

WATER USE/RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMM. MEETING MINUTES
January 17, 2023

Committee Members Present: Ginny Dudko, Al Henry, Fred Peckham (Zoom), Pat Jeffer, Evan Padua
Committee Members Absent: Andy Boyar
Staff: Laurie Ramie, Kerry Engelhardt, Ashley Hall-Bagdonas
NPS Partner: Don Hamilton- Chief of Natural and Cultural Resources, Alex Garcia- Maldonado- Cultural Resources (Zoom)
Guests: Bill Dudko- Deerpark Alternate

The UDC's Water Use/Resource Management Committee held its monthly meeting on Tuesday, January 17th, 2023. Chairperson Dudko called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Election of Committee Chair and Vice-Chair: Henry made a motion to nominate Ginny Dudko for Chairperson and Evan Padua for Vice-Chairperson of the Water Use/Resource Management Committee for 2023. The motion was seconded by Jeffer and carried.

Approval of December 13, 2022 Meeting Minutes: A motion by Jeffer seconded by Henry approving the December 13th, 2022 meeting minutes carried. There was no public comment on the agenda.

New Business

Skinnners Falls Bridge Coordination Plan: Ramie had distributed a copy of the "Coordination Plan for Public and Agency Involvement" for the Skinnners Falls Bridge Planning & Environmental Linkages Study in advance along with four comments. First, the Upper Delaware Council is not listed as a Participating Agency. The Council's PAC membership is mentioned on Page 18 but that is in a stakeholder capacity. She feels this minimizes the UDC's cooperative management role for the Upper Delaware River with NPS-contracted project review responsibilities for conformance to the Land and Water Use Guidelines. Secondly, the final Purpose statement reads: ""The purpose of the project is to provide a safe and efficient crossing of the Delaware River at Skinnners Falls for cars, trucks, trailers, emergency response vehicles, bicyclists, and pedestrians." (page 8-emphasis added). The summary of interviews with four local businesses reinforces "the need for truck and trailer access across the bridge" (page 18). As we have commented in our letters, the current weight limit and presumably repairs of the current bridge would not accommodate any trucks or trailers over approximately 9 tons, which may be perceived as eliminating the rehabilitation option? She quoted Damascus Township Representative Jeff Dexter's reaction to that in saying, "It's also been pointed out numerous times that this bridge has never been open for tractor trailer traffic. Also, its role for firefighting has been a direct route for individual firefighters in private vehicles. Fire trucks use another route. In a recent incident near Milanville, fire trucks from Lake Huntington crossing as Damascus-Cochecton Bridge reached the scene before trucks from Beach Lake. Why? Because the direct route from Beach Lake is too narrow with poor line of sight to make good time with heavy trucks. And the proposal indicates they want to allow heavy trucks to cross at Milanville? It makes no sense at all."

As a point of information, she said the Coordination Plan has a schedule on Page 19 which projects that the Phase I Alternatives Assessment will be presented in Fall of 2023, with Phase II and the alternatives (rehabilitate existing structure, replace with a new bridge, or remove the crossing) anticipated for "Early 2024". She also found that the list of elected officials on page 17 will need to be updated since NYS Senator Mike Martucci and PA Representative Mike Peifer are no longer in office.

Ramie will attend the 1/19 Skinnners Falls Bridge Project Advisory Committee meeting and express UDC comments on the "Coordination Plan for Public and Agency Involvement", as agreed on by consensus, and provide a summary report of the meeting.

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Delaware River Basin Commission Groundwater Assessment 2020-2060: Ramie provided a 1/10 news release from DRBC on the Delaware River Basin Commission Groundwater Assessment 2020-2060. “While groundwater only accounts for about 5% of the total water withdrawals from the Delaware River Basin, it is a critical water source in need of sustainable use and planning,” said Michael Thompson, a Water Resource Engineer at DRBC and a primary author of the report. Engelhardt said this study performed by the DRBC assesses the availability of groundwater resources within the Basin. It focuses primarily on baseflow, which is the amount of water in a stream or river that is assumed to come from groundwater sources. The report is available at:

https://www.state.nj.us/drbc/home/newsroom/news/approved/20230110_DRBC-GW-Report.html

Request for More “Did You Know Facts” For UDC Website: Engelhardt was updating the website and noticed we have a handful of “Did You Know Facts” that scroll through on the website. She asked members if they could think of any facts to add. A few interesting and unique points were offered. She will email a message to the UDC membership requesting contributions of verifiable Upper Delaware River Valley trivia facts to refresh the “Did You Know” feature on the UDC website and provide a list of the current factoids that appears on the footers on various web pages at www.upperdelawarecouncil.org for reference.

