

WATER USE/RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMM. MEETING MINUTES
December 14, 2021

Committee Members Present: Ginny Dudko, Andy Boyar (Zoom), Al Henry, Fred Peckham (Zoom), Pat Jeffer, Evan Padua

Committee Members Absent:

Staff: Laurie Ramie, Kerry Engelhardt, Ashley Hall-Bagdonas

NPS Partner: Cody Hendrix

Guests: Dave Dean- Town of Deerpark Representative (Zoom), Jim Greier- Town of Fremont Representative (Zoom)

The UDC's Water Use/Resource Management Committee held its monthly meeting on Tuesday, December 14th, 2021 at the UDC office in Narrowsburg, NY. Chairperson Dudko called the meeting to order at 7:48 p.m.

Approval of November 16th, 2021 Meeting Minutes: A motion by Boyar, seconded by Padua approving the November 16th, 2021 meeting minutes carried.

Old Business

11/22 Upper Delaware Scenic Byway Meeting Minutes: Ramie provided a copy of the 11/22 Upper Delaware Scenic Byway meeting minutes for members.

12/7 Catskill Mountainkeeper/CRISP Webinar: Invasive Jumping Worms: Engelhardt attended an interesting webinar on invasive jumping worms on 12/7 held by Catskill Mountainkeeper and Catskill Regional Invasive Species Partnership (CRISP). She took detailed notes and will find out if the presentation is available online. Nearly 350 people viewed the webinar. Engelhardt said invasive jumping worms are probably here and there's not much we can do to get rid of them but there is some prevention. Like any other invasive species, they are not good for the local biomes. Henry asked for Engelhardt to send out the jumping worm information to all members. Engelhardt said she would reach out to Catskill Mountainkeeper and CRISP to see if they would like to do a presentation for UDC.

12/7 Pike/Wayne Conservation Partnership Meeting Report: Engelhardt attended the 12/7 Pike/Wayne Conservation Partnership meeting. That was a chance for all to tell each other what events are going on so everyone could support each other, especially around Earth Day.

12/13 Upper Delaware BioBlitz Inventory Results: The Upper Delaware BioBlitz released their results and had a video presentation last night. If you would like to watch that, the hour-long presentation is available on their website and Facebook page. The bugs won this year. Engelhardt said that usually the BioBlitz happens in one 24-hour period but because of COVID each team chose their own 24-hour period throughout the year. The difference that made is that teams could visit when it was most advantageous for them; for example, the bird team came in May because the birds are in their native plumage, which is easiest to spot, they are singing because it's mating season, and the trees are completely leafed out and that helps with observations. The fungi team came in September because that's when they got two-four times as many identifications as they usually do because it's usually held in the summer. 727 total species were found: 80 birds; 158 vascular plants; 63 mosses, algae, worts and lichens; 173 fungi; 18 herps (reptiles and amphibians); 230 invertebrates (aquatic and terrestrial insects, worms and snails); and 5 mammals.

12/14 Delaware River Sojourn Planning Update: Engelhardt attended the 12/14 planning update for the Delaware River Sojourn. They spent time figuring out what campsites to use, where to put in, and where to get breakfast. Engelhardt was an observer and looks forward to continuing to attend these meetings.

Ten Mile River Access Status: Hendrix said there's nothing new to report on the matter.

UDC Water Use/Resource Mgmt. Comm. Meeting Minutes 12-14-2021

Other: Engelhardt also attended an Upper Delaware Recreation Plan meeting on 12/2. They presented information from a survey for local users of the Delaware River. If anyone is interested in that information, it's an 11-page PDF and Engelhardt can forward that. Tom Shepstone also did a planning analysis using data within an hour's drive, two hours' drive, etc. of the tailwaters region, noting what sort of activities people generally partake in. The draft plan is to be produced 12/15. The final plan is due on 1/31.

Don Hamilton gave Hendrix some talking points to go over. Hendrix said NPS, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Services, USGS, and NYDEC had a conference call on 12/7 with DRBC and NYCDEP regarding their modeling of flows required to meet proposed settlement agreement license conditions for the Mongaup River Hydro FERC relicensing. These proposed licensing conditions and settlement agreement would provide flows that better support aquatic life needs on a river that sustains significant economic, ecologic important species, and recreational needs of the Upper Delaware River. It is likely that additional appendices will need to be added to the current settlement agreement to clarify circumstances under which flows in the proposed licensing condition may not apply but at this time it is not anticipated that the settlement agreement will otherwise need to be majorly revised.

