

WATER USE/RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMM. MEETING MINUTES
June 20, 2023

Committee Members Present: Ginny Dudko, Evan Padua, Pat Jeffer, Andy Boyar, Fred Peckham (Zoom)
Committee Members Absent: Al Henry
Staff: Laurie Ramie, Kerry Engelhardt
NPS Partner: Lindsey Kurnath-Superintendent (Zoom), Don Hamilton- Chief of Natural and Cultural Resources
Guests: Bill Dudko- Deerpark Alternate; Stephanie Driscoll

The UDC's Water Use/Resource Management Committee held its monthly meeting on Tuesday, June 20, 2023. Chairperson Dudko called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m. Introductions around the table and on the Zoom screen were made to Stephanie Driscoll, a candidate for the UDC's Administrative Support position who was sitting in to take some sample meeting minutes.

Approval of May 16, 2023 Meeting Minutes: A motion by Boyar seconded by Henry approving the May 16, 2023 meeting minutes carried. There was no public comment on the agenda.

Old Business

Inflatable PFD Usage on the Upper Delaware River: Ramie reminded everyone that Henry, who is away on vacation, had a particular interest in this topic and had exchanged some information with the National Park Service for a requested follow-up. Hamilton said they looked into the sources that Henry provided and reiterate that NPS is following all the current U.S. Coast Guard regulations for inflatable PFDs, which are also in line with what both states allow and what is defined in 36 CFR. They have experienced drownings on occasion from people not wearing PFDs, not because they're worried about their functionality but there are situations where people don't want to wear them unless they are inflatable. Therefore, NPS thinks it's more productive to allow their use. Part of Henry's contention was about the whitewater status of the Upper Delaware River. Limited sections are considered whitewater, such as the Class II rapids at Skinners Falls, but 99% of the river is not classified as whitewater. Most of the individuals who wear inflatable PFDs, who he said are generally fishers and guides, are not in that section of the river. Asked for his opinion as a fishing guide, Padua said that the inflatable PFDs are great, especially in hot weather. They are comfortable and very accessible. He's only ever had one client fall out of his boat, but it happens. Inflatables make sense and it would be great even if they could be worn during cold weather months. Hamilton said there are some circumstances when they are not appropriate, like waterskiing or jet-skiing. Otherwise, the Coast Guard and both states agree that they're adequate, so NPS is following their lead. Kurnath said while we all appreciate Henry's concern, NPS would like to consider this matter closed. They have checked the regulations and, at this point, they're happy to see anyone wearing them as a next level of protection. If they receive any additional information, they will let the committee know but we have discussed this for several meetings now. If anybody has anything else for NPS to research, they would look into it. Dudko said yes, this will be reflected in the minutes which Henry will see. Boyar said since Henry isn't here, we should keep this item on the agenda as a courtesy since he's been primarily involved with this. Dudko asked if everybody is comfortable with that? She concluded that if Henry wants to put it on the agenda one more time, that's fine.

NYS DEC Paving Project at the Highland Access: Dudko observed that this river access is still closed as of today. Ramie said she reached out to Ryan Coulter at NYS DEC, who she added has now officially been appointed as the State of New York's representative to the UDC, with Region 4 Fisheries Manager Chris VanMaaren as his alternate. She asked him if there was any update since his report at the June 1 UDC meeting in which he said that the paving bids had come in higher than they wanted and DEC was in negotiations. She said apparently they came to an agreement because Coulter stated in an email this morning, "We just heard late last week that the contractor might be able to start paving the site this Friday, June 23rd. I can keep you posted." Ramie said she also copied Heather Jacksy from Sullivan County Planning on her inquiry about the project's status but hadn't heard back from her yet about next steps for the improvement project beyond the paving.

