Upper Delaware Council
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UPPER DELAWARE COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

November 6, 2025

The Upper Delaware Council held its monthly meeting on Thursday, November 6, 2025. Chairperson Rodgers called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Roll call followed reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Attendees:
Town of Fremont- Jim Rodgers, Town of Delaware- Harold Roeder, Town of Cochecton- Larry Richardson, Town of Tusten- Cathleen Breen, Town of Highland- Christine Martin (Zoom), Town of Deerpark- Ginny Dudko, Berlin Township- Al Henry, Lackawaxen Township- Doug Case, Shohola Township- Aaron Robinson, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania- Tim Dugan, Delaware River Basin Commission- Beth Brown & Kristen Bowman Kavanagh (Zoom)

Absent:
Town of Hancock- Katt Judd, Town of Lumberland- Nadia Rajsz, Westfall Township- Michael Barth, Damascus Township- Jeff Dexter, New York State- Ryan Coulter, National Park Service

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

Media:
Tri-County Independent- Peter Becker (Zoom)

Guests*:*
Town of Deerpark- Bill Dudko, Nick Hryniuk, Glenn Pontier, Jane Varcoe, Jeff Sidle (Zoom)

Presentation: "Wood, Coal and Water: Three Essentials that Changed the River Valley": Rodgers introduced Glenn Pontier, a Town of Highland resident who also works as a docent at Fort Delaware Museum of Colonial History. Pontier studied History, Speech, and Theology and served as founding editor of The River Reporter in 1978 for 17 years, then News Director at WVOS Radio station from 1995-98. He was Director of Communications for the Sullivan County Office of Public Information from 1998-2000. He was the Gerry Foundation's Director of Communications during their formative years of planning Bethel Woods Center for the Arts, and Executive Director of Sullivan Renaissance for 15 years, for which he earned the UDC's 2016 Recreation Achievement Award. He also had associations with the Ten Mile River Scout Camp Museum and Catskill Fly Fishing Center Museum. Pontier has volunteered as the past Chairperson and Town of Highland representative to the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway Committee and as a board member for the Sunshine Free Library in Eldred, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Sullivan County, Sullivan ARC Foundation, Camp Speers Eljabar YMCA, Sullivan Peace and Justice, the Sullivan County Public Health Advisory Board, and the Sullivan-Wawarsing Rural Economic Area Partnership.

Pontier thanked Rodgers and the UDC for allowing him to make tonight's presentation. He isn't sure it's possible to educate this knowledgeable group who probably know all if not more about the information in his presentation. Hopefully everyone will learn something they didn't know tonight. He said you may remember Town of Delaware Historian Mary Curtis; her great-grandfather collected Tales of Raftsmen here, which she put together in a booklet. He passed a copy around of that booklet. Ramie said she believes the UDC has a copy of it too.

Almost every tree in this area of New York State was cut down many years ago. It's hard to find what they call a "virgin tree" here. Why would we cut the trees down? We needed wood for warmth, fuel, and the biggest industry during the Civil War – the tanning industry. The things we relate to most in this area is logging and rafting. In the 1870s there were approximately 16,000 men employed in those industries. In 1873 there were 100 million board feet

cut. Ten years later in 1883 there was over 90 million board feet cut. They cut and floated trees from Daniel Skinner's from sometime in 1764 all the way to 1922.

Pontier asked whether anyone knew hot the Ten Mile River got its name, It's not 10 miles long. Ten Mile River is a mile marker. Guys back then floating down the river liked going to the towns along the Delaware, especially Callicoon and Barryville where there were good times to be had. How did you know how close you were to Barryville? The river that comes out on the NY side; Ten Mile River. He's not sure if when the Boy Scouts acquired that property and officially named it Ten Mile River they knew that unofficial name came from how close the rafters were to a party town.

The hardest part of floating a raft down the river isn't the rapids, it's the eddies. When the wind came, you couldn't get across the eddies. Local farmers used to hang out around the eddies during bad weather. If a raft got stuck, they would tie a team of cattle to the raft to get them back into the current. There was a story about 1000 men stranded in Narrowsburg.