Delaware River Flow & Storage Report: The 1/9 DRBC Hydrological Conditions Report noted combined storage is at 87%.

Other: Padua thanked Debby Seboldt for her work issuing CUA’s, saying she’s doing a great job and makes the process easy.

Ramie provided the 1/5/23 *Tri-County Independent* article by Peter Becker on “Warming Delaware River Could Threaten Trout: What it Means for Anglers and Tourists” for members. She said it was very comprehensive and partially based on Dr. Peter Kolesar’s presentation to the UDC.

Hall-Bagdonas shared information on the Vanessa Joy Van Gorder Memorial Scholarship with committee members. Delaware Highlands Conservancy established this scholarship in Vanessa's memory and to honor her dream of becoming an educator. The \$2,000 scholarship is open to high school seniors pursuing a career in education or environmental stewardship in school districts bordering the Upper Delaware River in NY and PA. Applications must be submitted by March 24, 2023. For more information please visit:

<https://delawarehighlands.org/learn/scholarships/>

Ramie asked Hamilton for information on Michelle Stevens, the new biologist who is due to start on 1/29. Hamilton said she grew up near Delaware Water Gap, has worked for Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area and Gettysburg, and is a graduate of East Stroudsburg University. Hamilton also said he will be meeting new Superintendent Kurnath for the first time this Thursday 1/19.

Old Business

River Litter Bag Stations Update: Engelhardt said she and Hall-Bagdonas spoke with Boyar about this project. Staff will confirm Boyar’s offer to take over the implementation of the River Litter Bag Stations proposal and ask him to share his plans.

Highland Access Update: Engelhardt attended a meeting on 12/14/22 regarding the Highland Access. The main purpose of the meeting was to discuss signage for the Access and other locations but she was able to obtain updates on the progress of the site. She also visited the site last week and took some photos. Permits allowed work to continue until 12/22, then work was done for the year and will resume in April (this is to avoid disturbing eagles during breeding and nesting season). The site is currently closed to the public (with orange fencing) as the drive lane is not yet paved. The following items are not covered in the scope of work with the current contractor or covered by partners: Bicycle rack; Kayak rack; Landscaping; and Installation of landing sign and interpretive sign.

The contractor and engineer will go over the actual costs and determine if there are sufficient funds to cover the work not in the scope. Otherwise, they will be looking for funding to cover those items. Jeff Haas has recommended working with Kaitlin Haas from the town and Shannon Cilento at Sullivan Renaissance to possibly submit an application for a municipal grant. Heather Jacksy wanted to note that huge thanks are due to: The town for providing

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removal of the fill (was initially estimated to be 10-15 loads, they were up to ~150 loads at the 12/14 meeting); NPS for making the signs; DEC for working on getting the drive lane paved (2023); and DOT for working to get the guide rail installed (2023).

On 1/13, Engelhardt stopped by the site on her way back from a meeting in Highland/Eldred. The asphalt access path extending from the parking area to the river had been constructed. Boulders had been placed at the bottom of the path, at the river access/concrete boat launch, to prevent erosion. The path is currently silty at the bottom from when the river was higher, but that's to be expected. All the areas that are to be grass have been covered with straw mulch to prevent erosion and a netting placed on top to prevent the straw from being blown away. It looks nice and contained for the winter. Some of the silt fence is in the river now, but again, she thinks that's to be expected. In the parking area, the stamped concrete "plaza" has been poured (and looks nice) and the curbing around the parking area and along Route 97 is in place. The parking area has been graded and stone has been placed. They've placed the pervious grid and filled about half of it with stone before they had to stop work. She wasn't able to descend the bank to check out the new drainage pipes and aprons, but from the parking area she was able to see that they've been generous with the rip rap that's used for stabilization and to prevent soil erosion. The orange fence along the state highway could be attended to, and as she said, some of the silt fence is a little worse for wear due to being under the river for a bit. But all in all the site looks good and will hopefully survive the winter unscathed so that they can complete construction in the Spring. She saw one Keep Out sign posted. Committee members thanked Engelhardt for her thorough report and photographs.

Bouchouxville Trail Signage Request: Peckham will share any future developments on the Bouchouxville Trail Signage Request that was made to the NYS DEC and DOT for the Town of Hancock site for missing and inaccurately located directional signs.

