



Upper Delaware Council

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UPPER DELAWARE COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

April 4, 2024

The Upper Delaware Council held its monthly meeting on Thursday, April 4, 2024. Chairperson Dudko called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Roll call followed reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Attendees:

Town of Deerpark- Ginny Dudko, Town of Hancock- Fred Peckham (Zoom), Town of Highland- Christine Martin, Damascus Township- Jeff Dexter, Town of Delaware- Harold Roeder Jr., Town of Cocheton- Larry Richardson, Shohola Township- Aaron Robinson, Berlin Township- Al Henry, Lackawaxen Township- Doug Case, Town of Tusten- Evan Padua, Town of Lumberland- Nadia Rajsz (Zoom), Delaware River Basin Commission- Kristen Bowman Kavanagh (Zoom), National Park Service- Lindsey Kurnath & Carly Marshall, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania- Tim Dugan, State of New York- Ryan Coulter

Absent:

Westfall Township- Michael Barth, Town of Fremont- Jim Rodgers

Staff:

Executive Director- Laurie Ramie, Resource & Land Use Specialist- Kerry Engelhardt, Administrative Support- Stephanie Driscoll

Media:

Jamie Falgie- River Reporter (Zoom), Peter Becker- Tri-County Independent (Zoom)

Guests:

Bill Dudko-Town of Deerpark, NPS- Ingrid Peterec (Zoom), Don Hamilton, Jim Bauhs, Cathleen Breen, William Gibney, Tim Schaeffer

Presentation: “Meet & Greet with the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission Board President William Gibney and Executive Director Timothy Schaeffer”: Chairperson Dudko welcomed PA Fish & Boat Commission (PFBC) Commissioner William “Bill” Gibney and PFBC Executive Director Timothy “Tim” Schaeffer. Gibney is the PFBC Commissioner for District 7, which is all of Northeastern Pennsylvania. He grew up in Waymart, attending Western Wayne High School. After college, Gibney taught Biology at Honesdale High School for nine years, becoming a Physics teacher after that. After college he was also a Deputy Game Protector in Wayne County and was involved in law enforcement for PFBC. During the summer he was a Park Ranger at Tobyhanna State Park for 34 years. After retiring he applied for the position as PFBC Commissioner; a position appointed to the board by the Governor. He has been the Commissioner since 2019.

PA is unique in that there are two separate agencies for fishing and boating (PFBC) and for game (Pennsylvania Game Commission). There is a 10-member Board of Commissioners for the PFBC, 8 District Commissioners, and 2 Boating Commissioners. Gibney said the PFBC operates like a school board; the Board of Commissioners sets the policy and is the controlling body of the agency with a staff directed by the Executive Director. Gibney was elected to be the President of the Commission in 2023 and was reappointed for another 4-year term by the governor. He said that Commissioners have a very active schedule with a lot of visits to hatcheries and other things. This time of year is busy for PFBC and the agency has been stocking almost 4-million trout around the Commonwealth of PA. There is also a lot of involvement in the Delaware River Watershed.

B. Dudko asked what the New York State counterpart to the PFBC is. Coulter said NYS doesn't have an equivalent. Schaeffer said NYS has a Fish and Wildlife department through the DEC that PFBC works with. Martin asked how they stock that 4-million trout? Gibney said they have a collection of hatcheries throughout PA that raise a variety of fish. Schaeffer said there are 8 trout hatcheries dedicated to trout that raise approximately 3.2-million trout and PFBC works with a network of 160 volunteer Sportsmen Clubs to get to the 4-million. Gibney said the fish they

stock in this area generally come from Seneca. Gibney said PFBC doesn't handle just fish; they also work with mussels, crayfish, reptiles, snakes, and all kinds of different things that live in or around the water. Schaeffer said PFBC supplements recreational fishing in areas that it wouldn't normally exist. B. Dudko asked how big the trout are when they stock them. Schaeffer said about 11 inches between 5 and 8 lbs. He invited everyone to join the stocking tomorrow (4/8) at 1pm at Dyberry Creek in Honesdale. All stocking schedules are available online at www.fishandboat.com and are updated in real-time. Gibney added that the threat of invasive species is also an important concern to the PFBC.

