

Upper Delaware Council
WATER USE/RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMM. MEETING MINUTES
February 21, 2017

Committee Members Present: Pat Jeffer, Al Henry, Fred Peckham, Doug Case, Debra Conway
Committee Members Absent: Tony Ritter, Andy Boyar, Jim Greier
NPS Partner: Don Hamilton, Larry Neal
Staff: Laurie Ramie, Cindy Odell, Pete Golod
Guests: Meg McGuire, Jackie DeSau

The UDC's Water Use/Resource Management Committee held its monthly meeting on Tuesday, February 21, 2017 at the Council office in Narrowsburg, NY. Chairperson Peckham called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

A motion by Henry seconded by Case to approve the February 2 meeting minutes was carried. There was no public comment on the agenda.

Old Business:

Upper Delaware Scenic Byway January 30 Meeting Minutes: Ramie referred members to their printed copy of the January 30 meeting minutes provided in their packets and covered some of the highlights of the meeting. She reported that the FY 2017 draft budget was reviewed and ultimately adopted and provided details of the discussion.

Ramie provided updates on meetings regarding projects that are to take place along State Route 97. One meeting was regarding the replacement of a bridge over the Shingle Kill in the Town of Deerpark and the second meeting provided details of a shoulder replacement project to take place in the Town of Highland.

Ramie noted that subcommittees have been established to deal with some priority projects for 2017 to give the committee some direction. The idea is that the subcommittees will work outside the regular monthly meeting to come up with strategies with how to tackle the projects and identify funding sources for them. The two subcommittees are Promotion & Marketing and Facilities.

Ramie reported that discussion continues regarding a proposal for a visitor center presence at the Narrowsburg Union. A site visit by the Town of Tusten Byway representative is planned to come up with more particulars to provide for the committee's consideration.

Ramie stated there had been a proposal to put interstate attraction signs for the Byway along I-84 and I-86 to let people traveling those routes know there is a scenic byway nearby. Ramie said she has found out since this meeting by the person investigating this option that the Byway is not considered an attraction because it does not have a physical location address.

Ramie said the new mobile responsive website development continues with hopes that the site will be launched this spring. The main feature of the new website will be an interactive map, she added.

An educational workshop about protecting scenic byway values is being considered, Ramie noted.

Ramie provided details about a potential pollinator plant seed packets fundraiser for the Byway. The Byway has also decided to make a pitch to Cornell Cooperative Extension and Sullivan Renaissance who sponsor an Annual Gardens Tour, to include the Flyway Along the Byway concept of pollinator gardens along Route 97.

The next meeting of the Byway is scheduled for Monday, February 27th at 7:00 p.m.

Catskill Regional Invasive Species Partnership (CRISP) February 8 Meeting Update: Golod said he realizes that the River Management Plan does not directly deal with and or mention invasive species however, he feels as members of the WU/RM committee, this information is valuable and needs to be shared. He said this February 8 meeting that he attended was very informative. The issue of Mile-A-Minute along the Upper Delaware was discussed. He said that some of the CRISP members had come out to pull this invasive plant last summer.

Golod reported that one goal of New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Bureau of Invasive Species and Ecosystem Health is to stop the spread of invasives in New York

State waters. When asked by NPS Biologist Jessica Newbern if any of the NYSDEC or New York City Department of Environmental Protection members worked below the reservoirs, they said no. The question of whether there is an invasive species biologist or point of contact regarding invasive species below the reservoir was posed. A member from NYSDEC noted that the contact would be Mr. John Thompson, the CRISP Coordinator. Golod said he feels that there is too little emphasis or concern with anything in the watershed that is occurring below the reservoirs and below the main stem.

A presentation by the Ecological Research Institute “Taking Ecosystem Services into Account in Prioritizing Hemlock Stand Conservation” was offered. The presentation provided information on eastern hemlock ecosystem services and how they are likely to be affected by the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA). Eastern hemlock is a foundation species, shaping ecosystems not only within the forest, but also the streams that flow through it. HWA can spread 10-20 km/year. HWA infected trees have a 5 to 10-year life expectancy, Golod noted. He stated that short-term, the decline and death of hemlock due to HWA can directly affect ecosystem services; and long-term, provision of services will largely be determined by which tree species replace the missing hemlocks. Golod said the “take home” he got from the presentation was that hemlock stands provide ecosystem services that include, among other things, suitable habitat for particular fish and wildlife; nutrient retention; stream flow maintenance, and aesthetic, recreational, cultural and even property value benefits.

