

Upper Delaware Council
WATER USE/RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMM. MEETING MINUTES
October 20, 2015

Committee Members Present: Tony Ritter, Al Henry, Deb Conway, Pat Jeffer
Committee Members Absent: John McKay
NPS Partner: Don Hamilton
Staff: Laurie Ramie, Cindy Odell, Travis O'Dell
Guests: Heather Jacksy (7:35 p.m.)

The UDC's Water Use/Resource Management Committee held its monthly meeting on Tuesday, October 20, 2015 at the Council office in Narrowsburg, NY. Chairman Ritter called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

A motion by Henry seconded by Conway to approve the September 15 meeting minutes was carried. There was no public comment on the agenda.

Ritter noted that Heather Jacksy of the Sullivan County Planning Division would give her presentation on the Delaware River Bridge Signs Project upon her arrival.

Old Business:

American Eel Update: O'Dell stated that the press release in members' packets was included as a follow-up to a UDC letter from July 3, 2014 to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission supporting the eel fisheries' continuance in the Upper Delaware. The press release stated that "The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced today that the American Eel is stable and does not need protection under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Nonetheless, for the species' long-term stability, the agency recommends continuing efforts to maintain healthy habitats, monitor harvest levels, and improve river passage for migrating eels." A brief discussion took place about the number of eel weirs on the Delaware River permitted by the NYS DEC and how many of those are active.

"Water 101" September 24 Workshop Report: A written report prepared by Ramie on this program held at the Delaware Youth Center in Callicoon, NY was provided in members' packets. The sponsors of the event included Delaware Highlands Conservancy, Friends of the Upper Delaware River, Sullivan County Division of Planning and Environmental Management, William Penn Foundation, and the Upper Delaware River Tailwaters Coalition. Ramie said that a lot of interesting statistics regarding flood damage were offered. She said that Jamie Knecht of the Wayne Conservation District reported that Wayne County experienced 700 years of flooding in 22 months during 2004, 2005, and 2006. Ramie stated that the Upper Delaware River Tailwaters Coalition (UDRTC) and the Delaware County Department of Watershed Affairs is facilitating the establishment of a Project Advisory Committee (PAC) to help guide a New York State Department of State Waterfront Revitalization grant to do a Stream Corridor Management Plan for the area below the NYC reservoirs. The UDC has been asked to participate in the planning sessions. A motion to allow O'Dell to participate on the Project Advisory Committee was made by Henry, seconded by Ritter and carried. The first meeting is scheduled for November 12 at 6 p.m. at the Hancock Town Hall. Ritter questioned the attendance at the workshop. O'Dell said it was fairly well attended by approximately 40 people. Ritter suggested that such workshops be video recorded in the future.

Long Eddy River Access September 28 Visioning Meeting Update: O'Dell reported that three sessions took place at the Long Eddy Hotel on September 28th from 8am-10am, 12pm-2pm, and 6pm-8pm. Buck Moorhead, architect and founding partner of Building Consensus for Sustainability, facilitated the meeting. Representatives from the Delaware Highlands Conservancy, Sullivan County Planning Division, and New York State DEC were on hand to answer questions and guide the discussion. O'Dell shared details of the meeting and stated that a majority of residents do not want the access developed in a way that it is just a parking lot for fishermen. They would like more of a "park-like" atmosphere. Hamilton questioned if the sale of the property has been completed yet. O'Dell said no. He stated that a lot of discussion took place at the meeting. No decisions were made, but the residents were heard and that is a good thing, he added. Ritter

questioned if another meeting has been scheduled. O'Dell said not to his knowledge. Ramie said she read that Buck Moorhead is to have a written report that summarizes all three sessions.

Upper Delaware Scenic Byway September 28 Meeting Report: Ramie said the minutes from this meeting were provided in members' packets. O'Dell said it was notable that the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway was voted as the top choice in the Northeastern United States and ranked #2 in the entire country in USA TODAY's "Best Scenic Autumn Drive" Readers' Choice contest.

Common Waters Partnership October 8 Quarterly Meeting Conference Call Report: Ramie referred to the written report summarizing the call provided in members' packets. She said an update on the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) was offered. The program is on hold in PA while awaiting action by NRCS at the state level. The NY partners have an October 22 meeting set up to discuss agricultural easements and are coordinating outreach efforts to describe the overall RCPP program to the eligible public. This special funding is geared toward implementation and management practices of Forest Stewardship Plans rather than the development of those plans for which regular state funding remains available.

An update on the Pocono-Kittatinny Cluster was offered. The William Penn Foundation is evaluating the success of the Phase 1 program to make any adjustments before rolling out Phase 2 of project solicitations. The working groups under Phase 1 are continuing their focus on Land Use Technical Assistance, Community Outreach, and Protection of Important Lands through Easements, among other topics.

National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) Delaware River Field Representative John Beljean described the Delaware River Geotourism Project for which NPCA has secured two years of funding through the William Penn Foundation to produce a National Geographic branded website for the Upper and Middle Delaware River region. Ramie said the name of the project is still pending.