Daniel Skinner, who's called the High Admiral of the Upper Delaware, first figured out you could cut trees down to float to Philadelphia on the Delaware River. He floated the logs down to Philadelphia, sold them, and walked back to Milanville. Other people soon discovered that they could do the same thing. There was an unofficial legend that if you wanted to float lumber down the river, you had to give a bottle of whiskey to Skinner. All the men that did this were brave. It was a physically hard job but also required a high level of business knowledge. You hop on a raft, float it down to Philadelphia and then negotiate since you can't bring the material back. They started stopping along the way to negotiate whether they could sell the lumber before Philadelphia.

This industry completely changed life in this area. New York City Mayor from 1826-27 Phillip Hone wanted economic development in NYC. He needed coal and energy for this. There was a coal field over by Scranton, but how would you get that to NYC? You can get it to Honesdale via the Gravity Railroad, but from there you need to get it to Kingston. They end up raising a million dollars (selling out in one day, the largest stock capitalization in America at the time) to bring a canal from Honesdale to Kingston for a total of 108 miles. They followed the rivers; from the Lackawaxen River to the Delaware to Port Jervis and then to Kingston.

There are 108 locks to change the height of the river along the Delaware & Hudson Canal. In the beginning it took two men to run the locks. While the Wurts brothers are running the locks, they hired an engineer named John Jervis, the Associate Engineer on the Erie Canal. From 1828 until 1898 they never stop improving. They make the canal deeper to accommodate more material; they make the canal wider for more passing zones. Remember the rafters coming down the river with lumber? They are lowering boats from the canal into the Delaware River around Lackawaxen and pulling them across the river to put back into the canal via lock. There are collisions with rafters and canal boats. It becomes a legal issue; they are suing each other all the time. The canal company hire "steersmen" who stop the rafts upstream and put their pilot on to bring them down river. That doesn't work. They end up hiring John Roebling from Trenton, who made the rope wire for the Gravity Railroad, to build an aqueduct. That fixes the collision problem, but now there are three piers you need to navigate through. Around the 1850s they abandon the canal and start transporting material by railroad.

New York City is thirsty; everyone needs water. Builders say they can get water for NYC by putting in a dam at the Ashokan, so they build the Ashokan Reservoir. They built dams on the East Branch of the Delaware River, with a pipe stretching over 100 miles to NYC. Philadelphia is also thirsty, and everyone deserves water. How can we make sure there is enough water for New York City and Philadelphia? This goes to the Supreme Court in 1954 to solve the water issue. From that, NYC is entitled to 800 million gallons of water a day, and Philadelphia is entitled to a certain amount. To enforce that the Supreme Court orders the creation of the River Master. It's that person's job to make sure flow is maintained at Montague, NJ. There is no problem since there is enough water for everyone until a drought in the 1960s. What was the best way to fix it? Build more dams. The Army Corps of Engineers unveiled a new plan in 1962 to build 58 reservoirs; 27 of them would have been on the Upper Delaware between Port Jervis and Hancock.

How do you protect the river from thirsty people? You make a law on free-flowing rivers and make it a part of the National Park Service system. Then, it can never be impounded. While sitting at the table to "carve up" the Delaware River, the 10,000-15,000 people that lived along the river didn't have a big enough voice, but now they have the NPS. This issue there is how do you control the NPS? The Upper Delaware designation is so powerful. Many of you may remember John Hutsky. There was a terrible winter flood just below Port Jervis; ice dammed and stopped the river. They thought we could put ice booms in the river so when the ice builds up you can release it and break it up. Hutsky said "water is water"; the law says you cannot impound the water. You can't put a dam there and you can't put an ice boom there either. There was a banker from NYC who wanted to put a hydro dam on Shohola Creek. Hutsky said that would have an adverse effect on the federally protected river. That stopped that project. The river has become a tourism industry, but not without cost. We lose a couple people every year to the mighty river. These are real people that come here to enjoy the Delaware River. We want to give people more facilities.These are issues the UDC is dealing with. Problems don't go away, they are just different.

