

**WATER USE/RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMM. MEETING MINUTES**  
**July 18, 2023**

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

The UDC’s Water Use/Resource Management Committee held its monthly meeting on Tuesday, July 18, 2023 at 6:30 p.m. Dennis Bernitt, newly-appointed Town of Fremont alternate representative, said that he would like to join this committee along with all other UDC committees. Chairperson Dudko said that would now require five members present to make a quorum. Therefore, we could not conduct official business but we could run through the agenda items unofficially if everyone agreed which they did. [*Note to minutes:* The next day, Laurie Ramie realized that the additional member brought the committee number from six to seven, which still requires a minimum 4 to attend to reach a quorum. That did occur. A virtual vote was taken and approved to make this an official meeting with minutes.

**Approval of June 20, 2023 Meeting Minutes:** Motion pending at the next meeting.

**Old Business:**

**Inflatable PFD Usage on the Upper Delaware River:** Henry said he had some sidebar conversations with NPS Upper Delaware Chief Ranger Keith Winslow and it seems as if the issue is resolved at this point in the season. Henry stated that he does reserve the right to do some more research for next year.

**NYS DEC Report on Callicoon Boat Launch and Northern Snakehead Catches:** Ramie reached out to our NYS DEC Representative Ryan Coulter for more information about the four Snakeheads that he had reported at the July 6 UDC meeting were caught in the Upper Delaware River. Coulter got back to her and said it was the DEC Region 4 Fisheries Unit that had caught the Snakeheads in the main stem of the river just south of Callicoon. They measured in at 21”, 24”, 29”, and 27” long. Hamilton stated that they were caught through electrofishing along a back channel of the Delaware River on the PA side down from the Fish and Boat Commission Access. Hamilton said they have a foothold here and there are not a lot of good management options. Ramie asked if that section was still considered the main stem and Hamilton replied it was not right out in the flow of the river; it was in a non-flowing section of the river which is the type of habitat they prefer. Regarding the Callicoon Boat Launch, Coulter had said that the DEC was appraising the site which is a few hundred feet downstream from the existing launch just south of where the Callicoon Creek meets the Delaware. It’s a 2-acre parcel at the future park now owned by The Trust for Public Land. Hamilton commented that he recently visited the site and, in his opinion, it’s a good location for the flow of water there and a solid substrate for trailered boat launching.

**6/26 Upper Delaware Scenic Byway Meeting:** Ramie reported that Sullivan County Legislature Chairperson Rob Doherty attended this meeting. He had participated in the Shad Bus Run on May 28 and presented a \$5,000 grant check from his District 1 discretionary funds allocation to support the Shadfest. He was very complimentary about that event and the work of the UDSB organization. They also talked about the renegotiation of the contract with Sullivan Catskills Visitors Association (SCVA) in which they broke off a part as intended to promote the western Sullivan County Delaware River side. Later in the

meeting, a letter that the UDSB Committee wrote supporting The Delaware Company to provide tourism promotion and event planning services was mentioned, as long as those services are complementary to what the SCVA offers. Once The Callicoon Depot opens as a visitor center there will be opportunity to bring new services there to benefit the quality of life for western county residents as well as visitors to the area. Ramie said that the \$40,000 grant through NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation came through to the UDSB in an odd way, being deposited in the account first and a letter approving the application second. The state agency now needs a closeout report to identify how the grant funds were spent. Town of Delaware Representative Rosie DeCristofaro contacted Central New York Railroad for permission to thin trees on their property to see more of the river from the Callicoon Viaduct. Trees were identified on 4 different properties that need permissions by all property owners and DeCristofaro was surprised to hear that the railroad company was thrilled to give them the go-ahead. Richard Lowe commented that if they are that happy, maybe they can give a matching grant. Upper Delaware Shadfest Coordinator John Pizzolato reported on how the funding of \$5,000 from County Legislative funds, \$5,000 from UDSB, and \$3,000 from The Delaware Company was spent for the Festival of the Founding Fish that took place from May 20-28. Sullivan Catskills Visitors Association also assisted with the bus transportation and promotions. Ramie reported that there was WiFi installed at the Callicoon Depot as a new service offered to the general public. Ramie said they need to install fencing as this is a requirement of the lease for insurance purposes and the Delaware Valley Jobs Corps Center has offered to help with that. There is now a glass display case available that will eventually include the WiFi log-in information among other project updates. The next UDSB meeting will be held Monday, July 24. Henry asked how many trees will be taken out, and Ramie replied saying, “not taken out, thinning.” It’s a selective clearing vista enhancement project. Bernitt asked if the Depot property is owned. Ramie said that a five-acre parcel of the larger railroad property that includes the old station is under a long-term lease with the Callicoon Business Association.

