

**WATER USE/RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMM. MEETING MINUTES**  
**April 21, 2020**

Committee Members Present: Ginny Dudko, Fred Peckham, Al Henry, Evan Padua  
Committee Members Absent: Andy Boyar, Pat Jeffer  
Staff : Laurie Ramie, Ashley Hall-Bagdonas  
NPS Partner: None  
Guests: Dan Paparella- Tusten Alternate, Mike Barth- Westfall Township

The UDC's Water Use/Resource Management Committee held its monthly meeting on Tuesday, April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2020 via teleconference. Vice-Chairperson Dudko called the meeting to order at 6:55 p.m.

A motion by Henry, seconded by Peckham carried approving the email votes from the cancelled March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020 meeting. There was no public comment on the agenda.

**Old Business**

**3/23 Upper Delaware Scenic Byway Meeting Report:** Ramie provided a packet via email of the 3/23 teleconference meeting. One of the first actions was to affirm that a tele-conference would count as a regular meeting for the purposes of official business to be conducted. There were two new members appointed to the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway (UDSB) Committee: Representatives Josh Felderstein (Tusten) and Bianca Velez (Lumberland). Felderstein owns Catskill Energy Homes and is a relatively new resident of Narrowsburg. Velez has a Pilates business south of Barryville and is filling a long-term vacancy as a representative. There is still one vacancy on the board (Village of Hancock) due to Nancy Furdock's resignation.

UDSB Treasurer Larry Richardson, submitted a voucher on 3/21 to request the \$25,000 in funding that the Sullivan County Legislature had approved. Unfortunately, he received a message back that all county funds had been frozen unless the expenditure is related to COVID-19. Ramie said it appears from subsequent articles she's read that discretionary funding may have been eliminated. UDSB will be checking into that further.

The Nominating Committee provided its report. The April meeting is when the Election of Officers takes place. The nominees that will be voted on 4/27 are John Pizzolato (Highland) for chairperson; Rosie DeCristofaro (Delaware) for vice-chairperson; and Larry Richardson (Cochecton) for secretary/treasurer.

The Delaware Company requested a Letter of Support from the UDSB for an application that they made for a Sullivan County Plans and Progress Grant that was needed by a 3/6 deadline. It was reported at this meeting that the County Grants Committee did approve that application, which requested some funding to connect the Barbara Yeaman Eagle Observation Blind in the Town of Highland to the NPS's Towpath Trail at the Roebling Bridge. A day after that grant was approved, the County Manager made the directive that all County funds are frozen until further notice for the same reason as previously mentioned. Ramie said the UDSB has still been giving out grants through its three programs. The Barryville United Methodist Church applied through the Signage Grant program to manufacture two seasonal signs that will promote the availability of the church's thrift store, which is targeted to visitors of the Barryville Farmer's Market. Ramie said if the Farmer's Market starts up on time that would be 5/22 and the Thrift Store wants people to know they share the same parking lot. The \$220 matching grant was approved.

UDSB approved a letter to the National Geographic Books Division to ask that in their next issue of their "Guide to Scenic Highways & Byways: The 300 Best Drives in the U.S.", they consider including the UDSB on that list.

The DOT Report provided an update about guide rail work along with some slope stabilization projects that are taking place on Route 97 in the Towns of Delaware and Cochecton. The first construction for that is anticipated in July 2020.

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UDSB approved a \$1,000 payment for the Callicoon Train Depot project to go toward attorney fees for the lease revisions that are going on in negotiating with Central New York Railroad. Reports were given about the 3/4 DOT meeting to discuss options for the Cohecton-Damascus Bridge rehabilitation as well as a report on the 3/8 visit by NYS Senator Metzger to the Skinners Falls-Milanville Bridge, who heard from the UDSB representatives about their desire to keep that crossing. Ramie said it was brought up that groups are targeting the Hawk's Nest area for incidents of recklessness and graffiti. People have found Facebook groups declaring "They can't take the Hawk's Nest away from us" during this time of Stay at Home Orders. They have been encouraging gatherings, drag races, and are committing acts of vandalism, including posting photos of this on social media. People are concerned because it borders on gang-like behavior. Ginny Dudko, Town of Deerpark Representative, has looked into this matter. The Town Board is aware as well as the Deerpark Police Chief. They have allocated extra money for patrols on weekends, especially during the summer months. They also made a deal with the Hawk's Nest Hunting Club that owns the wide pull-off area on the western end of the Hawk's Nest where a lot of the congregating has been taking place. Their permission is for the police to ticket anyone for trespass who is loitering in that area. Ramie said it seems to be schools that are challenging each other. This is being addressed further and will be reported on at the next meeting. Some of the options they were talking about were to install a camera system to record illegal activity and serve as a deterrent, talk about reducing the speed limit, limiting the amount of time that you're allowed to park at the overlooks, and putting up some additional signage to combat this. Deerpark Supervisor Gary Spears said that they were installing more Jersey barriers and signage to try to deter this activity. Dudko said since last week, they have installed the Jersey barriers and the area is completely blocked off.

