Upper Delaware Council
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UPPER DELAWARE COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
October 1, 2026

The Upper Delaware Council held its monthly meeting on Thursday, October 1, 2026. Chairperson Dexter called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Roll call followed reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Attendees:
Damascus Township- Jeff Dexter, Town of Hancock- Jim Serio, Town of Delaware- Harold Roeder, Town of Tutsen- Cathleen Breen, Town of Lumberland- Nadia Rajsz (Zoom), Town of Deerpark- Ginny Dudko and Bill Dudko, Lackawaxen Township- Doug Case, Shohola Township- Aaron Robinson, Westfall Township- Tammy Zajac, National Park Service- Lindsey Kurnath (Zoom), New York State- Ryan Coulter, Delaware River Basin Commission- Beth Brown (Zoom)

Absent:
Town of Fremont- Jim Rodgers, Town of Cochecton- Larry Richardson, Town of Highland- Christine Martin, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania- Tim Dugan

Staff:
Executive Director- Laurie Ramie, Resources and Land Use Specialist- Julie Pais, Administrative Support- Stephanie Driscoll

Media:
River Reporter- Sonia Ahmed, Tri-County Independent- Peter Becker (Zoom)

Guests*:*
National Park Service- Tom Kearns (Zoom), Rebekah Creshkoff (Zoom), Craig (Zoom), Don Hamilton (Zoom), Matt McMahon

Presentation – "Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River Geological Overview": Dexter introduced Tom Kearns, Natural and Cultural Resource Program Manager for the National Park Service at the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River. Kearns added that he has been at Upper Delaware for a little over two years and that the geological inventory project he's presenting on tonight was already essentially complete by the time he arrived. The work was conducted through the National Park Service's Geological Resources Inventory program, based in Colorado, which does similar geological inventories for National Park Service units throughout the country. The principal investigator for the Upper Delaware project was Tim Henderson, who has since left the National Park Service for another federal position. Kearns said that Henderson, as the geologist who conducted the work, could have provided a more technical presentation, while Kearns himself is not a trained geologist. His goal tonight is to provide an overview of the report's major findings and, importantly, explain how the resulting geological information can be applied to actual planning and management decisions within the Upper Delaware corridor.

Kearns said one of the primary benefits of the geological inventory is that it gives managers and planners a head start when evaluating a proposed project site. Rather than beginning with virtually no knowledge of the underlying geological conditions, planners can consult the inventory to obtain an initial understanding of what may be present and what conditions may need to be investigated more closely. He emphasized throughout the presentation that the inventory is not intended to substitute for detailed, site-specific engineering or geological studies. Instead, it provides an informed starting point that can help identify potential issues early enough to influence project design and site selection. Kearns had provided UDC staff with several links in advance of the presentation, including links to the geological inventory report and a poster/map produced from the project on the National Park Service's IRMA website. He encouraged members to explore the materials if they wanted a deeper understanding of the geology. He personally finds these types of resources particularly interesting because looking more closely at geological features tends to generate additional questions and provides a way to learn not only about geology generally, but about why the Upper Delaware landscape looks and functions the way it does. He also provided a link to an NPS geology story

resource highlighting locations such as Hawks Nest, Narrowsburg, areas near Lordville, and significant geological features around Hancock. These are useful public resources that help people understand the distinctive geology of the Upper Delaware region.

As background, Kearns described the Upper Delaware as "one river, two states," encompassing five counties: Delaware, Orange and Sullivan counties in New York, and Pike and Wayne counties in Pennsylvania. The Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River park unit encompasses approximately 55,574.5 acres of river landscape, hills, villages and cultural sites and was designated as a National Park Service unit in 1978. Unlike a more conventional park with a single ownership or jurisdiction, the Upper Delaware consists of one river corridor containing many communities, property owners, governmental agencies and other assets, all existing together within the same landscape. Understanding how the Upper Delaware landscape developed requires looking at a three-layered geological story. The landscape visible today did not result from one geological event. Instead, it is the product of processes occurring over vastly different periods of time. The first layer is the ancient bedrock, which formed approximately 383 million to 350 million years ago. Rivers and shallow seas deposited enormous quantities of sand, silt, mud and gravel, which eventually hardened into rock. The second major layer of the story came much later through repeated Ice Age events. At least three major glacial advances are known to have affected the area, with the most recent major ice sheet retreating northward approximately 18,500 years ago. These repeated ice sheets profoundly altered the landscape, scouring valleys, breaking and shattering rock and leaving behind thick deposits of material. Those glacial processes were responsible for much of the dramatic topography and landscape that residents and visitors see today. The third layer is the modern, "living" river. The Delaware River continues to reshape the landscape in real time by moving sediment, depositing material, eroding banks and carving portions of the corridor. Kearns stressed that the geological inventory brings those three layers together – the ancient bedrock, the comparatively younger glacial deposits and the continuing work of the river – and translates that geological history into information that can assist present-day park management and planning.