Padua asked why walleye don't naturally spawn in Pennsylvania? Gibney said sedimentation. Padua asked if that's true for the Upper Delaware as well? Gibney said he can find out, but he doesn't think so. Schaeffer said the biggest reason for species that don't naturally reproduce is due to temperature. Padua said he had read an article a few years ago about the PFBC putting around 3-million walleye fry in the Delaware River. Schaeffer said they may have. They have gotten much more selective on where they stock both walleye and muskie based on where they will get the most growth. He said Daryl Pierce from PFBC invited anyone who is interested to join them in the field. Schaeffer will send Ramie the PFBC Field Schedule. Pierce is a great source of information.

Ramie said there have been some questions on river access maintenance: How does PFBC maintain the accesses they own and get them ready for the season? Schaeffer said there is a maintenance staff based in Sweet Valley that covers all of the Northeastern PA boat ramps. They've been trying to make an effort to improve ramps and accesses over the last few years. If you know of any that need work, he asked everyone to let him know. He will get his contact information to Ramie to distribute. Ramie said the UDC board has been impressed by the accesses that PFBC maintains. Gibney said the PFBC is not funded by tax dollars; they are primarily funded by fishing licenses and boat registration fees. Schaeffer said motor boat fuel tax revenue comes to PFBC as well. The Commission takes investing boater dollars on their behalf seriously. Gibney added they also receive a reimbursement on the tax for fishing equipment. A big focus for the PFBC is for boaters to be able to get to natural resources. Schaeffer said the PFBC applied for and received a \$1 million grant that came from the Delaware River Conservation Fund. He said if the council ever has priorities that they think ought to be a part of that grant, pass it through to him and he would be happy to be an advocate.

Henry asked if PFBC is planning to install any new accesses along the Delaware River? Gibney said not at this time. Schaeffer said they will often work with partners to facilitate their applications. Padua said from Lackawaxen to Milford Beach, there are no PFBC accesses. When the Pond Eddy Bridge went in, there was talk about putting an access in and that didn't happen. Schaeffer said they are dedicated to adding boating accesses. The relationship between the resource agencies have never been stronger. If there are public agencies that anyone thinks PFBC should speak with, let them know. Hamilton said the Damascus Access needs attention; it's a safety issue. Padua said that the maintenance crew he spoke with said it's on the list.

Schaeffer said up until this time last year, PA was the only state in the Northeast and one of the only states in the country that there was no paper trail or disease requirement for stocking fish. You could buy a load of fish and stock them in the waters of the Commonwealth without letting anyone know. PFBC went through a rigorous process to get regulations. The board passed a regulation last summer that you need to let the PFBC know when and where you're stocking fish and that they are disease free. Henry asked if the regulation could be sent to Ramie for her to distribute. Schaeffer agreed. Schaeffer said, also included in that regulation is that you have to remove the plug when you move from one water body to another with no visible water or vegetation on the boat. Schaeffer commented that the way the board is working with staff has been great.

Ramie said with the Delaware being a bi-state river there are a lot of joint fisheries management issues. As an example, if a PA resident harvests eels, it's still handled by NYS. Is there any reason why that is? Case said PA doesn't have an eel weir license anymore, so you need to get one through NY as a non-resident. In the 80's he had a PA license, called an eel chute license, but the rules were very restrictive compared to NYS. Schaeffer said the goal is that the states are in alignment. Henry said PA put a limit of 50 eels; that's why no one wanted to go through PA for eel chute licenses. Schaeffer said PFBC has been working on a Joint Trout Management Plan with NYS in the tailwaters that's still being drafted but is almost ready to debut. Robinson asked if Gibney and Schaeffer could leave their information with Ramie for her to distribute to the council. Schaeffer said yes. He added that PA is desperately trying to diversify. If anyone knows of anyone looking to start a job with PFBC or law enforcement, please send

them their way. Hamilton asked how much of the budget is based on fishing boat licenses? Schaeffer said about 60/70%.

Chairperson Dudko thanked both Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission President Bill Gibney and Executive Director Tim Schaeffer for their presentation, and gave them each UDC lapel pins.

Approval of March 7, 2024 Minutes: A motion by Henry seconded by Robinson to approve the March 7, 2024 meeting minutes carried.

Public Comment on the Agenda: None.

Committee Reports: There were no questions regarding previously distributed minutes for Water Use and Resource Management 3/19 (Evan Padua), Project Review 3/26 (Larry Richardson) and Operations 3/26 (Ginny Dudko).