4/26 D&H Transportation Heritage Council and 6/2 Board of Trustees Meetings: At last month's meeting, Ramie said she hadn't had time to prepare the minutes from the April 26 meeting of the D&H Transportation Heritage Council that took place in Rosendale so was including a copy of those in the packets. The Board of Trustees has been meeting monthly since April and then met May 5 at the UDC office, but she included minutes from the most recent one on June 2. The Trustees have been focused on updating the organization's bylaws. If they are approved, it would amend the meeting schedule so that the full Council would meet three times a year on the 4th Wednesdays of April, July, and October, skipping winter which can be problematic; and the Board of Trustees would meet four times a year on the 4th Wednesdays of March, June, September, and January. The required 30 days' advance notice of bylaws changes was provided to the full membership so a vote can be taken at the July 26 meeting. Ramie reported that the May 20 bus trip from Port Jervis to Phillipsport was very successful, with 49 people signing up for the 50-passenger bus and 48 actually showing up that day. She was not able to participate due to the Upper Delaware Shadfest starting that day but heard rave reviews, particularly for the historic narration by Cliff Robinson, Jr. He was not present at the June 2 Trustees meeting but will be giving a report at the July 26 meeting. On another topic, there is interest in pursuing federal trail status for the D&H Canal which runs through two states. Of the available programs, the National Recreation Trail (NRTs) appears to be the easiest to pursue. It's done through an online application process rather than requiring legislation, with a Nov. 1 deadline. This designation would basically provide additional prestige for the D&H Canal and it may help with grant funding applications to show that this system has national significance. That will be discussed further at that July 26 meeting which will be held at the D&H Canal Park at Lock 31 in Hawley, PA, with a tour of the Daniels' Farmhouse that is being restored followed by lunch and the business meeting under the canal boat pavilion. If the bylaws are approved, the D&H Board of Trustees would then meet again on Sept. 27.

5/18 Extreme Heat Webinar: Engelhardt attended this webinar sponsored by the NYS DEC about how extreme heat is hazardous to human health. Above 73.5°F is considered the minimum mortality temperature, which seems surprising. That's when you start to see an impact. It's not just extreme heat that is the issue; it can be cumulative. In terms of worker safety, the most occupational heat-related deaths occur in the agricultural, forestry, fishing and hunting industries, where impacts are seen with an 80-85° heat index. Air conditioning has been a solution but rural residents are less likely to have access to it than those in urban settings. Over 23% of New York State's land area is in agricultural usage, with over 33,000 farms operating. Farm workers are 20 times more likely to die from heat-related causes. It's not just humans either to suffer the effects of extreme heat. There can be negative effects on vegetable damage, plant tissue growth and development, and more susceptibility to disease. It's also bad for livestock and dairy cows. Adaptation opportunities are expensive to implement. One alarming note mentioned was that, by the end of the century, there will probably be no more maple production in NYS since that requires freezing temperatures overnight and warmer temperatures during the day. Engelhardt said it was an interesting webinar.

5/22 Upper Delaware Scenic Byway Meeting: Ramie reported that the UDSB ordered 10,000 updated placemats from St. Clair Graphics in Honesdale at a cost of \$1,175 with a refreshed design that adds new logos and a QR code for the website. They feature a map of the NYS Rt. 97 byway route and are available for free to entities that host community meals. Program Manager Johnny Pizzolato announced that Assemblywoman Gunther has found another \$25,000 grant for UDSB after they had understood that a \$40,000 state grant was "one-shot" funding to free up monies to pay for the six-month program manager contract. The new funding also can't be used for salaries but Pizzolato said that Sullivan County will allow use of its discretionary funds contract to the UDSB for 2023 for that purpose so that position which is due to expire in early August can be extended. At this May 22nd meeting, the 2nd Annual Festival of the Founding Fish had gotten underway, with over 120 visitors estimated for Shadfest activities at the Barryville Farmers' Market and the Anglers' Trade Fair & Shad Shindig at Fort Delaware in Narrowsburg on May 20. Ramie said that she was interviewed about the UDC for a blog called Fishadelphia. Still to come was a Youth Fishing Day with students from the Homestead School on May 25. Ramie asked Hamilton and Boyar to discuss how that went, noting that organizers hope there will be an opportunity to open this up to public schools after this successful test run. Hamilton said it was a good experience, with Michelle Stevens helping out as well as fishing experts including Andy Boyar and Tony Ritter. They sent curriculum material in advance about the importance of undammed rivers for migratory fish. The students received casting lessons then were able to test their fishing skills at the Zane Grey Access in Lackawaxen. Boyar remarked that the girls did better than the boys. Hamilton said it was a positive overall experience and a way to create future stewards of the river. Dudko said that schools are often looking for field trip ideas like this and can arrange the transportation since a percentage of those costs were traditionally refundable through state aid. She said lots of kids here don't know a lot about the area they