Going further back into the formation of the bedrock, Kearns explained how ancient river systems ultimately became the sandstone and related rock formations seen throughout the Upper Delaware today. He referred to what geologists describe as the Catskill Delta complex. Mountains rising to the east, the ancient Acadian Mountains, supplied enormous quantities of sediment. Rivers transported sand and mud westward, depositing the material through shallow braided stream systems crossing a coastal plain toward an inland sea. Over immense periods of time, those accumulated layers hardened into sandstone, siltstone, shale and conglomerate, which now underlie the Upper Delaware River corridor. Evidence of those ancient water systems can still be seen in the rocks themselves. Careful observation of sandstone exposures can reveal features such as cross-bedding and preserved ripple patterns, essentially physical evidence of the direction and manner in which water flowed hundreds of millions of years ago. While walking his dog after work at Ten Mile River, he noticed examples of these geological clues in rocks lying alongside the road. He described these visible features as particularly interesting because small pieces of evidence found throughout the landscape contribute to scientists' understanding and interpretation of the area's geological history. Once those ancient sediments had hardened into rock, the glaciers played an enormous role in producing the cliffs, valleys, rounded hills and other dramatic features familiar today. Kearns described three major glacial advances moving down from the north and physically carving the landscape. The immense ice sheets scoured and shattered rock, widened valleys and rounded hills, while repeated freezing and thawing contributed to the breaking apart of exposed cliffs. He compared it to what happens to an old stone building that no longer has a roof. Water penetrates openings in the masonry, freezes, expands and eventually begins breaking the structure apart. He said that familiar freeze-thaw process provides at least some sense of the destructive force involved, although the weight and power of an actual glacier operating across an entire landscape would have been vastly greater. The glaciers ultimately left behind till, outwash and large quantities of other material created and transported as the ice carved through the region. Kearns reiterated that the most recent major ice sheet retreated north approximately 18,500 years ago, leaving behind many of the deposits and landforms that remain part of the Upper Delaware landscape.

Kearns described the modern river corridor as an outdoor geology guide as well as a planning map. Rapids, cliffs, buried river channels and sediment deposits all provide clues about both the geological past and the way a particular site may behave today. Bedrock rapids, for example, can occur where hard sandstone resists erosion, creating rocky drops and shallow channels. Cliff ledges are influenced by joints and bedding planes in the rock, which allow sandstone to separate naturally into slabs and blocks. That characteristic of the local sandstone also connects the region's natural geology directly with its cultural history. The slabs and blocks produced from local stone are the bluestone that has been used extensively throughout the Upper Delaware for generations. Kearns pointed to

bluestone sidewalks, landscaping and other structures found on private properties throughout the area, as well as the numerous historic stone walls associated with the Delaware and Hudson Canal. Those structures were built using rock extracted locally, meaning that the region's geological resources quite literally became part of its built environment. Kearns also brought up what he calls "hidden routes" in the landscape. Buried channels, abandoned river bends, islands and glacial deposits can reveal where the Delaware or other waterways traveled in the past. With a trained eye someone can begin looking across the modern landscape and identifying clues to what occurred there over time. Everything covered to that point is essentially a "30,000-foot overview" of the geology.

Kearns said the concept he'll return to is significance; specifically, how geology shaped the history of the Upper Delaware and how it continues to influence the region today. Geological resources are deeply incorporated into the area's cultural and built environment. He pointed to eel weirs, the Roebling Bridge and widespread use of bluestone as examples. The stone and other geological resources found locally have been incorporated into structures people still encounter and use every day, including retaining walls and transportation infrastructure. As a particularly recognizable example, UDC members may have driven across the Roebling Bridge that same day. The bridge piers themselves are constructed from bluestone. Local geology is everywhere, and people have been making practical use of those geological resources for a very long time. For that reason, geology has significance beyond the natural landscape: it has helped determine how communities developed, what people built and how the landscape continues to be used.