Pontier asked if anyone had questions or could teach him something new hopefully. B. Dudko said during the ice jam in Port Jervis, he put his boat in the river at 3:00am to rescue people. There were blocks of ice bigger than his truck; it was unreal. Pontier said people were running door to door warning "The flood is coming! Get out!" People got out, but there was a lot of damage. B. Dudko said he was helping someone out of their house and the water came up to his boots, but all of a sudden it dropped. It came and went just like that. Pontier said they discussed dropping a bomb on the ice to break it up. Ramie asked what year this flood was? Henry said 1981. G. Dudko said there was a second flood in 1983, but it wasn't as bad. Case asked what finally broke the ice dam? B. Dudko said it finally just broke loose. Pontier said the pressure finally made it break.

Martin thanked Pontier for his presentation. She said he ended it dramatically with the threat of the tourism industry today. As it modernizes and expands, the costs and risks that come with that is something we are grappling with at the UDC. She asked to hear his views on the proposal for the current expansions of some businesses along the river. Pontier his property borders Camp FIMFO's. When the project begun, he received a letter from the Planning Board to give his opinion as a neighbor. His opinion hasn't changed; he is not opposed to campgrounds along the river. He likes them. Once or twice in the summer the sound gets to be too much. For perspective, his son lives in NYC and gets that every night. If a couple of times a year there are people coming up here and enjoying it, he can live with that. This is a place he loves. Having said that, he doesn't want to live next to a bungalow colony. The Town of Highland made a mistake when they allowed the first trailers at neighboring businesses. Someone wanting to put a couple hundred trailers in makes him feel creepy. He chooses to live in the middle of nowhere. Is there a number of cabins that makes sense? Probably. He isn't against it. The number one issue is what it will do to the river. You need to monitor it. He's sure everyone is aware of Cortese Landfill, a Federal Superfund site in the Town of Tusten. He has the Barnes Landfill behind his property which is not a Superfund site, but still gross. They took 5,000 drums of substance out of the Cortese Landfill. They don't want that to happen again. There has to be a monitor put in now so we can have a baseline to tell what the effects are. He wouldn't let them install hundreds of trailers either, he would give them 25 to start and see how they do. Are we going to require they remove the trailers for the off season? Richardson said we need to move on from this topic and ask questions only on the presentation given. Pontier agreed.

Robinson said he should include the stone industry in his presentation as an essential that changed the river valley. In Shohola there were 8,000 men working in the quarries at one time. When Kilgour, who owned the quarry rights, lost his contract with the railroad, 8,000 men left Shohola in just one day. There are two stone huts with initials and dates on his property. They were where the quarry men would stay over night until they got a load and made it out of the forest. It was amazing how busy this place was. Pontier said when Sullivan County was going to become is own county, there were three towns proposed as the center; Liberty, Monticello, and Barryville. There was a lot going on in Barryville at the time. The bluestone of NYC is stone from here.

Dugan asked if there is a reason Barryville became more of a developed hub? Pontier said he's sure there is a reason, but he isn't sure of why. There was a boat basin here that serviced boats. Narrowsburg and Callicoon had a lot of hotels and businesses as well. The people coming from the East and West Branches would stop in Narrowsburg as further north; that was their Barryville essentially.

Rodgers said he thinks the longest operating business in Sullivan County might be the Long Eddy Saloon in the Town of Fremont, when it was known as Douglas City. He said Pontier did a great job not only with his presentation, but the story telling he did tonight. He thanked Pontier again and gave him a UDC lapel pin. Pontier left the meeting.

Approval of the October 2, 2025 Minutes: A motion by Henry seconded by Robinson to approve the October 2, 2025 meeting minutes carried.

Committee Reports: There were no questions regarding previously distributed minutes for Water Use/Resource Management 10/21 (Evan Padua), Project Review 10/28 (Larry Richardson), or Operations 10/28 (Jim Rodgers).

Public Comment on the Agenda: None.

Status Reports:

Delaware River Basin Commission: Brown said the Hydrologic Conditions Report is included for review in tonight's packet. We've had some precipitation, but not a lot. Through the rest of this week the basin is expected to get around .1-.25 inches of rain. We are down 2.2 billion gallons in the NYC combined reservoirs, well below the long term goal. The DRBC is watching that closely. Averages for the salt front are pretty high, the highest it's been in a decade. The salt front is currently at the Philadelphia Airport; 20 miles north of the average monthly for this time of the year.