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live in; Hamilton agreed that many children today are separated from nature. He mentioned that the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission will be holding an Introduction to Fly Fishing program for kids on July 16 at the Zane Grey Access. At the end of the Shadfest on May 28 was the Shad Bus Run to mark the 20th anniversary of Upper Delaware Scenic Byway (which occurred in 2022). A full motorcoach traveled from Port Jervis roundtrip to Hancock with Sullivan County Historian John Conway on board for the trip up to offer historic narration. City of Port Jervis Mayor Kelly Decker read a proclamation to start the trip. Stops were made at the Eagle Observation blind in the Town of Highland which is also the site of the Kate Project trail extension, the Cochecton Station where the Cochecton Preservation Society hosted a lunch catered by the Cochecton Fire Station which went over very well, in Hancock to participate in their Blues, Brews & BBQ event, then back for a stop in Callicoon where Laura Silverman from The Outside Institute shared some shad programming, and a stop at The Outpost in Pond Eddy where staff came on board to hand out ice cream treats, before the return to Port Jervis. Based on the popularity of this bus trip, they decided it has potential to become an annual event and could serve to raise revenue and awareness of the byway and the attractions along it. Continuing her report, Ramie said that volunteers participated in a clean-up day May 7 at the Callicoon Depot which will be the future UDSB visitor center to do some sprucing up while identifying needed repairs. Recent actions coordinated by the Callicoon Depot committee include working to get an ADA accessible restroom operational, initiating some community programs, winning a Sullivan 180 beautification grant for new plantings with plans to install tables, chairs, fencing, and free WIFI, rebuilding the loading dock for its continued use as a performance stage during events, and installing a message board with a suggestion box on-site. Ramie confirmed that the WIFI has been installed since there had been a CDI Zoom meeting last night at which one person participated on his phone while standing next to the Depot. The UDC's news release about the outcome of the May 10 NY-PA Joint Interstate Bridge Commission's annual meeting was handed out, with Ramie noting that there would be a May 25 meeting of the Skinners Falls Bridge Project Advisory Committee. Heather Jacks reported that Friends of the Upper Delaware River. Inc. (FUDR) plans to hold its annual Day on the Delaware event at the Highland Access on Aug. 2 from 2-4 p.m. with U.S. Congressman Marc Molinaro and other officials invited. Lastly, the next UDSB meeting is June 26.

5/25 Upper Delaware River Watershed Plan Steering Committee: Ramie and Engelhardt participated in this first meeting of the steering committee called by FUDR, which is serving as lead organization to implement a \$300,000 line item in the NYS Environmental Protection Fund secured in 2022-23 to put together a watershed plan for the Upper Delaware River. Its objectives are to engage multiple watershed stakeholders and identify and implement watershed protection projects that improve water quality, mitigate flooding, restore aquatic habitat, and enhance recreational opportunities through the development of an action agenda and re-grant program. Steering committee members are asked to provide overall support and guidance for the project, offer technical assistance where possible, and help ensure accuracy of content in the final plan. The expected commitment is to attend 2-3 meetings through the course of the year, review drafts and supporting materials, engage in project selection decisions, and provide individual consultation to project leaders as needed. In its second year, the funding got moved to the Aid to Localities program at a level of \$350,000. They displayed a map of the project area which covers the portion of the watershed in NYS including the New York City reservoirs, a couple DEC regions, the tailwaters section, the East Branch, Neversink River and tributaries to the Main Stem, and is primarily in Delaware, Sullivan and Orange Counties while touching some other counties. There are three current projects from the first year: Mongaup Creek Habitat Restoration on the Willowemoc, the Little Beaverkill Waterline Restoration outside Livingston Manor, and the Highland Access Project. The first two are partnering with Trout Unlimited. In partnership with Sullivan County, the Highland Access project is on about two acres of property owned by the NYS DOT and leased by the NYS DEC as a fishing access, with plans to add ADA accessibility, stormwater management, aesthetic improvements, restore native flora, and add bicycle and kayak storage. The timeline for this overall project is to execute a contract, create a list of projects for 2023 funding, complete the three mentioned 2022 projects, add to the action agenda, and develop and implement a grant program. The DEC must accept the Upper Delaware River Watershed Plan. Its existence would provide advantages for seeking grants. They hope to leverage funding outside the state line item and to help pick up budget shortfalls from the federal Delaware River program. They asked at the meeting who else should be included as well as soliciting project ideas. Ramie provided contacts for the Lackawaxen River Conservancy, Delaware Highlands Conservancy, National Parks Conservation Association, and all the municipalities for consideration, particularly since there's an opportunity for project funding. Hamilton asked any entities on the Pennsylvania side of the river that are included. Kurnath, who had also participated in the webinar, said no. This is funding from New York State so they've only brought in NY partners, which she said is obviously half of the watershed. Ramie said maybe this will serve as a challenge to seek PA funds.