Status Reports:

Delaware River Basin Commission: Bowman Kavanagh reported there are Advisory Committee meetings coming up and pasted the link in the Zoom chat (<https://www.nj.gov/drbc/meetings/advisory/index.html>). The Water Quality Advisory Committee will meet on April 23rd and the Regulated Flow Advisory Committee will meet on April 29th. On May 14th there will be a joint meeting of the DRBC's Monitoring Advisory & Coordination Committee and Science & Technical Advisory Committee. The DRBC's second quarter public hearing will be on May 8th; a virtual meeting at 1:30pm. The subsequent second quarter business meeting will be held in the Upper Delaware region; the caucus will be on June 4th at the UDC office, with Ramie providing opening remarks, and the DRBC public meeting on June 5th will be held at the Tusten Theatre.

There are some open job postings within the DRBC: Data Scientist/Modeler, and Executive Director.

The DRBC received a grant through the Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund to do a baseline monitoring project of an emerging contaminant called 6PPDQ; a chemical that's used in tires to make them last longer. The chemical can be toxic to certain fish species including trout. As far as they know, there has not been any monitoring on the Delaware River on whether or not the chemical exists in the river. Because of the species that are particularly affected by 6PPDQ, they do have this small baseline study to look at what may be coming off of roads and into the river after heavy rainfall in the area. Some DRBC staff were in the Upper Delaware Region scouting potential sites for the monitoring. The DRBC may reach out to the council, being that members may be more familiar with local areas. They are hoping to do the monitoring in 2024.

NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation: Coulter left 2024 regulation guides in the front office and with Driscoll to distribute. He said there aren't many changes this year. He commented that it was great to hear Gibney and Schaeffer speak and to hear the differences between the two states. NYS is in the middle of their stocking season as well; issuing fish stocking permits, conducting outreach events, and getting fishing accesses ready for the season. The Catskill hatchery system is out every day stocking in the region with multiple trucks. The best way to find information on stockings is on the NYS DEC website under the DEC Info Locator.

Ramie sent updated pictures to him of the Highland Access. He put a work order in to get that cleaned up with the Operations staff and hopefully that will be taken care of within the next couple weeks. The signage at the Long Eddy Access should be going in this week or next. NYS DEC is currently hiring for seasonal positions. If you know of anyone who would be interested the openings are on the DEC website or he can send a link directly.

Dudko said she was impressed with the way PFBC handles the funds that come in; going directly back to boaters in PA. Do we have that kind of commitment in NYS? Coulter said yes, there is the Conservation Fund which is funded by fishing licenses and things like that. Dudko said at previous meetings Padua had mentioned how much better maintained the PA accesses are. Coulter said it could be based on the flows of the river, where the crews are, and how getting help is difficult. Coulter asked anyone to reach out to him directly if they notice an access that needs maintenance. Padua said he noticed at the DEC access under the Cochection bridge that there is a construction company is storing equipment, probably getting ready to paint the second half. The signage for the older accesses used to be painted in indentations that lasted a long time; the ones they put out now don't last as long. Coulter asked if the current signage at the Cochection Access isn't holding up? Padua said no, it doesn't look great. Coulter took note.

Pennsylvania Dept. of Conservation and National Resources: Dugan said DCNR will be holding a viewing event at Presque Isle State Park for the solar eclipse on April 8th. There has been a lot of positive attention about that. There is going to be a rebuild on the dam at Tobyhanna State Park. In September of this year there will be a full draw-down at Tobyhanna Lake. Typically, leading up to a draw-down, size limits are all pulled off to allow anglers to harvest as much as they can prior to a full draw-down.

The Bureau of Forestry is moving into the next stage with the Strategic Plan, reaching out to stakeholders and partners to save the date on some partnership meetings coming up. Regional Director in the Northeast Dan Figured had recently retired. Regional Director in the South-Central region Mike Beahm has come back to the Northeast and is taking over for Figured. Dugan said that Game Commission released harvest data, that can be found on the DCNR website. Approximately 430,000 deer were harvested this last season, a 2% increase from last year. 171,000 were antlered and 258,000 antler-less. Spring gobbler season is coming up, with the Youth Day being April 27th and May 4th – June 31st will be the regular season. Even though we are pretty well soaked now, there was an early start to the Spring Fire Season with the few warmer days we had in March. All it takes is a few dry, warm days for the forest to dry out and a fire to take off. The Spongey Moth Season will start in mid-May with about 10,000 acres getting treated in the Northeast. The Youth Trout Season Day was last Saturday (4/6) and the state-wide opening is this Saturday (4/13) at 8am. Dugan asked Schaeffer when the 2 “Fish For Free” days are? Schaeffer said Memorial Day and Fourth of July. PA Rangers were out speaking with some kayakers that were not wearing their life jackets in those few days it was nice out in March. He reminded everyone that the water is still cold and PFD’s need to be worn. Rangers try to get out, especially with the opening of Trout Season, to let people know they need to be wearing their life jackets. Schaeffer said it is the law this time of year; from November 1st to April 30th, you need to wear your life jacket. Dudko asked if there are a lot of kids that take advantage of Youth Fishing Day? Dugan said yes, there are families that come.