The DRBC's business meeting will be on 12/10, virtually. The public hearing was yesterday (11/5), with three dockets in NYS and one in PA (Pike County). Written comments are still being accepted until Monday for those dockets. The Monitoring Advisory and Coordination Committee meeting is on 12/9, Regulated Flow Advisory Committee will meet on 12/15, and the Advisory Committee on Climate Change will meet on 12/16. Those meetings are all virtual and details can be found on the DRBC website.

G. Dudko asked with the salt front so much further up, the only thing that helps that is more water coming down? Releases wouldn't advisable though with the drought? Brown said that is a delicate dance when they get into dry conditions. She doesn't have an exact answer. Initially they do call for more releases, but if conditions continue to be dry they move into conservation mode. They can call for releases from Beltzville and Blue Marsh Reservoirs in PA to manage the salt front if needed.

NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation: Absent.

PA Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources: Dugan said UDC staff included a press release in tonight's packet on the grand opening of the new Delaware State Forest District Resources Management Center on Route 402 in Pike County. DCNR staff moved in in July of this year and had the opening ceremony this past Monday. They are still waiting to get some educational and interpretation exhibit materials for their front room. They should be installed before Christmas. This isn't a typical visitor center, but it will have a lobby for visitors. He invited everyone to stop on during normal business hours to get a map and check things out. This location gives staff the ability to be in the forest they work in, spanning across two counties and 85,000 acres. It also provides an emergency operations center for the counties, FEMA, etc. Once those exhibits in the lobby are installed it will look nice for people to stop in. He said personally, it's been nice to be in the forest with more wildlife. Their last location had a lot of traffic.

The budget hasn't passed yet in PA. They are still working with the budget impasse, though still open and operating to the best of their ability. Hunting seasons are here. There was a spike two weeks ago in fall hunting season where small game, muzzle loader for antlerless deer, bear, and archery for bear began, as well as senior, junior, and active military for antlerless deer rifle season. This gives people the opportunity to get out on public and private lands. The rut is currently happening along with fall turkey season. Fall fire season is here, with only a few slight rounds of precipitation. On 10/26 PA had a 58-acre fire on state forest land near some cabin colonies in Porter Township. Some people had said they saw smoke earlier in the day, but no one reported it until later. No structures were lost or injuries occurred. The cause is still under investigation. With the lack of precipitation streams, ponds, and lakes have all been very low. Since we are starting to get a little rain and the trees have dropped their leaves, the rainfall recharges the streams very quickly. This happens in the spring too, when the trees are just about to break bud. DCNR staff has been watching some of the streams with native brook trout population, starting to get nervous. Now that the leaves have dropped things have been better. Last week DCNR closed on a new acquisition of land in Westfall Township. It's a big tract of land that's taken a few years to transition from private property to typical state forest land. Rangers were out yesterday and spotted two hunters already. Henry asked what forest it is? Dugan said

Delaware; ~50 acres on the south side of Route 84 with a majority of the acreage (~900) on the north side of Route 84. There have been two developments proposed for that spot in the past.

Henry said at the last meeting they talked about an Elk someone spotted in Equinunk, PA. He has a video of the Elk with a herd of cows in the Milanville, PA area. The Elk is supposedly from Moonshine Ranch. Dugan said there have been three reports in or close to NEPA of Elk this year. There's one that's been spotted in Sullivan County around Callicoon. Another is the same one that was spotted on trail cameras last year in the Lords Valley area around Route 84. There's another Elk down in Wind Gap. He hasn't been able to get a full report from the Game Commission. They are trying to capture or take them down. In PA there is an Elk season so they are not fair game outside of that. You have to have a tag and be in a management area where its legal. There are other animals that don't have "seasons" and are essentially unrestricted. Rodgers asked if anyone knows what happened to the Elk that crossed the river to Fremont? Dugan said no; no one has shot it and the state hasn't heard anything. He said last fall a set of three little stag or young Bull Elks showed up, and then they never heard about them again. Now there are three sets of these animals across three county areas. Rodgers asked if they could all be escapees? Dugan said could be.