1/9 Upper Delaware Scenic Byway Meeting Minutes: Ramie provided a copy of the 1/9 Upper Delaware Scenic Byway Minutes. The Search Committee received 10 applications for Program Manager and recommended interviewing three of the candidates which happened today by Zoom. They hope to make a potential hiring determination at the 1/23 meeting for this 6-month independent contractor position.

After discovering there were no bus companies available to accommodate the idea of a 2022 holiday events-themed bus tour along the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway, the committee shifted to consider ideas for 2023 that could center on a 2nd Annual Festival of the Founding Fish, tentatively on May 6-7.

A handout of product descriptions and technical specifications from the security company Flock Safety that Town of Deerpark Police Chief Richard Sztynodor had been communicating with was provided at the last meeting, with time given to review it. Discussion had occurred previously about concern over any public perception that UDSB is taking on a traffic enforcement role on Rt. 97. Committee members agreed that a specific proposal and cost needs to be identified, as well as gauging support from the town, before UDSB could take any action.

A copy of UDSB DOT Liaison Kris Gilbert's written report for Sullivan & Delaware County Operations for Region 9 was included. She had commented that the Cohecton bridge job is mostly complete, although there is some minor follow-up work scheduled for 2023, and that the slope stabilization job in the Towns of Fremont and Delaware is preparing to start. A notation in Gilbert's report regarding the Skinners Falls-Milanville Bridge Replacement stated, "Construction anticipated for 2024." Ramie said Gilbert subsequently told her she had outdated information. Dudko had said another bridge in the news is the Port Jervis-Matamoras crossing. PennDOT announced Summer 2024-2025 construction plans for the Port Jervis-Matamoras Bridge are available to review online via [SR 6 Section 451 Bridge Project \(pa.gov\)](#) through Feb. 3rd. Secondly, Ramie asked if the committee would like to offer comments on the proposed NYS DOT Engineering Instruction and draft Standard Sheet included in the packets that would allow the use of Edge Line Rumble Strips with sinusoidal profiles on eligible highways. Terry Hale from the DOT Design Quality Assurance Bureau requests comments by 2/3 to either Agree (unqualified support); Agree with Comment (support substantive issues but has concern over details); or Disagree (fundamental objections to the approach, goals, costs, or philosophy of the issuance as written). Ramie specified that this guidance is not specific to NYS Route 97 but that UDSB, Inc. had received this as a consulting group. Ramie returned an "agree" comment on behalf of UDSB, Inc.

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Dudko has invited Orange County Legislator Tom Faggione to attend the next 1/23 UDSB meeting to discuss that county's participation.

1/10 Delaware River Sojourn Meeting Report: The 2023 Delaware River Sojourn will be held June 16-23 with a theme of "Running Free!". It will focus on the Upper and Middle Delaware portions. The Upper Delaware group includes Engelhardt and representatives from the National Park Service, Delaware Highlands Conservancy, Friends of the Upper Delaware River, and U.S. Fish & Wildlife. Engelhardt will be sharing about that event on UDC social media. Event merch is available at: <https://delawareriversojourn.com/index.php/store/> The Steering Committee met 1/10 and discussed financials (down from 2022); they will be raising/changing registration fees this year as a result. The Upper Steering Committee will be working with Northeast Wilderness Experience and Konrad Catering again this year. They will be using a rechargeable generator this year which will be much quieter. Upper Day planners still need to work on programming. They're meeting via Zoom on 1/10. The next Steering Committee meeting will be 2/14.

Other: Ramie will forward the Delaware Riverkeeper Network's Upper Delaware River Paddle plans for Wallenpaupack High School students on 5/20-21 to Hamilton at his request, with its invitation to identify local representatives such as Al Henry and Jeff Dexter who considered last year prior to the postponement to participate in the river trip and/or campfire discussion on land use and river issues.

Engelhardt was asked to forward the Camp Fimfo drive-by visual simulation link provided by LaBella Associates with their January submission of supplemental project reports to the Highland Planning Board and review agencies.

Padua inquired whether UDC will hold another littersweep event. Ramie said staff will discuss whether the UDC staff recommends coordinating a 3rd Upper Delaware Litter Sweep in April 2023 in conjunction with planning the schedule for the Council's annual events that will be discussed at the 1/24 Operations Committee meeting. If so, Henry suggests focusing on trash prevention as a theme, such as the problem of garbage trucks traveling without being covered.

Adjournment: A Motion by Jeffer seconded by Padua to adjourn the meeting at 7:43 p.m. was carried.