Kearns shifted from the historical significance of geology to the practical value of the new inventory. He said the inventory can serve as a useful tool not only for the National Park Service but also for municipalities, property owners and others throughout the river corridor. If someone is considering a project, the inventory provides a logical place to begin determining what geological conditions may exist at the proposed location. To demonstrate this, he displayed the geological map created as a product of the inventory. He reminded members that he had provided a link through which they could download the map from the NPS IRMA website and examine it in much greater detail. The map divides the corridor into differently colored polygons, each associated with codes identifying particular geological or soil conditions. Kearns walked through how that information could be used in a real-world situation. If NPS were considering a project at its headquarters in Beach Lake, at the Zane Grey Museum, near the Roebling Bridge or elsewhere in the corridor, staff could locate the project area on the map and identify the mapped geological unit. They could then use the corresponding code and inventory report to determine what types of material might be present. Depending upon the site, that could include colluvium, wetlands, stratified sand, Wisconsinan outwash, boulder colluvium or other materials. Bedrock descriptions are also included. That initial information can then lead planners to the relevant sections of the full report or to additional geological databases for more detailed research. The National Park Service has already used the inventory in planning two actual projects since receiving the final material approximately a year ago. One is the Zane Grey Accessibility Design Project. The other involves the proposed work to redo the Roebling Bridge icebreakers. For the icebreaker project in particular, he has used the geological information to provide engineers with an initial understanding of what they might encounter at the site. The inventory should not be treated as definitive proof that a particular geological condition exists at an exact location. Rather, it informs engineers about what is likely to be there and therefore helps them plan subsequent investigations. If geotechnical borings are necessary, for example, engineers can approach that work with a better idea of the conditions they may encounter and what may or may not be feasible in that project area.

Kearns said that the same information can be used during preliminary site screening to identify possible hazards or constraints, including susceptibility to river flooding, slope movement, radon and shrink-swell soils. Knowing those conditions in advance could have a direct effect on project design. A proposed location might initially appear suitable, but geological information could indicate that moving the project even 100 feet in one direction or another, when possible, would provide substantially better conditions. The more information planners have at the beginning of a project, the better positioned they are to avoid problems later. He outlined a general planning process in which managers first identify the proposed project and determine what is significant about the site. They then consider how the site itself functions geologically. Is it primarily bedrock? Is it within a floodplain? Is it a bog? Is it susceptible to erosion? That information can then be overlaid with whatever is being proposed, whether roads, trails, bridges, utilities, buildings or work involving historic structures. From there, planners can determine what type of response or design is most appropriate for the conditions. Kearns gave the straightforward example that no one wants to construct something new only to have it slide down the side of a mountain two years later. The inventory therefore helps with early evaluation of alternatives, while more detailed, site-specific studies remain necessary for final

engineering, design and approval. He repeatedly characterized the geological inventory as one useful tool among many available during the early stages of project development.

Among the larger conclusions and objectives of the inventory project was the desire to create a "decision-ready" geological inventory for the Upper Delaware corridor. The work helps identify significant geological features and strengthens the baseline information available to resource managers. It also helped NPS recognize gaps in existing natural and cultural resource data. The mapping information is available as GIS data as well, allowing the geological layers to be incorporated into other spatial planning and resource-management work. Just as importantly, information can be shared with partners and other interested parties throughout the river corridor through the NPS IRMA system. The goal is to make geological information current, accessible and easy to use before projects reach the design stage, rather than discovering important site conditions after substantial planning has already occurred. In wrapping up the formal presentation, Kearns said the Upper Delaware is clearly "more than a river." The ancient bedrock and younger geological deposits control many aspects of how the river corridor functions. The significant geological resources of the region connect science, heritage and a sense of place, while also providing information that can guide future management. Having good geological inventory information available early in the process can therefore contribute to better decision-making throughout the Upper Delaware River corridor.

Ramie asked Kearns about the geology "story map" that the National Park Service had been developing around 2017. She has not reviewed all the links Kearns provided and is curious to know whether that story map was among them. Kearns referred to the resource as the "Trail of Geology" and said the updated version he was looking at was dated March 27, 2025. He confirmed that the link had been included in the information he sent to Driscoll earlier that day.