Ramie asked Dugan if he ever found the local feather and wedge set PA DCNR was looking for to display at the new center? Robinson said he might know of one. Dugan said no. They do have some historic artifacts from Western PA for the cases in the new Resources Management Center lobby. To find a set from that has ties to this region would be cool. Robinson said he might have a lead on one.

Ramie thanked Dugan for prepping everyone in advance of the meeting they had in Harrisburg on 10/8. It took no persuasion on whether or not the UDC should be funded by PA during that meeting; it was more about finding the mechanism to get it done. She appreciates Dugan's advocacy. Dugan said during the meeting Senator Baker's aide was trying to figure out if there was a similar organization elsewhere to the UDC seeking something like this, to build a team. The UDC is such a unique entity though. They discussed water authorities and other ways to get a line item in the PA budget. Ramie said the UDC's subsequent letter was sent to Governor Shapiro, though the timing is not terrific. Dugan said the timing may be okay; we were not asking for this year's budget.

National Park Service: Ramie said November 1st was supposed to be the day UPDE Superintendent Lindsey Kurnath came back from her Regional business office assignment as superintendent. We aren't sure who is considered essential at UPDE and what operations have taken place, but we continue to keep our NPS friends in our thoughts and hope this shutdown will end soon.

UDC Executive Director: Ramie thanked DRBC Executive Director Kristen Bowman Kavanagh for calling in tonight to join Brown. Bowman Kavanagh said she was very interested in the presentation that Pontier gave tonight.

Ramie pointed everyone to the Nov./Dec. calendars included in tonight's packet. The UDC office will be closed 11/11 for Veterans' Day and 11/27 for Thanksgiving. Any meetings requiring the NPS on either calendar are currently deferred with the government shutdown. Engelhardt's 4th work anniversary is coming up on 11/22, which triggers a personnel review. She asked the present Personnel Subcommittee members if they could come in ahead of the 12/4 UDC meeting for the staff performance appraisal. Henry said if everyone agrees, which they did, the Personnel Subcommittee will come in at 6pm on 12/4 for Engelhardt's staff performance appraisal. They will let Dexter know. Ramie said at the Upper Delaware River Rendezvous she attended a presentation by Dr. Peter Kolesar on the Flexible Flow Management Plan. She found it very interesting and asked Kolesar if he'd be available to give the UDC the same presentation. He agreed for the 12/4 UDC meeting. We have no other presentations scheduled at this time and welcome ideas and topics for the next year. December 8th is the deadline for the Fall/Winter issue of "The Upper Delaware" newsletter to be sent to Courier Printing, with a release date of 12/22. Ramie reminded everyone that the Operations Committee (6:30pm), Project Review Committee (7:00pm), and WU/RM Committee (7:30pm) meetings are scheduled on the same night (12/16) due to the holiday. We will remind everyone in advance.

We have considered what the Funding Task Force has advised regarding grant opportunities to avoid another budget deficit in the next year. There are a few sources for which applications are due soon, often applicable to municipalities and non-profits. The Upper Delaware River Network requested proposals starting today due by 12/1 for their regrant program funding through NYS. That program is administered through Friends of the Upper Delaware River (FUDR) and offers state matching funds through the federal Delaware Watershed Conservation Program. All details can be found on the Upper Delaware River Network website. Ramie serves on the Regrant

Committee. They typically give 3-5 grants. The Sullivan County Visitors Association (SCVA) has opened up applications as of 11/3 for tourism grants due by 12/16. There are two rounds; this first round for the $300,000 initiative by Sullivan County Legislature and SCVA offers funding support in four categories: Roomnight-Focused Grants, Arts & Culture Enhancement, Hamlet & Micro-Brand Grants, and Events & Festivals Support. In PA, the DCNR opened the 2026 Community Conservation Partnership Program (C2P2) that covers funding for parks, river, trails, etc. Most of those applications open in January and are due by April. PA DCNR held a virtual program about those today. They will post a video of that workshop on the DCNR's YouTube channel.