Lastly, the next UDSB meeting which serves as the annual meeting will take place Monday, 4/27.

**3/30 Delaware River Basin Watershed Needs Assessment Project:** Ramie provided a fact sheet handout about the program. She was asked to participate in a phone interview with the chief researcher in the project, Stephanie Dalke, previously of the Pinchot Institute for Conservation. She was also a contact for the Common Waters partnership. Maryland University has been contracted by the William Penn Foundation to work on this Delaware River Water Initiative project which is addressing non-point source pollution in the river basin. They're working in eight different sub-watersheds of the basin and the focus is on land protection, agricultural best management practices and stormwater management activities. They are now entering the last phase of their project and wrapping it up with these interviews of stakeholders throughout the basin. They will then decide what to do next in terms of promoting goals for water quality. One of the questions asked was "Does your organization use modeling, data, and mapping to plan for implementation or evaluate water quality work?" Ramie responded that the UDC relies on the Delaware River Basin Commission (DRBC) and the National Park Service to do water quality testing and we anticipate they would inform us of any red flags that they observed through data produced. UDC as an organization does not conduct scientific testing ourselves but we certainly pay attention to any results we receive. Ramie was also asked to rank various water quality goals as we regard them here in the Upper Delaware. They asked: "How useful would your organization find information presented through layers on maps to document changes in nitrogen and phosphorous levels, impervious land cover, and nutrients and sediments?" She said they also asked if we in the upper part of the basin have concerns over some specific areas, being water temperature, chloride, bacteria, increased stream flows from climate change, and fill-in-the-blank with any others. Ramie said she shared that our main concern is the management of the NYC reservoir system in terms of the flows and releases, and how they impact habitat protection for the fishery as well as the recreation industry. She told them that we do pay particular attention to water temperatures because we have advocated in the past for the thermal mitigation program to make sure that the fishery is protected. They seemed happy with the input and said that they will share a summary of the feedback they received through these calls. Ramie asked the two interviewers if they would be interested in making a presentation to the full UDC at a future meeting when they are ready to have data to share, and they agreed.

**3/30 Mongaup River Hydroelectric Project Final License Application Letter:** A copy of the 3/30 letter was provided in the meeting packet. Ramie said the FERC licenses for the Mongaup River Hydroelectric Project are due to expire on 3/31 of 2022 and they filed for renewal starting in 2017. This is a long process to get three separate licenses for Swinging Bridge, Mongaup Falls, and Rio. This letter is documenting their final license application and it provides all stakeholders and those with an interest in this project, of which UDC is one, with the ways that you can access the entire packet that they have assembled. It can be done electronically through the website that's listed, at the libraries in Monticello and Port Jervis when open, and Ramie has also seen notices published in the *Times Herald Record* saying that the report is available. She added that Don Hamilton of the NPS usually reports on this.

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**4/9 Water Safety Committee Report:** Hall-Bagdonas was unable to participate in the 4/9/2020 meeting as it used Microsoft Teams for the teleconference. Susie Kaspar from the NPS relayed to Ramie that the Partners' meeting has been cancelled. NPS is delaying the start of their summer staff they anticipate to begin the week of 5/24. Kaspar said there will separate emails coming out to address event cancellations soon. Ramie said 5/1 was going to be the day that the Water Safety Committee had their annual get together with all the liveries and CUA holders at the UDC office. But obviously with the shutdown still in place, that's not happening unfortunately. 5/12 was the day that they had invited UDC to the seasonal orientation to provide information about the Upper Delaware with our usual messaging about the private property issue, etc. But as Hall-Bagdonas said, they're delaying the start of seasonal staff until at least 5/24 so that will be changing. NPS also included information about their loaner stations not being out at this time. That's been judged to not be a safe thing to do, but their letter does offer some hygienic rules about how to clean lifejackets. If you're interested in receiving those links, we can send this letter electronically. Acting Superintendent Jessica Weinman had previously reported to the full council that no permits will be issued at this time. She said businesses can't be operating quite yet, although they are allowing marinas, golf courses, and certain recreational activities like that to re-open.