Common Waters long-term planning was discussed. Coordinator Stephanie Dalke asked for suggestions of speaker topics for future meetings. Ideas included deer management impacts on forests, federal funding advocacy for the Delaware River, stream corridor management plans, and gearing a meeting toward better engagement of municipal officials.

"Round-phone" sharing took place. Ramie's written report contained some announcement highlights.

Sullivan County Trails Committee October 13 Meeting Update: Ramie reported that Sullivan Trailkeeper, a one-source outlet for hiking trails and public lands in Sullivan County, received a \$10,000 grant from the O'Connor Foundation with some matching funds from the Northface Company. The funding will be used to make the website more mobile-responsive and improve the on-line database.

A discussion about the Delaware River Bridge signage took place.

Ramie stated that speakers are scheduled for the next couple of Sullivan County Trails Committee meetings. She shared details of the speakers and the topics they would cover.

Upper Delaware River Roundtable October 15 Meeting Update: Ramie reported that rural health was the main topic of this meeting. She reported that Sullivan County ranks 61st out of 62 counties in New York for all health outcomes. Wayne County ranks 31st out of 67 counties in Pennsylvania for all health outcomes. The Roundtable looks to bring the two sides of the river together and talk about what can be done about such issues. Anya Shaunessy, Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River Centennial Volunteer Ambassador intern, attended the Roundtable meeting. She is in the process of applying for a grant through the National Park Foundation called the 2016 Active Trails Grants Program. Shaunessy is looking for partners and to host an activity every season in 2016. The deadline for this application is October 23rd.

Water Safety Committee October 16 Meeting Update: Odell reported that this meeting was attended by NPS Superintendent Kris Heister, NPS staff, Marc Magnus-Sharpe of the National Canoe Safety Patrol, and herself. Kevin Reish of NPS covered a long list of accomplishments for 2015. He asked that people help with getting the "Wear It" lawn signs pulled in for the winter by picking them up if they see any on public property. Tentative plans for the 2016 season were discussed. Heister stated that the committee

needs to establish a purpose and goals. She provided a draft copy of the purpose and goals that she came up with and members reviewed them. It was decided that members would review the document individually and share any additional ideas or concerns in order to finalize the document.

The next tentative meeting date for the committee is scheduled for February 16, 2016.

“Water, Water Everywhere” October 19 & 20 Conference Update: O’Dell noted that the agenda for the two-day conference held at the West Branch Angler & Resort in Hancock, NY was provided in members’ packets. Ramie anticipates having a written report on the conference for the November full Council meeting. O’Dell stated that he presented earlier in the day on “The Role of the Upper Delaware Council”. Ramie said he did a fantastic job and many good questions were asked of him. O’Dell noted that his major “take home” of the conference was that people are frustrated with the releases from New York City Reservoirs. He reported that the Delaware River Basin Commission’s Regulated Flow Advisory Committee (RFAC) has a meeting scheduled for Thursday, December 3, 2015 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Wallenpaupack Environmental Learning Center in Hawley, Pa. It is hoped that this meeting will be attended by all the Decree Party Principals. Ramie shared a list of “asks” that Friends of the Upper Delaware River would like to pose at the upcoming meeting. Ritter noted that these questions come up time and time again. Ramie said they have succeeded in getting on the agenda for this RFAC meeting. Hamilton stated that on September 28, the release rate from Cannonsville went from 1,300 cfs to 300 cfs within 24 hours in anticipation of the rain that was forecasted. He added that is a drastic change in release flow that strains fish and is not good for other aquatic life. Ramie reiterated that a written report summarizing the conference will be done for the November 5th full Council meeting.

Presentation by Sullivan County Planner Heather Jacksy: Bridge Sign Project: Jacksy provided “Water Trail Signage for Installation in the National Park Service Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River” packets to each member. The packets contained professional graphics of the signs proposed for the bridges at Barryville, Callicoon, Narrowsburg, and Skinners Falls and for the interpretive sign proposed for Pond Eddy, NY prepared by W Design. Jacksy noted that the bridge signs will be installed so that people on the river will know what bridge they are going under and which river mile they are at. It is also the intention to have uniform signs along the river and in the river valley. Jacksy said the DOT’s are being consulted to be sure that the signs are not put up on a bridge that is in need of repair which would result in the new sign being removed. They are also trying to determine ownership of the existing signs that are currently on some of the bridges. Jacksy said they are looking for input on where to install the sign on the Narrowsburg Bridge so not to degrade the visual aspect of the bridge. Jacksy spoke of the interpretive sign to be installed at the proposed river rest stop at Pond Eddy, NY. She said the sign will include information about the old bridge and the canal. They are open for input. Hamilton asked where the rest stop is proposed there. She said it is land directly under the existing bridge on the New York side. Henry shared his past experiences with signage along the river. He told Jacksy most free standing signs do not stand one good ice out or high water. Jacksy said they will take that into consideration when deciding where to put the sign. Conway told Jacksy she could share content for the interpretive sign with her. A lengthy discussion took place about the formal name of the Narrowsburg Bridge and the access on the Pennsylvania side. Ramie suggested deferring to DOT to find out what the official name of the bridge is. Henry suggested consulting with Damascus Township before any decision is made. Referring to the bridge sign mockup, Henry suggested that the river mile number may not be useful and noted that it should at least be identified as that to avoid any confusion. Jacksy shared details about the funding for the project. She hopes to have edits done to the sign mockups and out this week. The first round of comments will be due by early December, she added. Ritter asked where the funding is coming from. She said that half the funding is coming from the Sullivan County Division of Planning in in-kind services and the other half is from the New York State Department of State.