National Park Service: Kurnath said earlier today she participated in an event with the Society for Environmental Journalists at the Delaware Water Gap; a field trip/excursion for the day. The Society for Environmental Journalists reached out to the Delaware Water Gap asking to hear about the Delaware Water Gap and the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River (UPDE), so Kurnath was invited to speak on the Upper Delaware. Beth Brown and Kate Schmidt from the DRBC was also at the event. She commented that it was nice to see partners there. Kurnath said it was a great opportunity to explain the set up at the Upper Delaware and the concept of the UDC.

NPS is holding their Upper Delaware Litter Sweep on Tuesday, April 23rd. The annual meeting for the Commercial Use Authorization (CUA) holders will be held on Friday, April 12th at the UDC and the Fishing Guide meeting will be held on Thursday, April 18th in Hancock. The seasonal staff has officially started coming on and Peterec is still hiring for Interpretation. To facilitate finding people interested in working for the NPS, they are trying to get permission to hire local people directly (not having to go through the USA Jobs process). UPDE just found out they just got access to funds to help cover the differential in NPS leasing a house and what the seasonal employees pay to rent the house back from NPS, a program called “Cover That Difference”. NPS UPDE is working with the federal government on a flyer to send out to local rentals.

Kurnath said at a previous meeting Padua had mentioned getting carabiners for the Life Jacket Return Stations, so the life jackets don’t blow off in the wind and get muddy. UPDE Maintenance Crew have purchased and will be installing metal cages this purpose that will be elevated off the ground and should prevent them from getting muddy.

Kurnath commented that the contractors are doing a great job with the rehab of the NPS Milanville office location. Starlink will be installed hopefully in early May at both the Zane Grey Museum and the Milanville office.

The American Hiking Society is hosting a vacation for volunteers in September to help reroute the Tusten Mountain Trail in cooperation with DEC and The Conservation Fund. That vacation is currently full based on the American Hiking Society website. That does change if people end up dropping out, so keep checking to see if spots open up. There are other great ways for people to volunteer this year. The National Canoe Safety Patrol (NCSP) always needs volunteers and have a brand-new website if you want to learn more about NCSP. The Wear It Watchers volunteer program is also looking for people who would be interested in sitting under a shady tree and counting how many people are or aren’t wearing life jackets while on the river. Please reach out to Corrine Hinton for information or to sign up to be a Wear It Watcher volunteer.

The oral history recordings have not been forgotten. A local student volunteer has been working on them over the last year. They have to go through the 508 Compliance process to make sure they are accessible once they go on the internet. Richardson said one of the issues with the oral history recordings was that people who gave their testimonies had passed on and it was sometimes difficult to find the next of kin to give authorization. If there a list of any individuals they are having difficulty finding a decedent of, share that list with Ramie and she can circulate it. Maybe someone on the council can be of some help. Kurnath agreed that is a great idea and will send that to Ramie.

There is a Federal Budget approved for the rest of this Fiscal Year. It is a reduction overall from what UPDE NPS got last year. She will share those numbers during her NPS staffing presentation at the July full council meeting.

UDC Executive Director: The UDC's budget for the 3rd and 4th Quarter allocations was sent to the NPS on March 1st got approved on April 2nd; \$150,000 to carry us through the end of the Fiscal Year.

