Delaware River Basin Commission: Ramie said Bowman Kavanagh is away but we did circulate DRBC information about Hurricane Ida and its impacts. The DRBC advisory on the predictions on flood staging on the Delaware River and other waterways was just released. Hall-Bagdonas provided the link in the Zoom chat. The Hydrologic Conditions Report was provided in the meeting packet.

NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation: Rudge acknowledged a lot of members are in areas that got hit hard by Hurricane Ida. He is in northern Ulster County that only received a couple inches of rain. Rudge referenced the 8/31 press release "DEC Investigating Prevalence of Invasive Northern Snakehead Fish In Bashakill Marsh After Angler Report". They are in the process of doing their own sampling in the very large wetland. There's a lot of vegetation this time of year that makes their sampling level difficult. They will likely do more sampling in the Spring to try to determine if there is an actual presence of snakehead in that habitat. They are currently asking any angler that fishes in the Bashakill to report any snakehead caught and of course not to release it back into the wild.

With regard to the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) Ten Mile River Camp located in four Townships in Sullivan County (Bethel, Tusten, Cochection and Highland), BSA recently approached DEC looking for some assistance in trying to come up with a solution in conserving their land that would also provide revenue for them. They are in the early stages of discussion. One option would be for the State of New York to acquire some of the land. Rudge wants to be clear BSA is very much committed to continuing to run a Boy Scout Summer program on their property. The different entities they approached are all on the same page in terms of finding solutions that would allow that to continue. He will update the committee as things progress.

Dexter asked if there is anything major in their new rules for deer or bear hunting? Rudge doesn't believe there is a significant change. Many know DEC has gone to antler restrictions in several wildlife management units across the state. He thinks it's proven popular with the hunting community and they are going to continue to stick with those.

PA Department of Conservation & Natural Resources: Dugan said as Rudge and others had mentioned about the rain and flooding, last week we had some heavy storms. Staff across much of DCNR in the Commonwealth has been out responding and trying to remediate the damages from the recent storms. He spent much of the day in Pike County going out with staff and assessing any damages. The issues were minor to moderate on state forest land and on public lands he observed. A lot of culverts were overwhelmed but the damage coming from them seemed to be minor or moderate with gullying and washouts. With the cooler weather staff is preparing for the fall season. Game Commission's hunting season has just started yesterday with mourning dove season and early resident goose season. People are also starting to prepare for the traditional hunting seasons that are coming in the next months.

The PA Gypsy Moth Spraying Program, as it was last year, will continue the same way into the future where they are not treating. They are providing an option for private lands. In the past, they provided a cost-share treatment program for private land owners. With the budget situation the program will be solely on state lands and occasionally on federal lands. Dugan said in our area they proposed about 8,000 acres of our state forest land. They have about 85,000 acres of state forest in their district. There is a core bubble in the middle of Delaware Township they will be keeping an eye on. If you are a private landowner, Town/ship or other entity he would suggest talking to a private contractor if you have needs for gypsy moth spaying next spring.

Anecdotally a lot of DCNR staff are not seeing the numbers of Spotted Lanternfly adults in later parts of August as they did in the past years. In Southeastern PA where there was a big impact of adults being observed in August and September they are not seeing as many adults. Dugan said maybe some of the efforts from partners are helping.

Dettore mentioned at the 5/6 meeting, staff was getting ready to finish up the 2021 grant applications. They completed their review through their Community Conservation Partnership Program and the grants are making their way up the chain. They hope to have some announcements in the fall. They are scheduling new grant workshops and that is included in the meeting packets. They are usually held in November. They are having three across the state but will be virtual, so you may attend if anyone is interested. They are working with Wayne County on a Recreation Park and Natural Areas Plan. They are one of the last areas in the state that did not have this plan. Dettore said they

are excited that they will likely be getting this in draft form by the end of the year as they have been working with the consultant for the last nine months. The Delaware Highlands Conservancy recently moved to a new preserve location in Beach Lake. They have an event coming up on 9/4 at the Van Scott Nature Preserve.

National Park Service-Upper Delaware: Hendrix said Superintendent Salvatore had an emergency with his home. Salvatore didn't leave Hendrix with anything to report on.

UDC Executive Director's Report: Ramie said she's reporting from the St. Lawrence River. She's at her mother's house at the moment to help her out. They had zero rain from the hurricane but she has been following the plight of the river valley. Ramie thanked Rudge for the information on the BSA Ten Mile River Camp, saying there were rumors and UDC had been contacted by media to see if that is the case. Ramie said we've written about the Delaware Highland Conservancy's Van Scott Nature Preserve in our newsletter and Cilento has been on site so it will be great to see what programs they have there.

The reservation deadline for the Awards Banquet is tomorrow, 9/3. The guest count is currently at 90. We completed our awards program booklet with its 13 award profiles and sent it to Curcio Printing on Monday. Next came the plaque inscriptions and writing of a presentation script. We'll be checking in with Central House Family Resort a couple days before our 9/12 event about COVID protocols to assure that we have the latest information in effect and take it from there.