Don Hamilton asked whether there were any plans to install physical interpretive signage at any of the locations featured in the Trail of Geology resource. Kearns said, to his knowledge, the National Park Service does not currently have plans for site-specific geological signage at those locations.

UDC members thanked Kearns for the presentation. Robinson said that people drive past geology every day without necessarily noticing it, although there are certainly some very noticeable geological features when traveling along the Delaware River. Kearns agreed, concluding that the Upper Delaware is indeed a very unique area.

Approval of September 3, 2026 Minutes: A motion by Robinson seconded by G. Dudko to approve the Sept. 3, 2026 meeting minutes carried.

Public Comment on the Agenda: None.

Committee Reports: There were no questions regarding previously distributed minutes for Water Use/Resource Management 9/15, Operations 9/22, or Project Review 9/22.

Status Reports:

Delaware River Basin Commission: Brown commented on the significant rainfall the region had received over the weekend. While it made for a wet and unpleasant few days, the precipitation was much needed. She reported that New Jersey's statewide drought warning had officially been lifted following the state's most prolonged dry period since the early 2000s. Although the region had experienced precipitation deficits over the preceding months, the wetter summer and early fall and periods of above-average rainfall had substantially improved conditions.

Referring to DRBC's September 28 hydrologic conditions report included in the meeting packet, she noted that reservoir storage remained quite high and above the long-term median. The two federal reservoirs in the lower basin were also in good condition, and the Delaware River salt front remained well below the area of concern. Overall, she characterized conditions as positive from a hydrology and water-supply standpoint.

The DRBC had released a new technical report on surface water availability, focused primarily on Pennsylvania. DRBC staff have developed a screening-level model to examine whether public water supplies in selected watersheds could continue meeting demand during another drought of record or prolonged severe drought. The results are encouraging, with most of the water-supply intakes studied showing resilience to drought. The Lehigh River Watershed was identified as an area requiring additional, more detailed investigation. The study supports the DRBC's broader long-term planning efforts for both drought and flooding while ensuring that the basin can continue meeting its various water-use needs.

Two DRBC advisory committee meetings are scheduled for October 14: the Water Quality Advisory Committee and the Water Management Advisory Committee. Both will be available by Zoom and open to the public. DRBC staff had been busy with conferences and public-engagement events while continuing to gather input for the Water Resources Resilience Plan. The public survey will remain open through the end of October, and she encouraged anyone who had not yet participated to provide feedback.

NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation: Coulter reported that New York's bow hunting season opened October 1, along with the start of pheasant stocking on State Lands. Major DEC news is the completion of Phase 1 of the Ten Mile River property acquisition. DEC now owns approximately 6,100 acres of the total 9,400-acre property, representing the largest parcel purchase in DEC Region 3 since 1990. DEC hopes to close on Phase 2 by spring. Lands and Forests staff are working to post the newly acquired property, install gates, develop maps and establish public information. Coulter confirmed that the property will be State Forest and will require a unit management planning process. Members asked whether there is a map currently available showing which portions are State-owned so visitors can avoid crossing onto property that has not yet been acquired. Coulter agreed to check with Lands and Forests staff and obtain more information about the boundaries, river frontage and other details of the acquisition. He noted that there will be many management questions to work through given the size of the property. DEC fisheries staff are also interested in surveying the lakes and ponds to determine what fish populations are present.

Coulter reported on plans to rehabilitate the Lake Huntington boat launch in the Town of Cochecton. Improvements will include new concrete launch slabs, paving, a new dock and repairs or replacement of the retaining wall. DEC hopes to arrange temporary storage of construction materials at a nearby town facility because of the distance from the DEC office. The timing will need to be coordinated with the town because the heavily used launch will have to close temporarily during construction.

G. Dudko asked about the Spotted Lanternfly, describing very heavy numbers she recently encountered near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Coulter said he did not have detailed information on the extent of the local infestation because his DEC program does not specialize in entomology but can check with the appropriate department.

Pennsylvania Dept. of Conservation and National Resources: Absent.

National Park Service: Kurnath reported that the National Park Service now has a permanent Northeast Regional Director. David Alberg, most recently Deputy Regional Director and Acting Regional Director for Alaska, is relocating to Philadelphia to assume the position. The Northeast Regional Director position had been filled through acting assignments since Gay Vietzke left in February 2025. The Regional Director is actually NPS's appointed representative to the Upper Delaware Council, while the UPDE Superintendent serves as the alternate. She has already briefed Alberg on the UDC and looks forward to introducing him to the region and Upper Delaware.