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6/7 NPS Water Safety Committee: With the departure of Hall-Bagdonas who previously represented the UDC on this committee, Engelhardt participated in the 6/7 meeting. Ingrid Peterec is working on the Loaner Life Jacket return boxes. Three billboards have been installed on NYS Rt. 97 near the Roebling Bridge, Rt. 652, and Rt. 6 with messages from the “Wear It!” life jacket campaign including images that Corrine Hinton had developed. The Pocono Mountains Visitors Bureau is assisting with additional billboards. The new water safety video of approximately eight minutes will be produced in English and Spanish. The interviews have been completed and it awaits inserting graphics. Law Enforcement Park Ranger Ron Babus has been working on water safety outreach in New Jersey, where a lot of people travel from to vacation here, and will also be talking to summer camp counselors. Since 2011, NPS UPDE has done a wear rate study to gather statistics on how many people are wearing life jackets but unfortunately, they don’t have the staff available this year. The committee wondered whether the UDC would be able to round up some volunteers from its board or the community. It involves sitting under a tree or in the shade at four different locations for a minimum of four hours on weekends during July and the 1st two weeks of August to do counts. Training is provided. Engelhardt said it would be a shame if there was a gap in this data due to the staffing situation. Peterec will design a flyer to explain the program that we will share when it’s received. Ramie added a reminder that the NPS will give a presentation on water safety at the next full Council meeting on July 6.

Other: None.

New Business

Report on Upper Section Days of the 28th Delaware River Sojourn, 6/16-19: While displaying photos she had taken, Engelhardt reported on the first part of the Sojourn which is still underway through June 23. Day 0 on Friday was a river clean-up that Peterec reported was a success. There were 20 participants, including an enthusiastic group of Girl Scouts who pulled out 8-9 tires and had a blast. The 1st day of paddling on June 17 (Hancock, NY to Buckingham, PA) went well too, with Don Hamilton being honored as a High Admiral in absentia and to his surprise in that he said he was just hearing about it now. Peterec had given a speech about his decades of service in the Upper Delaware. On Sunday, it was Peterec’s turn to be surprised when Engelhardt gave her the High Admiral award. Engelhardt paddled that day from Buckingham to the Northeast Wilderness Experience (NEWE) Campground in Equinunk for her first time with the Sojourn and said it was interesting to experience from that perspective as being among the over 100 paddlers, including the safety team. Their lunch takeout was at the Bouchoux Trail. There had been only one boat-over on the first day but 10 of them on Sunday, although the river was quite low. The Monday, June 19, paddle was from NEWE to Callicoon, PA. Engelhardt joined the Sojourners again early this morning to make sure everyone got up and out, whether they were leaving or continuing on the Sojourn by heading down to Bushkill. She said everybody was in good spirits, seemed to have a great time, and was appreciative of the organization that went into it. Catering by Konrad’s Kitchen was fantastic, and Dan Corrigan from NEWE handled the transportation and camping expertly. Programs she witnessed by Luc Cibischino from NPS UPDE on reptiles and amphibians and Rachel Morrow from Delaware Highlands Conservancy on bounding furbearers were very informative. Engelhardt said it was really great to share this area with people from all over, including Hawaii, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Michigan. She noted that Beth Brown and Kristen Bowman Kavanagh from the Delaware River Basin Commission were participating most every day of the Sojourn and she was surprised by how many “through-trippers” there were doing the whole week. She will get final figures once the event is over. Dudko thanked Engelhardt for all her hard work as a member of the Delaware River Sojourn Steering Committee and a day planner. Ramie added that the Upper Delaware days occurred during a 3-day holiday weekend too.

6/28 National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) Community Roundtable: A handout was included for a virtual Community Roundtable sponsored by the National Parks Conservation Association on June 28 from 1-2 p.m. It will serve as an opportunity to meet new National Park Service leadership, Superintendent Doyle Sapp from the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, and Superintendent Lindsey Kurnath from the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River, as well as hear about efforts to make stronger connections with Latino communities to provide a better visitor experience that will feature Lizeth Ortega Luna from Solidarity Strategies as a speaker. Ramie can provide the free registration link to anyone who is interested. She had already signed up, noting that the NPCA likes to bring Middle and Upper Delaware interests together to see what we share in common and serve as a learning opportunity.

35th Annual UDC Family Raft Trip, 8/6 Staircase to Matamoras, RSVP by 7/28: The Council’s June 12 news release on this year’s raft trip was included in the packets. Ramie described that the reservation deadline is July 28 for