Next month, the Friends of the Upper Delaware River (FUDR) have scheduled their annual "Water, Water Everywhere" conference over the two dates of Oct. 12 and 14. It will be held virtually. For the last several years, the UDC has sponsored participation by staff and any interested board members. Ramie is requesting to see if we would continue that policy. The cost for the two-day program is \$25 per person at an early bird rate through 10/4. The specific agenda is pending but will include topics such as: Is increasing pressure on the river threatening the future of the Upper Delaware River fishery? How will the river be impacted when NYC shuts down the Delaware aqueduct for several months next year? What's happening with the bugs on the river? Will there be enough water in the 2021-22 thermal bank? Can we put a dent in the Knotweed problem? How is NYS DEC preparing for the first year-round fishing season under the new State Trout Plan? Will the State of NY opt to invest in the UDR watershed in 2022? If you'd like to approve opening it up to the membership at the UDC's cost, Ramie requests people to confirm with her by 9/24 so we can include that expense in this fiscal year's budget. A Motion to approve paying the registration fee for \$25 per person for the two-day program was made by Peckham seconded by Rajsiz and carried. Peckham noted that he would like to sign up for the conference.

As a follow-up to the letter we sent to support retaining the river valley segment within Senator Martucci's 42nd Senate District, we received notice that the New York State Independent Redistricting Commission was scheduled to have a public meeting today at 2:30 p.m. in New York City but because of Hurricane Ida and issues with flooding they rescheduled it to 9/9 at 4:00 p.m. with a live stream www.nyirc.gov Their next meeting will consist of releasing a redistricting map for congressional and state legislative districts, and a public hearing schedule.

After the 8/5 Day on the Delaware event at the Callicoon Riverside Park, the Alliance for the Upper Delaware River Watershed and various partners held a Zoom meeting on 8/19 that Ramie participated in to discuss next steps. A sign-on letter is being developed to direct to the new governor, much like we are doing under New Business, and they are also working on another petition for the public to express support for the dedication of NYS funding through the Environmental Protection Fund to subsidize an Upper Delaware River Watershed Action Agenda. They plan to launch that on 9/26, which is World Rivers Day and run it through the end of October. Last year's petition obtained around 650 signatures.

Lastly, Ramie referenced the September calendar in your packets. Our focus for the rest of this week and next is on our awards banquet preparations. Note that the annual special meeting of the Project Review Committee to review what turns out to be our single FY 22 Technical Assistance Grant application from the Town of Tusten will be on the 2nd Tuesday, 9/14, at 6:30. Payment reimbursement requests for the two River and Shoreline Clean-up Grants projects by the Towns of Lumberland and Deerpark are due by 9/20. Cilento will participate in the three-day virtual

Delaware River Watershed Forum from 9/29-10/1. We have confirmed UDC presentations for 10/7 (the Highland River Access Improvement Project by Heather Jacksy) and 11/ (DRBC Microplastics Study by Jake Bransky).

The calendar also includes a preview of October meetings, activities, and deadlines.

New Business

Draft letter to NYS Gov. Hochul: Fiscal Year 2022 Executive Budget Consideration: A Motion by Peckham seconded by Rajs to approve the draft letter to NYS Governor Hochul regarding Fiscal Year 2022 Executive Budget Consideration carried with one abstention. Sullivan asked if Rudge or DEC could support this letter in some way as a member of UDC? Rudge said as a state agency they can't support letters of potential grant application. Rajs said she forwarded the contact person for governor Hochul to Cilento earlier this week.

Draft Resolution 2021-15: Awarding the Printing of "The Upper Delaware" Newsletter to Courier Printing Corp. for Fiscal Year 2022: A Motion by Rajs seconded by Peckham to adopt Resolution 2021-15 passed.

Payment for Town of Hancock TAG 2021-03: \$10,000: A Motion by Rajs seconded by Sullivan to approve the \$10,000 payment for Town of Hancock TAG 2021-03 carried after this documentation was not ready for the 8/24 Project Review and Operations meetings.

8/24 Damascus Citizens for Sustainability letter RE: Milanville-Skinners Falls Bridge: Ramie said you will see the 8/24 letter by the Damascus Citizens for Sustainability is titled "PEL Study Faulty Public Comment Process". That is not necessarily a position that UDC is putting forward. Mayo of the *River Reporter* questioned PennDOT on these claims and has not received any comment back from PennDOT. Sullivan said she received an email from the people who did the survey and they were only going to count comments that were received in a survey. She sent one in by mail and received many messages that PennDOT would welcome any solicitations and ways to get in touch. Sullivan feels it was very deceptive. Ramie also said she never saw it explicitly stated that comments would only be accepted in survey form. She said she is going on good faith they will take all the comments via the hotline, email and mailing address. She said the good news is UDC serves on the Project Advisory Committee and another meeting is scheduled for 9/23 and Ramie will be asking about that. Henry suggested reaching out to our local government officials to put pressure on PennDOT before then.

Other: None.

Old Business

Other: None.

Public Comment: None.

Adjournment: A motion by Greier, seconded by Rajs, to adjourn the meeting at 8:24 p.m. was carried.

Minutes prepared by Ashley Hall-Bagdonas 9-14-2021