She announced for those who don't know, PennDOT's District 4 Executive covering Wayne and Pike Counties Rich Roman passed away this week. Former Tusten Supervisor Richard "Dick" Crandall passed away in late October. Roeder said Crandall was a good friend. Robinson added that Crandall was a great guy. Ramie said it's amazing what he accomplished in his lifetime. She provided details on each individual and expressed the UDC's condolences.

Henry asked if we have a copy of the tales from the raftsmen that Mary Curtis put together? Ramie said we will search for it. Robinson said we could make copies and sell them as a fundraiser. Ramie said she could consult with Mary Curtis whether there are any copyright issues. G. Dudko said the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway gives out Cultural and History grants that could potentially help with some materials for copies.

New Business:

a. **Appoint a Nominating Committee for UDC 2026 Officers:** Rodgers said he asked Henry to serve on the Nominating Committee, to which Henry agreed. He asked Ramie if he could serve on the committee. Ramie said she didn't think there was anything in the bylaws saying he couldn't. Martin also volunteered. Henry said the Nominating Committee will come up with a slate of officers for 2026. He asked who the current Vice-chair is? Driscoll said Evan Padua.
b. **Draft Resolution 2025-13: Awarding the Printing of "The Upper Delaware" Newsletter to Courier Printing Corp. for Fiscal Year 2026:** Ramie said she reduced the number of copies by 1,000 for an overall savings of $429. This contract starts with the Fall/Winter issue. Driscoll is currently working on a re-design of the newsletter, and passed around a draft of the first page graphic as an example. A motion by Henry to award the printing of "The Upper Delaware" newsletter to Courier Printing for Fiscal Year 2026, seconded by Richardson, carried.
c. **Draft Resolution 2025-14: Adopting an Upper Delaware Council Whistleblower Protection Policy:** Rodgers said we needed to come up with something as a requirement of our Cooperative Agreement with NPS. The second draft has been circulated in advance and it is also included in tonight's packet. G. Dudko asked if there is a complaint against the Executive Director, who will also serve as the Compliance Officer, who does that person go to? Ramie said the UDC Chairperson. Breen said it says if preferred reports can be sent to the Chairperson. That should be made clear. A motion by Henry to adopt the UDC Whistleblower Protection Policy, after the amendment making it clear who to submit a complaint to if the complaint is against the Executive Director, seconded by G. Dudko, carried.
d. **Other:** None.

Old Business:

a. **UDC Computer Needs Estimate:** Ramie said the Operations Committee previously saw the estimate from our current IT Consultant, Chris Marshall of Marshall Consulting, LLC (also included in tonight's packet). Our current computers are not compatible with Windows 11. We are in a vulnerable state right now with no security updates from Windows. We do have another virus protection on our computers (Avast), but we need to get our technology up to date. We have a promising funding source she isn't at liberty to disclose right now but didn't want to wait a whole month to bring this up because of the Windows 10 situation. The Operations Committee had authorized us to subscribe to an Extended Security Update via Windows 10, which is proving complicated. We are seeking pre-approval for the new equipment contingent on getting the funding. Henry made a motion for the UDC staff to approve the estimate by Marshall Consulting, LLC to upgrade computers, seconded by Robinson. Richardson asked if we compared pricing? It doesn't necessarily require the lowest bid. He's worked with Kristt Company and was always happy. He thinks we should get another quote and allow the UDC staff to make a decision based on services and pricing. Henry amended the motion, for the UDC staff to get another quote and have the authority to decide based on services and pricing. That motion, seconded by Robinson, carried.

b. **Federal Government Shutdown Update:** Ramie said this item is a bit of a placeholder. We put it here in hopes we can say it's resolved soon. This is now the longest shutdown in history. It's very unfortunate for our partners at the NPS. The UDC is funded through the end of the calendar year currently.
c. **Other:** Henry said his son-in-law send a video of the PA State Police and Game Commission shooting down the Elk in the Equinunk area today. They were running all over a person's lawn with maybe a dozen cows. They were not tranquilizing them.

Public Comment: None.

Adjournment: A motion by Roeder seconded by Breen to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 p.m. carried.

Minutes prepared by Stephanie Driscoll, 11/14/25