Scenic Wild Delaware River Geotourism Stewardship Council February 21 Call Update: Ramie said she participated in this call earlier in the day. She noted that not too much new had come out of the call from what she had reported at the February 2 Water Use/Resource Management Committee meeting. Ramie noted that an Upper Delaware Focus Group meeting took place on February 1 at the UDC office to obtain feedback on the Scenic Wild Delaware River initiative in terms of what’s working and what needs attention. There was discussion about the conclusions of that meeting with this larger group. Two messages that have come out of those meetings are that there is a feeling that the boundary for what the Geotourism program covers has grown too large and does not accurately represent what we consider the Upper Delaware to encompass authentically and that people still don’t know that the MapGuide exists. Strategies to introduce people to the MapGuide were discussed. Conway questioned if there has been any progress in replacing National Parks Conservation Association Delaware River Field Representative John Beljean who tendered his resignation at the beginning of February. Ramie said that was not mentioned, but it will help to have a staff person that is assigned to the project. Ramie said that an in-person meeting of the Stewardship Council is scheduled for April 24th at the Settler’s Inn in Hawley. The next monthly conference call is scheduled for March 20th, she added. One of the issues reviewed during today’s call was coming up with an action plan to expand the calendar section and the trip planning itineraries on the website.

Other: Peckham said in light of the recent flooding issues and troubles with the Oroville Dam out in Oroville, California, he would like to see another letter sent to New York City inquiring about the status of their review of our Early Warning System for Reservoir-Related Emergencies proposal. A motion to draft a letter to NYC DEP inquiring about the status of their exploration of options to improve the public early warning system for emergencies involving the Delaware Basin reservoirs for action by the full Council on March 2 was made by Conway. The motion was seconded by Henry and carried unanimously.

New Business

Pond Eddy Bridge and NPS River Height Signage Installations Policy Discussion: Further discussion of this issue was referred from the February 2 WU/RM meeting. Ramie reported that March 6th is the date that the Pond Eddy Bridge contractors have set to require an answer from the Park Service about whether to proceed with the installation of the river height sign or not. She added that, as was reported at the February 2 meeting, the Park Service is proposing to discontinue such signs in general. Ramie noted that in an April 2, 2015 letter from the Upper Delaware Council to George Roberts, District Executive for Pennsylvania Department of Transportation District 4-0 commenting on the Section 7 Authorization and Aid to Navigation Boater Safety Plan for the Pond Eddy Bridge Replacement Project, the Council requested, “To improve river safety, the UDC would like to see a river gauge installed on the new bridge abutment, viewable from NY St. Rt. 97, similar to the design and correlated height with the Barryville-Shohola Bridge. Installing a river height reference gauge on the bridge abutment helps inform law enforcement, emergency personnel and the average river user of the current river conditions.” A motion supporting a

recommendation for the contractor move forward with installing the river height sign on the Pond Eddy Bridge was made by Henry and seconded by Case. Neal noted that there are alternate methods to identify river height besides the signs on bridge abutments. He noted that the river deteriorates the condition of the signs over time. Henry shared some history of river height signage during his tenure with the Park Service. He added that educating the public about the presence of the river height signage is key to their effectiveness. Henry amended his motion to have the letter include a recommendation that consideration be made to include the river height signage on any future bridge projects. Members discussed where the best place to place the signage on the bridge piers would be. Neal reiterated the reasons the NPS management team is opposed to putting the sign on the new Pond Eddy bridge pier including there is not an access at that bridge, only a fraction of the people going down the river will see it as they are only to be installed on one side of the pier and not both, and the information the river users would receive from the signage would be late as they would already be on the river. The amended motion was seconded by Case. A vote was taken and the amended motion passes. Ramie stated that a draft letter with the committee's recommendations will be ready for consideration by the full Council at the March 2nd meeting.

Delaware River Flow and Storage Report: A copy of the February 21st NYC Current Reservoir Levels was provided in members' packets. Total combined storage was at 80.2%. Normal for the same date is 87.8%. Peckham reported that Cannonsville is at 67.1%. Precipitation was below average in December and February, he added.