As the summer season winds down, most seasonal employees have departed. However, NPS was able to retain seasonal law enforcement ranger Pete Bizjak for another month to assist with operations. The postponed National Public Lands Day event was also rescheduled in partnership with Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area at Milford Beach.

Under water and resource management, Kurnath reported that the EPA conducted field testing on September 15 of the Geographic Response Plans in Narrowsburg and Lackawaxen. The exercise built upon the tabletop exercise held last year and brought numerous partners together to identify the resources and capabilities available in the event of a spill or other incident causing damage to river resources. Both tests were successful, and additional training and testing phases are expected.

UPDE intern Miles Stewart completed his textile eel weir installation at NPS headquarters, although the textile portion was damaged by recent winds, leaving the stone and vine portion of the sculpture. She said the remaining installation still evokes an eel weir and encouraged anyone interested to stop by headquarters to see it.

The National Canoe Safety Patrol is wrapping up their season after recording more than 7,000 public contacts, over 100 rescue assists and 80 boat-overs.

The contract for the Zane Grey roof repair has been awarded, with construction expected to begin in the fall.

NPS facilities staff collected another 189 gallons of trash during September weekends, along with a queen-size mattress, tire and pair of shoes. That brings the summer total to 1,703 gallons of trash, not including larger items. Kurnath estimated that the loose trash alone amounted to approximately 1,900 pounds, or nearly a ton. She remarked on the extraordinary amount of garbage continually removed from the river and thanked the UDC and other partners for their litter cleanup efforts.

Ramie thanked Kurnath for attending the UDC's 38th Annual River Valley Awards banquet on September 13, representing the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River. She also commented that 6 NPS rangers showed up to the September 26 Birds & Bees program at the Callicoon Depot after the National Public Lands event at Milford Beach was cancelled. Kurnath said unfortunately that event was rained out and postponed due to the nor'easter. Ramie said the Birds & Bees program ended sooner than planned due to the rain as well.

UDC Executive Director: Ramie said because the federal ASAP payment system temporarily shuts down each year to close out the federal fiscal year, she waited until the system reopened today so she could draw down the exact amount of September expenses rather than estimating them in advance. She successfully withdrew $22,190.96 for the September abstract, leaving $99,844.33 from the original $300,000 federal allocation for the calendar year. Regarding the anticipated New York State operational funding, she still has no definitive information about how or when the funds will become available or what expenses would be allowable. Friends of the Upper Delaware River recently received its state contract and was beginning the process of uploading its work plan and budget, but it is unclear whether UDC would follow the same process. Because UDC would be a new State contractor, additional setup requirements will be involved. Ramie plans to contact New York State Budget Director Blake Washington, who attended the River Valley Awards banquet, in hopes that he could direct her to the appropriate state personnel and help answer questions about the process. The uncertainty is affecting both UDC's budgeting and the Technical Assistance Grants (TAG) program. The Council cannot determine how much funding can be allocated to TAG awards until it knows whether some operating expenses normally paid with federal funds can instead be covered by the state allocation. TAG award decisions have therefore been tabled until the October 27 Project Review Committee meeting. The same uncertainty is delaying submission of UDC's next federal assistance application through Grant Solutions because the state funding could affect the federal budget, work plan and Cooperative Agreement. Carly Marshall, UDC's Agreements Technical Representative, agreed that UDC should hold off on submitting the federal package until those questions are resolved. Fortunately, the revised TAG schedule for 2027 provides additional time, so the delay should not reduce the municipalities' available project-completion period.

Moving to the 38th Annual River Valley Awards, Ramie thanked the *River Reporter*, *Sullivan County Democrat* and *Hancock Herald* for their extensive coverage of the banquet and its honorees. She said the publicity was particularly valuable because the purpose of the program is to recognize the award recipients and their accomplishments. Copies of the 16-page awards booklet are available, with a full-color version posted online, and UDC also highlighted each award through a nine-day series of Facebook posts. Ramie felt this year's event was particularly successful, with strong connections among the America250 theme, John Conway's keynote address, a performance by Fort Delaware Fife and Drums Corps, and the Cochecton 250th anniversary planning committee's recognition.