Other: Ritter noted that an agency meeting regarding the Barryville Access will take place at the UDC office on October 21, at 1:00 p.m. O’Dell said he has not received confirmation regarding attendance from New York State DEC or the National Park Service. Ramie said that Kris Heister verbally stated earlier in the day that she will be attending that meeting. A brief discussion about the access and how the workshop may be conducted took place.

New Business

Discussion of letter to NY-PA Joint Interstate Bridge Commission: Requesting Consideration of River Height Alert Signage: Ramie noted that this was an idea of Andy Boyar's and it was decided to refer it to this committee to flesh it out more. She wondered in Boyar's absence, if discussion should be deferred. Henry noted he thinks Boyar's idea was to have some sort of electronic gage that may flash different colors as the water is coming up to alert motorists and residents. Henry is not sure how to accomplish this due to the complexity of the river conditions. Members spoke of the gages attached to bridges up and down the river that are visible to those on or near the river. Ritter suggested that a visual flag at accesses may be effective in alerting potential users of the river height and any danger associated with the level. Henry questioned who would put up the flags. Ritter noted that so much information regarding precipitation and river levels is available electronically. Henry stated that recessing the gages into the bridge piers is one way to ensure they last longer, but it is not a guarantee. O'Dell said that the consultants for the Pond Eddy Bridge were receptive to the UDC's recommendation of recessing a river level gage on the new bridge to be constructed. Hamilton noted that the NPS has some of those metal gages already produced. He added that they may want to recess the gage more than the one on the Barryville Bridge. Ramie suggested that a letter could be written to the Bridge Commission stating that we are interested in as much early warning for our citizens and ask them if they have any ideas. Henry said he agrees with Ritter that much information is available electronically and that an electronic gage is not necessary.

Delaware River Basin Project Workshop – November 10 at UDC: Ramie referred to the agenda and accompanying information provided in members' packets. She said that Shippensburg University received a \$1 million grant to create a system for mapping and tracking land use in the Delaware River Basin. A Watershed Identity and Scenario Development Workshop will be held at the UDC office on November 10th at 10:30 a.m. To register, visit www.drbproject.org. Hamilton questioned if anyone besides the William Penn Foundation is funding the project. O'Dell believes the funding is just from the William Penn Foundation. A brief discussion about the agenda took place.

Trout Unlimited's River Condition Report: Ritter referred to the report from David Plummer of Trout Unlimited provided in members' packets. He noted the report is a very comprehensive one. Ramie asked if members wanted the report on a regular basis. After a brief discussion it was decided that staff would start regularly forwarding the River Conditions Report compiled by Dave Plummer of Trout Unlimited to WU/RM Committee members when it is updated for informational purposes.

PA Draft State Forest Management Plan Comment Discussion: Ramie referred to the September 24 PA DCNR press release included in members' packets. The 2015 State Forest Management Plan (SFRMP) is the first management plan update in eight years. Written comments will be accepted until November 30. Ramie asked members if they wanted to comment. O'Dell stated the document is 160 pages long and he has not had the time to get through it, although he did have an opportunity to speak with Michael Roche, assistant district forester of Delaware State Forest, who told him that not much has changed. After a brief discussion, it was decided that O'Dell would review the plan and make any recommendations for UDC comments prior to the 11/30 comment deadline.

Fishing Guide Survey Responses: A letter dated September 16 from Andy Boyar was emailed out to licensed fishing guides on September 17 by UDC staff at Boyar's request asking the guides to share their thoughts with him on any aspect of the fishing season. Ramie said she did not think he has received any responses to date. Ritter suggested that the National Park Service could conduct a similar survey in addition to the Commercial Use Authorization (CUA) requirements. Hamilton stated that Superintendent Heister was not interested in sending guides such a survey and to do so would be a complicated process to obtain permission. Ritter spoke of the information required of the guides as part of their CUA. Conway asked if there is a report that is compiled of the information provided by the guides. Hamilton said the Fish and Boat Commission does compile a report, but it is not done annually. He added there was a multi-year compilation and report released a couple of years ago. He said he could provide the web-link for that report to anyone upon request. Ritter suggested that Boyar may get more responses if he were to send his request out under the organization Trout Unlimited with which he is affiliated.

Flow and Storage Data Report: Ritter noted that total storage as of October 19th is at 75.3% with Cannonsville at 50.6%. He commented that the current water temperature in Deposit is about 10 degrees warmer than the Narrowsburg/Barryville section of the river. A brief discussion about the precipitation in September took place.

Other: None

Public Comment: None

Adjournment: A motion by Conway seconded by Jeffer to adjourn the meeting at 8:54 p.m. was carried.

Minutes prepared by Cindy Odell, 10/27/15