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this first Sunday, August 6, paddle from Staircase Access in the Town of Lumberland, NY to Kittatinny Canoes' Matamoras Base in Westfall Township, PA, with parking in Matamoras between 9-10 a.m. before guests board shuttles to the put-in location. The biggest advantage of the UDC organizing this trip is the deeply discounted group rate of \$29 for ages 13 and up, and \$19 for ages 4-12, compared to individual bookings. Now we can only hope for decent water levels when August 6 arrives and good weather, although we've never had to cancel despite some rain. Advance reservations are required because we need to inform the livery of our numbers. Our publicity is underway and the guest list is developing. Asked by Dudko whether there is any cut-off number, Ramie said no, and it widely varies from year to year. This event is to promote stewardship of the river by offering a fun recreational activity on it. Padua asked about a special event coming up ahead of that one. Ramie confirmed that the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre RailRiders will promote the UDC at their August 1, 6:35 p.m. baseball game at the PNC Field as part of their community organization program. We opted to invite NPS staff to join the UDC to talk about water safety in addition to our description of the Council. Ramie said she keeps getting diverted while we are short-staffed from learning how the online ticket sales work for the block of 25 tickets that the UDC purchased and can re-sell for a \$5 profit per ticket but will find the time soon. The UDC will also need to find someone willing to throw out the ceremonial first pitch. Padua said he'd be interested in doing that. Ramie said it would be great if we could work with the NPS to arrange transportation to the game such as a large van or bus.

10/24-25 Set for FUDR's Annual Water, Water Everywhere Conference: The dates for this year's "Water, Water Everywhere" conference sponsored by FUDR have been announced as October 24 and 25, in-person at their Hancock office or virtually. Ramie noted that FUDR has invited Kurnath for NPS, Tim Leonard for NPCA, and Ramie for the UDC to jointly present a half-hour program on the afternoon of October 24 on View from the Upper Delaware or a title to that effect which she and Kurnath had accepted. She said this conference always has relevant topics while bringing federal, state, and local interests together. The UDC typically offers to cover the registration fee for any board members or staff who wish to participate.

Delaware River Flow & Storage Report: The 6/12 DRBC Hydrological Conditions Report handout showed combined storage in the reservoirs of 88.6%. Engelhardt said that the DRBC issued a 6/20 report a couple minutes after she had assembled the packet in lieu of Monday being a holiday. That updated report will be distributed with the action items. Padua said that those heavy releases that everyone was expecting have not been happening. We are expected to get some rainstorms which will cause levels to increase.

Other: 1) Padua passed around a photo he had taken after noticing scattered white splashes on river rocks in about 2-4 feet of water with a steady but not fast current in areas above the Ten Mile River and Cochecton-Damascus Bridge. He was curious what kind of eggs they are or what they may be otherwise, asking Hamilton if he recognized it. Hamilton said he wasn't sure but to send him the photos so he can consult with others to find out. B. Dudko asked if the Upper Delaware River is seeing any rock snot. Hamilton said no, but it's also not considered to be as big of a concern as it was thought to be initially. It's been around for a while. Boyar said it's common to call it Didymo. Padua agreed with there was a time for a year or two that it looked really bad and he thought it could ruin the river but he doesn't find it so much anymore. Hamilton said it likes cold water; he has noticed it on the lower West Branch.

2) Engelhardt introduced a handout from PA Senator Lisa Baker's newsletter on Targeting Illegal Dumps. The item says, "To limit public health hazards that negatively impact property values, Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection have launched the Illegal Dump Free PA Program. It will help communities curb illegal dumping by exposing those who commit this crime. To avoid costly cleanups that average \$3,000 per site, grant recipients will receive, as a temporary loan, three cameras to capture evidence of vehicle license plates and illegal dumpers, even at night. One camera uses wireless technology to email pictures when triggered, providing almost instant results. Municipalities, counties and nonprofit organizations can apply for grants. If you know of an illegal dump or graffiti site, you can anonymously report it." (Search the subject for links). Engelhardt said we run a litter sweep but have also talked about ways to stop litter from accumulating in the first place. This is an interesting program for anyone who knows of illegal dump sites in PA. Ramie noted that the UDC had presented an award for a similar program that physically helped people to clean up such sites, which had occurred in Beach Lake and Milanville. It is important to give a spotlight to initiatives like this.

3) G. Dudko said they are seeing a lot of tree defoliation in the Deerpark area from the spongy moth, although it looked better as they traveled up the river. Padua said he had stopped on the river to take a break and could hear the

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caterpillars falling out of the trees. B. Dudko said he's literally had to scrape them off surfaces but he has seen them getting a lot bigger so may they will be done soon. G. Dudko said perhaps the cooler weather will help. Padua said he was also shocked to find that the majority of larger sycamore trees were so impacted by that frost kill that happened. Smaller sycamores under 30-40 feet withstood it. Jeffer said she definitely has observed that too.

Adjournment: A Motion by Jeffer seconded by Boyar to adjourn the meeting at 7:48 p.m. was carried.

Minutes prepared by Laurie Ramie, 6/26/23