On behalf of the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway, Ramie displayed a new trifold brochure featuring a fold-out map of the byway from Hancock to Port Jervis. Former UDSB program manager David Krantz created the brochure with a $1,500 Sullivan Catskills Visitors Association tourism grant, and copies are available for distribution. She also reminded members about the Scenic Byway photo contest. Approximately 60 entries have already been received, and participants may submit multiple photographs depicting scenery or attractions along the byway until November 1 through the online portal at www.UDSB.net.

Ramie highlighted the 3rd Annual Upper Delaware River Rendezvous, scheduled for October 21-22 at Villa Roma. The UDC has five tickets and one is now available for any member interested in attending all or part of the conference. The UDC will also participate as a sponsoring exhibitor. She announced that NYS DEC representative Ryan Coulter would receive the 2026 Community Leadership and Partnership Award during the Wednesday evening awards dinner. Coulter said he was extremely honored, noting that he had been thrown into the Delaware River community, and learned a great deal and still had much more to learn. The conference's Conservation and Stewardship Award will be presented to "Get Trashed in the Catskills", a river cleanup initiative primarily focused on the East Branch.

For upcoming UDC programs, Ramie said she had requested a November 5 presentation on the Connect Sullivan/Archtop Fiber Optic project, although it had not yet been confirmed. She would like Sullivan County representatives to update the Council on the countywide broadband project as well as efforts to improve cellular coverage and communications for emergency services in the river corridor. A December 3 program is confirmed with Town of Delaware alternate and licensed fishing guide Bob Lindquist, who will present his program, "*Seasons Along the Delaware"*. Ramie invited members to suggest additional presentation topics for 2027.

Following the report, Coulter offered to contact a person within DEC's Division of Water in Albany who had been involved with Friends of the Upper Delaware River funding to see whether they could provide any information about UDC's State funding process. Ramie welcomed the assistance, explaining that even having a knowledgeable state contact would be helpful given the complicated contracting process. Coulter agreed to follow up, and the item will be added to the meeting's action list.

New Business:

a. **UDC Recommendation Letter to NPS – UDC2026-12: Town of Highland Comprehensive Plan:** A motion by Henry, seconded by Robinson, to send the letter recommending the Town of Highland's Comprehensive Plan substantially conforms to the River Management Plan to the National Park Service, carried.
b. **Draft Resolution 2026-08: Awarding a Graphic Design Service Contract:** Ramie said eight proposals were received by the 9/21 deadline, all of which were qualified. The Operations Committee reviewed the proposals using a comparison matrix prepared by Driscoll and ultimately recommended selecting WOLVESTUDIOS, of Roscoe, NY whose proposal and portfolio were determined to meet UDC's objectives. The proposed contract amount is $4,400. This included an additional $800 that was not part of their original bid. It will cover converting the awards booklet from QuarkXPress into a usable template because the software is no longer compatible with UDC's computers, the same situation with the newsletter. The UDC had budgeted $5,000 for the project through the Jeff Bank donation announced June 5. Although the grant funds had not yet been received, the bank had assured the UDC that the funding is forthcoming. The UDC is familiar with WOLVESTUDIOS through its principals' participation as litter leaders in the Town of Fremont and had reviewed the firm's previous work and portfolio. Because the contract requires all deliverables to be completed by November 30, Ramie stressed the need to make the award promptly so work could begin. A check for the required 50% down payment could be released upon Council approval. A motion by Breen, seconded by Roeder, to approve WOLVESTUDIO's graphic design proposal for the graphic re-design of the UDC's "The Upper Delaware" newsletter, conversion of other needed QuarkXPress documents, and training for Adobe InDesign, carried.
c. **Personnel Subcommittee: Administrative Assistant Search:** Henry reported that an exit interview had been conducted with Driscoll in advance of her departure from the UDC to accept a position with Friends of the Upper Delaware River (FUDR). The interview provided Driscoll with an opportunity to share observations about her experience working at the Council. While nothing major was raised, he indicated that some of her feedback would be shared with the remaining staff. The search for a new Administrative Assistant is underway, with the position advertisement already distributed. Members were encouraged to refer any qualified local candidates to Ramie. The advertised application deadline is October 9, which corresponds with Driscoll's departure date, although the search could be extended if necessary.