New Business

Skinnners Falls-Milanville Bridge Study Purpose & Need Statement – Comment by 1/8: A four-page Purpose and Need Statement was provided in the meeting packet. Comments are due by 1/8. Ramie said we will have an opportunity at the 1/6 full Council meeting to send a comment letter. When Ramie was reviewing the Purpose and Need Statement, she had some questions and objections to it. She said it presumes to assume a modern bridge is needed. On the first page it states “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.” Ramie said to her, that seems presumptuous because emergency response vehicles don't use the bridge now and are too big for the weight limits that are posted. Ramie said for that to be the very first line under purpose is already saying you can't have the bridge in its current condition. She feels the document should be more objective because it will play into the ultimate decision on what will happen to the bridge. One page three it mentions that overweight vehicles have traditionally used this bridge and that is part of the problem. Ramie said the way they spin it is “Regular usage of the bridge by overweight vehicles demonstrates a need to provide a crossing that is suitable for vehicles over ten tons.” Ramie said why not enforce overweight vehicles against using the bridge? They also say “The Skinnners Falls Bridge does not provide adequate accommodations for pedestrians, bicyclists, and recreational users in the area.” It mentions that the NPS is there and what the statistics are but then says recreational vehicles and trailers should be allowed to cross the bridge. It says for bike and pedestrian accommodation there should be a sidewalk. Ramie said that too seemed to be favoring a modern bridge. One of Ramie's biggest objections is there is really no mention of the cultural and historical significance of the bridge.

UDC was sent some comments by Nathan Holth, who runs the website historicbridges.org. Ramie found his comments to be very astute. Holth made the same comment about unlawful drivers and writing off in-kind restoration. Also, suggesting that a bridge should be two-lanes with bike lanes and sidewalks would not be possible to keep the historical appearance and structure of the bridge. He said while it has been a one-lane bridge, there has only been one vehicle on it at a time, so pedestrians have plenty of room. Holth makes the point that the value of the bridge as a culture resource is not considered. The historic bridge is worth preserving and an important aspect of local tourism. He noticed that the area appears to be frequently visited by people that are there to look at the bridge. It's used as a historic resource. He pointed out it being in a setting of the National Park Unit and having a large parking lot available for people who want to visit the bridge. Holth indicates the bridge qualifies as a very low volume roadway (under 400 ADT); saying it should be considered in the Purpose and Need, and reduce the need for a massive replacement bridge. Holth said he truly understands that not all historic bridges can be saved but it is becoming difficult to save even one, due to past demolitions. It's not like there are many other options for preservation. As a subdivided Pratt (Baltimore) truss, the Skinnners Falls Bridge shares the same general design as the Pond Eddy Bridge. Nearly all have been demolished by PennDOT, and each surviving

UDC Water Use/Resource Mgmt. Comm. Meeting Minutes 12-14-2021

Pennsylvania truss is thus very rare today. Even more so, pin connected Baltimore truss bridges are one of the rarest truss configurations among highway bridges. The Skinners Falls Bridge is richly decorated with portal bracing ornamentation, something that very few bridges today retain. Further the beauty of the Delaware River needs to be considered. Holth said in conclusion, he is deeply concerned that the Purpose and Need seems excessive for the actual uses of the particular bridge, which has now been closed for many years (calling into question how critical this crossing really is). If this was such a critical crossing for emergency vehicles it seems to him the bridge should have been immediately rehabilitated without adverse effect, as that would be the quickest way to restore service to the majority of vehicles. He is also concerned that the use of the bridge as a local tourism destination is not considered in the Purpose and Need document.

Dexter noted that the three roads to that bridge are in no condition to handle big trucks so it doesn't make sense to replace the bridge with anything bigger. Henry noted on page three of the Purpose and Need document it states Bill Case Polaris Sales & Service is located in Beach Lake, PA but he's located in Pike County and that doesn't apply. On page three at the bottom, it mentions the Lake Huntington Volunteer Fire Department but no one from Beach Lake Fire Department was ever interviewed. He also noted if these emergency responders are requesting a bridge over the Delaware River that would exceed 10 tons. Ramie will draft a letter to PennDOT in response to the Skinners Falls-Milanville Bridge PEL Study's Purpose and Need document for advance review and action by the UDC on 1/6 ahead of the 1/8 public comment deadline.

12/10 Federal Railroad Administration Safety Complaint Inspection Outcome: Ramie shared the written report from the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) in the meeting packets that was provided by Michael Pirato, the supervisor of the inspector who visited the site. In the advance of the document, on 12/10 Ramie received a call from the FRA Track Inspector. The Track Inspector said he's impressed with Central New York Railroad in terms of how they pay special attention to their culverts. Not only do they have a regular annual schedule, he had a copy of their most recent inspection report which was dated 11/25, and they looked at the entire railroad line and every culvert on it and it passed. They also do a weekly inspection of the tracks to make sure there are no obstructions or encroachments. He personally looked from post marker 143, which is Kellam's Bridge, to Narrowsburg (post marker 122) and he found that everything was in the clear with no exceptions. They happened to be there on 10/26, when we had those torrential rains and flash flooding, and they didn't note any exceptions regarding the culverts. Railroad contractor, RailWorks is contracted to remove and discard old crossties. The railroad expects them to be removed by year's end.

Delaware River Flow & Storage Report: A copy of the 12/13 DRBC Hydrological report was provided in members' packets. Total combined storage was at 88%.

Other: Ramie provided a 12/9 news article by *Pike County Dispatch* regarding the latest news on the Delaware Water Gap Natural Recreation Area (DEWA) and an upgrade to its classification as a national park. Henry said we should keep following this issue.

Boyar requested a link for the BioBlitz information.

Public Comment: None.

Adjournment: A Motion by Boyar seconded by Henry, to adjourn the meeting at 8:19 p.m. was carried.