April and May calendars are included in the packet for review of UDC activities and meetings. Ramie said this Monday (4/8) the spring issue of *The Upper Delaware* is due to come out in print form, already listed on our website under "Publications." The 4th Annual Litter Sweep is the cover feature with an interview of the artist, Eric J. Hinkley, for this year's artwork. This Friday (4/12) NPS and CUA holders will meet at the UDC office at 10am for the annual Spring Water Safety Partners meeting. The annual Fishing Guides meeting is at 8:30am in Hancock on Thursday, April 18th. She will be attending the Orange County Land Trust press event at the Sparrowbush Access on April 18th at 12pm to launch their "Save Orange County's Last Wilderness" campaign that the UDC signed up to support. Applications are due by April 19th for the 2024 River & Shoreline Clean-up Grants. There will be a public briefing on alternatives for the Skinners Falls-Milanville Bridge on April 25th from 5pm – 7pm at the Narrowsburg Union. The DRBC's Regulated Flow Advisory Committee meeting will be held virtually on April 29th. Over a 3-week period in April the UDC will be holding their 4th Annual Upper Delaware Litter Sweeps for the towns and townships. Driscoll will get together a calendar of dates and locations. At the May 2nd full council Director of NYC DEC Bureau of Water Supply Jennifer Garigliano will be giving a presentation on the Delaware Aqueduct repair project. The annual meeting of the NY/PA Joint Interstate Bridge Commission is set for 10am May 29th at PennDOT headquarters in Dunmore, PA and virtually.

Ramie also mentioned that via an issue of the *Gettysburg Times* we found out that former Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River Superintendent Kristina (Kris) Hiester has been selected to serve as Superintendent for Gettysburg National Military Park and Eisenhower National Historic Site, effective March 24, 2024. She had been Deputy Superintendent since 2020 at those parks. Ramie read off Hiester's biographical section of the article: "A lifelong Pennsylvanian, Heister has deep connections to both the Civil War and to the Eisenhower family. Her family counts 18 members who fought in the Civil War for the Union, although none at the Battle of Gettysburg. In 1957, President Dwight Eisenhower sent a signed note to her great-grandmother for her 100th birthday which is a family treasure. The favorite Heister family meal is a recipe Julie and David Eisenhower served for Christmas one year, which was found in the local newspaper. She cares deeply for the hallowed grounds of Gettysburg and the home of a remarkable military general and president."

New Business:

- a. **Personnel Subcommittee Report:** Henry reported that the Personnel Subcommittee met this evening ahead of the full council meeting for the Executive Director's Performance Appraisal. He said the UDC is lucky to have Ramie and thanked her for all she does. The UDC is fortunate to have her.
- b. **Discussion on Mandatory Training Proposed Policy:** Ramie said this topic came from our annual instance Sexual Harassment Prevention Training. It is based on Henry's proposal for provisions that should pertain to any kind of mandatory UDC training. Richardson said this topic would be a discussion for the Operations Committee. Everyone agreed. A motion by Richardson seconded by Henry to move the discussion on mandatory trainings policies to the next Operations Committee meeting carried.
- c. **Other:** Richardson presented a check from the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway (UDSB) in the amount of \$500 for the 4th Annual Upper Delaware Litter Sweep. Everyone thanked the UDSB for this donation.

Old Business:

- a. **Upper Delaware Litter Sweep Update:** Driscoll said there are Litter Sweep dates ranging from April 14th – April 30th. T-shirts are in and are displayed at the front of the room. She said Engelhardt had submitted an application for a grant from the Pocono Mountains Visitors Bureau that was approved in the amount of \$1,000. Ramie reported a total of \$5,248.50 has been raised for the Litter Sweep. A majority of the funds came from Sullivan County Discretionary Funds thanks to Rajsz and her legislature colleagues Cat Scott and Matt McPhillips. She thanked the Delaware River Basin Commission and the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway for their generous donations as well. She will be doing a press release after the Litter Sweep to thank all the contributors. Driscoll was interviewed by Tim Bruno of WJFF during their program “Radio Chatskill” today for the Litter Sweep. WJFF is our media sponsor for the Litter Sweep. She said the *River Reporter* will publish an ad that we provided seeking volunteers for the Litter Sweep in the April 11th issue.
- b. **175th Anniversary Celebration of the Roebling’s Delaware Aqueduct on 4/27:** The flyer for the event is included in the packet. Ramie said there will be a 10am walking tour guided by Professor Paul C. King, who has written a book about John A. Roebling that will be out soon. There will be a buffet style luncheon with canal era dishes, presentations by Sullivan County Historian John Conway, Professor Paul C. King, and THC President Bill Merchant, canal music by Dan Engvaldsen, and exhibits.
- c. **Other:** None.

Public Comment: There was no public comment.

Adjournment: A motion by Roeder seconded by Padua to adjourn the meeting at 8:24 p.m. carried.

Minutes prepared by Stephanie Driscoll, 4/15/2024