   Driscoll thanked the Council, saying that she appreciated everyone, had enjoyed her time at UDC and that leaving had been a difficult decision. Council members wished her well and expressed appreciation for her service. Driscoll also offered to return and help train the new Administrative Assistant once a candidate is hired, which the Council appreciated.
d. **Other:** None.

Old Business:

a. **Update on Barryville Gage Funding:** Ramie reported that Sullivan County Legislator Nadia Rajsz successfully secured the $8,700 needed to maintain discharge measurements, with the Sullivan County Legislature approving the funding by resolution on September 24. This came just before the previous funding by the NPS Upper Delaware unit for the last two fiscal years, was scheduled to expire on September 30. Ramie contacted the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) on September 25 to begin the agreement process, with UDC serving as the contractor for the technical and administrative agreement.

USGS advised that the required technical assistance agreement would need legal review and could take approximately 30 days to complete. Ramie asked whether that delay would result in a lapse in discharge data. USGS Operations Manager Andrew Waite assured her that the gage would remain operational and the discharge data publicly available while the agreement was being processed. She prepared and submitted the required funding application to Sullivan County, after reviewing an updated certificate of insurance naming the County as an additional insured. That completed package was submitted September 30, and the County confirmed the following morning that all required information had been received. An advance-payment contract is now being developed. The UDC may temporarily need to front the $8,700 payment, but reimbursement from the County is secured. The exact payment procedure will become clear once the USGS agreement is received.

Rajsz credited the successful effort to cooperation among several people, including Town of Highland UDC Representative Christine Martin and NPS Superintendent Lindsey Kurnath, who helped determine the exact amount needed. Rajsz said obtaining that figure had been half the battle; once the $8,700 amount was confirmed, the timing of the County Legislature meeting allowed the funding to be approved quickly. She thanked Ramie for handling the considerable paperwork needed to put the agreement in place. Ramie explained why the $8,700 cost was several thousand dollars less than what NPS had previously paid to support the gage. USGS attributed the reduction to ongoing evaluations of operating expenses, updated equipment and technology, network modernization and more efficient, data-driven servicing of stream gages. These improvements have reduced operating costs at some locations, including Barryville. Waite also indicated that it's their long-term goal is to install webcams at all of their stream gages. UDC members thanked everyone involved for making this happen.

b. **Request for Regional Feasibility Discussion – Upper Delaware Rail-with-Trail Parallel Greenway:** The Council returned to the request from Sam Rowe for UDC to facilitate a regional discussion about the feasibility of an Upper Delaware Rail-with-Trail Parallel Greenway. Ramie said the matter had previously been referred to the Water Use/Resource Management Committee, which discussed the potential benefits, drawbacks and overall feasibility of the concept at its September 15 meeting. That committee voted to recommend that the full Council move forward with exploring the concept and begin a broader discussion of its pros and cons. The Upper Delaware Scenic Byway had also conceptually endorsed exploring the idea on September 28, without making any commitment to the project itself. Interest has also emerged from other organizations. Pennsylvania DCNR Regional Advisor Christine Dettore indicated that she would like to participate in future discussions and had contacted Rowe directly, although she had not received a response. Rowe had also contacted PennDOT, which was reportedly preparing a response. In addition, Burt Thelander, representing the Orange County Pathways Committee and Sullivan O&W Trail Committee, contacted Ramie for information and expressed interest in participating. However, she has not heard from Rowe since September 1 despite keeping him informed about the various committee discussions. More importantly, the UDC currently has significant demands on its limited staff, including the graphic design project, Administrative Assistant search and unresolved New York State funding. With only two staff members, she does not believe the UDC could realistically take on an active facilitator role immediately. She suggested that, if the Council agrees to facilitate the discussion, work could potentially begin during the winter after some of the current priorities are completed. Members agreed that it would be misleading to commit UDC to facilitating the project when staff does not presently have the capacity to undertake it. A motion by G. Dudko to table the discussion until the UDC has the time and capacity to properly consider and facilitate the feasibility discussion, seconded by Breen, carried.