Other: Ramie referred to the additional handouts in members' packets. The first was the agenda for the Regulated Flow Advisory Committee February 16 meeting along with the draft notes from the April 5, 2016 meeting held at the Lake Wallenpaupack Environmental Learning Center in Hawley. Ramie noted that the chairmanship for this committee has reverted to New York from Pennsylvania and she will share information from the February 16 meeting when it is available.

The second handout was a fact sheet about The Delaware River Basin Program produced by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Ramie noted that the program needs to be implemented within 180 days of enactment of the legislation. The Fish and Wildlife Service has set a meeting on March 29th in Philadelphia at the John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge. Advance material is being distributed in order to ensure a productive meeting on that day.

The third handout is a copy of an Associated Press article "Groups fear fracking ban may end" printed in *The Times Herald-Record* in the February 21st edition. The article speaks of concern that regulators are taking steps to lift a seven-year moratorium on natural gas development near the Delaware River. Peckham noted that this information also appeared on the front page of a Binghamton, NY paper.

Henry asked Hamilton and Neal when was the last time they had any contact with the Fish and Wildlife Service. Hamilton said the NPS belongs to the Delaware River Basin Fish and Wildlife Management Cooperative. Ramie noted that the legislation does not list the National Park Service as a consulting agency, but the Fish and Wildlife Service does recognize that in the Upper, Middle, and Lower Delaware, the Park Service has a large presence and they will "involve them to the extent of their interest." Hamilton said there will be a Park Service representative at the March 29th meeting. They have asked for input on issues of the Upper Delaware, he added.

Peckham said he has heard rumor that there is movement to make the upper main stem of the Delaware River from Hancock to Lordville "catch and release" only. Hamilton said there are some fishing groups advocating for that, but the states would have to agree to that. He noted that there are some sections of the West Branch that are "no-kill". Peckham questioned why the Park Service wouldn't have a more active role in a decision like this. Hamilton said that the River Management Plan says the states will take the lead in fishing regulations, however the Park Service would be part of the conversation. Peckham asked Hamilton to keep the committee informed regarding this topic. Henry described the lengthy process that would happen if this were to proceed. Hamilton added there would be a lot of people that would have to agree to it for it to happen as well as a public input process.

Conway stated that at the February 1 Upper Delaware Focus Group meeting held at the UDC office, one of the members brought in the 2017 copy of the Sullivan County Travel Guide. Conway showed committee members the Guide. Members noted that the person floating in the tube on the front cover was not wearing a personal flotation device (PFD). After a lengthy discussion a motion to draft a letter to the Sullivan County Visitors Association administration and officers, and members of the Sullivan County Legislature, on the missed opportunity to educate on the life-saving message of wearing personal flotation

devices while boating, swimming, fishing, and floating for action at the March 2nd full Council meeting was made by Conway, seconded by Henry. Henry recommended sending a picture of the “Wear It!” lawn signs that have distributed by the NPS the past several years. Conway would like to have drowning statistics included in the letter. A vote was taken and the motion passed. Conway suggested that hard copies of the letter be sent in addition to the e-mailed version.

Golod reported that today on the online news source, *The Hill*, it said through executive orders, President Trump will reportedly instruct the EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers to redo a 2015 rule that gives the federal government more regulatory power over waterways around the country. He will also lift an Interior Department moratorium on federal land coal leasing. The power plant rule, called the Clean Power Plan, and the water rule are two of the most expansive and controversial environmental rules issued by the Obama administration. The measure envisions a 32 percent reduction in electricity sector carbon emissions by 2030. The water rule, formally titled the Clean Water Rule, but commonly known as Waters of the United States, gives the federal government regulatory jurisdiction over small waterways around the county. President Trump has promised to undo both rules, as well as end the coal leasing moratorium the Interior Department issued in early 2016. So far, he has signed a congressional resolution undoing a different coal mining regulation, and the Senate could soon send him a resolution blocking methane restrictions on federal natural gas wells.

Public Comment: None

Adjournment: A motion by Henry, seconded by Conway to adjourn the meeting at 7:52 p.m. was carried.

Minutes prepared by Cindy Odell, 2/23/17