**Upper Delaware Litter Sweep Challenge:** Ramie said that the litter sweep scheduled for 4/22-25 would have been can't move forward but there is some interest by the UDSB in continuing it through some sort of social media challenge. Paparella said that John Pizzolato and Carmela Hugel have been brainstorming an idea where people could send in pictures of themselves with all of the litter they picked up and UDSB could offer them some kind of reward. Pizzolato has been working on getting anti-littering signage for Upper Delaware communities and on the Litter Letters art project. Ramie said that the funding for the Litter Sweep Coordinator position is through the Pennsylvania grant which fortunately goes through December 2021. We have committed \$3,000 for that program and do need to spend it. There will be a Litter Sweep; it's just postponed until the timing is right.

**Status of the Delaware River Sojourn:** Ramie said that the Sojourn was originally scheduled for June 20th through 26<sup>th</sup>. Ramie has been following the minutes from their meetings. They've set a deadline for themselves of 5/1 to make a determination of whether to postpone, cancel it, or go ahead. The issue they have is that social distancing would have to be observed. Weinman from the NPS did participate in one of their calls and forewarned the steering committee that they would not be able to issue any Special Use permits they would need to use any of the Upper Delaware accesses if it was still the situation we are in now. Another problem is that Northeast Wilderness Experience, which plans to be the camp site for days one through four of the Sojourn, is also having some difficulties because that's a leased property and they're not sure that they'll have that lease. Some options might be to consider paddling more contiguous sections so they could cut down on the busing that needs to take place or make it more of a show up on your own in your own vehicle event, but that means more camping locations and needing an equipment trailer to take people's gear and personal items down the river. They were trying to figure out how you would sufficiently clean the livery equipment and the issue of mixing livery gear with personal gear. That's tricky, along with maintaining the social distancing through the meals, camping, and busing as previously mentioned. There is also a financial concern that they were thinking it might be better to cancel it outright than to try to run a limited event that could result in a loss or deficit through more restricted participation. They had already started taking in grant money for the 2020 event.

**Other:** Padua asked if there are any updates from the NPS or the Boy Scouts of America regarding the Ten Mile River Access? Ramie said the subject hasn't come up again lately; they might have an update but we can certainly reach out to Hamilton to see if there is any. The last time we asked Hamilton he said they were still working on making additional signage for that area but Ramie is not sure if that has advanced further.

**New Business**

**American Rivers Names Delaware 2020 River of the Year:** Dudko said the American Rivers' decision to name the Delaware as the 2020 River of the Year is a feather in our cap! That's exciting news. Ramie said she hopes everyone saw both the news release and the video. The Delaware has been on the "Endangered Rivers of The Year" as well and this is a much more positive list to be on. Dudko said she thought it was a real testimony to cleaning up the whole river from top to bottom and a lot of hard work.

**New York State Codifies Ban on Natural Gas Fracking:** Ramie provided a copy of a *Times Herald Record* article announcing the approval of this legislation. Beneath that she had printed additional information she got from other

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sources in which she removed the political statements. She said it's hard to understand why this is a budget proposition exactly, this ban on fracking. Nevertheless, that's how it was presented for NYS. This means that any future Governors could not rescind this prohibition as it was otherwise vulnerable to happening under Executive Order.

**“Entering the Delaware River Watershed” Signs Installed by NYS DOT:** Ramie said it was a surprise to us to find that these signs had been installed. UDC had been working with the Coalition for the Delaware River Watershed, the Friends of the Upper Delaware River (FUDR), the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) and others on this campaign. The DOT in Albany had assured us that they would let us know when they were at that stage. Ramie found out through a message from Bill Rudge (NYS) who saw one near his home on 4/15. The coalition of groups was looking forward to a publicity push about it and unveiling with press. There were 14 that were approved originally and DOT Region 9 was responsible for 12 of them; the other two are in Region 8 which is in Orange County. Ramie included a photo in the meeting packet of one located in Sullivan County in Woodbourne. Ramie said the coalition is holding a Zoom meeting tomorrow to discuss doing virtual publicity outreach, and speaking with Senator Metzger and Assemblywoman Gunther about participating.

**Delaware River Flow and Storage Data Report:** A copy of the 4/20 NYC Current Reservoir Levels was provided in members' packets. Total combined storage was at 99.8%. Peckham said the newspapers and fishing groups are asking people to not fish because of COVID-19. He said he's seen two boaters so far.

**Other:** Padua said compliments on the “High Elevation” sign on Rt. 97. The only thing is we need an overlook there because it's a beautiful view. Unfortunately, he said he's sure we're dabbling into private property. Ramie said the UDSB organization was behind that, working with the DOT and the nearby property owner, and there was talk about developing a roadside pull off there. The problem is that it is within the Town of Hancock, which is not a participating member of UDSB.

**Public Comment:** None.

**Adjournment:** A motion by Peckham, seconded by Padua, to adjourn the meeting at 7:40 p.m. was carried.