c. **UDC 9/24 Letter to NYS DEC re: Monitoring of Barnes Landfill, Town of Highland:** Ramie provided an update on UDC's efforts to obtain additional information from NYS DEC regarding the Barnes Landfill. The UDC had previously received the 2025 monitoring reports for the closed landfill, but the reports did not include any accompanying analysis or explanation. Because Council members are not technical experts and cannot readily interpret the monitoring data themselves, the UDC sent a formal letter on 9/24 to DEC requesting clarification of the results and an assessment of what the data indicates about current conditions at the site. No response has yet been received. The issue has also attracted the attention of the Delaware Riverkeeper Network, which learned about the UDC's inquiry through the meeting minutes and requested a copy of the letter and any additional information available. Riverkeeper's interest is related in part to the proposed Camp FIMFO project, since conditions associated with the nearby landfill could potentially have relevance to that project.

d. **UDC White Paper on History and Funding of River Management Plan:** Ramie presented the latest draft of the UDC white paper on the history and funding of the River Management Plan. This combined material from several previous versions, including drafts prepared by Breen, Robinson and Richardson. One of the principal additions was more historical context about the controversial period during which the River Management Plan was negotiated. Based on discussion at the Operations Committee, Ramie incorporated an excerpt from Mary Curtis's 1988 thesis, "*The Aginners and Others: A Case Study of Citizen Protests on the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River*." She felt the excerpt provided a concise and articulate explanation of the controversy surrounding development of the Plan while giving readers important historical background. The overall white paper was kept to three pages to maintain its intended purpose as a summary document. Members wanted additional time to review the latest version and Breen identified at least one area needing revision. In particular, the concluding language concerning municipal funding should be broadened rather than focusing primarily on obtaining participation from a Pennsylvania community. The paper should reflect the larger objective of establishing ongoing annual funding commitments, recognizing that New York provided funding this year but that long-term support is the goal. A motion by Breen, seconded by Henry, to send the white paper back to committee for further revisions, carried.

e. **Other**: Henry asked Coulter, as he gathers additional information from DEC Lands and Forests staff, to determine how much of the newly acquired State Forest property lies within the Upper Delaware River Corridor. The River Corridor encompasses approximately 55,000 acres and has historically been described as roughly 90% privately owned. With DEC acquiring approximately 6,100 acres in the first phase and potentially as much as 9,400 acres overall, it would be useful to understand how much land within the corridor has shifted from private to public ownership and whether UDC's existing public/private ownership figures should be updated. Coulter agreed that would be worthwhile information to obtain, and will follow up.

   Roeder reflected on the successful effort to secure continued funding for the Barryville stream gage, calling the Council's response commendable. He said the experience demonstrated one of the reasons he has remained involved with the UDC for so many years: members are able to work together and accomplish meaningful results for the people who live in and care about the Upper Delaware region. He acknowledged that the Council's work can sometimes become hectic and even contentious, recalling that when he first became involved many years ago, he wondered why he had volunteered. Looking back, however, he said he was very proud of what the Council has accomplished over the years. He specifically praised everyone who became involved in resolving the recent gage funding issue and expressed confidence that, as new challenges arise, the Council will continue working collaboratively to address them.

Public Comment: Matt McMahon, a resident of Long Eddy since 2020, introduced himself and explained that he recently accepted a tenure-track position as a professor of landscape architecture at Cornell University. He is interested in establishing an ongoing relationship with the Upper Delaware region through Cornell's landscape architecture program. He hopes to dedicate a semester-long undergraduate and graduate design studio to the Upper Delaware River region once a year, beginning potentially in fall 2027. He envisions continuing the program for at least three years and possibly throughout his six-year tenure-track period or longer. The program emphasizes place-based learning, with approximately 12 to 15 students participating in each five-credit studio course. Each semester could focus on a different real-world issue affecting the people, communities and ecosystems of the Upper Delaware. Potential topics could include the proposed rail-with-trail concept, redevelopment opportunities around the Callicoon Depot, forest and fire management strategies, or other planning and landscape issues identified as useful to the region. McMahon said the goal would be mutual benefit. Students would gain experience working on meaningful, real-world projects and interacting with local stakeholders, while their research and design work could potentially help communities develop concepts, support future grant applications or undertake preliminary studies that might otherwise be difficult to fund. He said he also intends to connect with other organizations throughout the region but viewed the UDC as an appropriate place to begin because of its ability to bring together many of the communities and interests within the river corridor. Council members expressed interest in the concept and asked McMahon to leave his contact information so that UDC could remain in communication and help connect him with appropriate organizations and potential projects.

Adjournment: A motion by Roeder seconded by Henry to adjourn the meeting at 8:50 p.m. carried.

Minutes prepared by Stephanie Driscoll, 10/7/2026