**6/28 DRBCs Water Management Advisory Committee:** Ramie said there were 44 participants on this June 28<sup>th</sup> call. In this meeting they offer a more in-depth hydrologic report. Amy Shallcross from DRBC said the conditions had been very dry but joked of course after saying that we had up to 7 inches of rain in the 4<sup>th</sup> week of June, but there was plenty of dry weather in the 90 days prior and PA had declared a flood watch. Stream flow was considered above average as of that date. The salt front is now at river mile 71.6 – just above the Delaware Memorial Bridge. The summer forecast was higher temperatures than normal, normal precipitation amounts, and a normal hurricane season. That means to expect 12-17 named storms, 5-9 hurricanes, and 1-4 major hurricanes predicted. One storm named Storm Arlene has occurred so far in the Gulf of Mexico and did not affect the basin. On August 9<sup>th</sup> there will be a DRBC public hearing, with the business meeting to follow on September 7<sup>th</sup>. Avery Lentini was hired as a Community Engagement Specialist. There are employment opportunities for a Finance & Administrative Specialist and a Water Resource Engineer/Scientist. Chad Pindar gave an update about their evaluation of storage options, which was first done by USACE in the late 1950s through 1961, then there was a smaller initiative by the DRB Electric Utilities Group in 1970s. This new study was the biggest done in about 40 years. The budget they had for this project required pre-screening the potential site and they got down to 38 projects that passed screening. They already issued the report, which has not determined that we do need more supply but they just want to know what sources are available in case that day ever comes. DRBC is also doing a Water Trend Analysis which includes a survey on how many people are in this basin. The 2010 in-basin population was 8.252 million and 86% were served directly by a public water supply. Ramie said the revised estimate is 7.157 million living in basin boundaries and 87% use the public water supply. October 12 is the next DRBC Water Management Advisory Committee meeting. Peckham said some movies about the past towns of the Cannonsville Reservoir area are being played at some local theatres. He recalled they are called Indian Summer and The Taking of Cannonsville, about giving the Cannonsville people “pennies on the dollar” to access the reservoir for New York City drinking water. Peckham said they are very interesting and take you through the entire history. Ramie said that Time and The Valleys

Museum in Grahamsville has a great exhibit on the communities that are now underwater to create the reservoir system and the whole development.

**6/28 National Parks Conservation Association Roundtable:** Ramie attended this virtual meeting which introduced the leadership of the National Park Service Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River and the Delaware Water Gap (DEWA) National Recreation Area. Lindsey Kurnath said she has been on the job since January, originally from Rochester, NY and started in D.C. working with EPA and then NPS. She provided further information about the Upper Delaware and its programs. Ramie said it was interesting to hear from Doyle Sapp, superintendent of the DEWA and Middle Delaware who was appointed around the same time as Kurnath. He had been with the NPS for 30 years and has worked in 20 different parks. Ramie said he joked that it may seem like he can't keep a job but many of those assignments were temporary details. Sapp said, "I am a caretaker and also a storyteller" in describing that it doesn't matter what the job titles are at the NPS; that applies to everyone that works for the Park Service. Sapp said that there is 12,000 years of human history to explore. DEWA is considered the 14<sup>th</sup> most visited National Park in the country. Ramie said the second half of the meeting focused on discussing reaching out to Latino communities. The National Parks Conservation Association is working with a company called Solidarity Solutions to help enhance Latino engagement in the outdoor spaces of PA and NJ. There was a presentation that about 100,000 Latinos reside in the Delaware Water Gap, which makes up 15% of the population. Increased engagement benefits family and community, and boosts the economy.

**7/12 NPS Water Safety Committee Report:** Ramie said that Kerry Engelhardt had attempted to participate in this meeting but was unable to join it through Microsoft Teams so she isn't sure what happened in the meeting. Ramie said that Engelhardt had planned to follow up but was out sick today. Ramie asked Kurnath and Hamilton if they had anything to add. Kurnath said they talked about the finalization of the Water Safety video, for which she knows that Ingrid Peterec followed up with the UDC. There are still a few changes to be made and then it will be posted. She added that there was a conversation started on monitoring what the liveries are doing and if they are giving the right safety standards or if people are getting on the river and just taking off their PFD. They plan to do a "secret shopper" style program to get people into the liveries to see how safety talks are going. Hamilton had no comment. Dudko thanked Kurnath for filling in what she could.

**Other:** none.

**New Business:**

**Railroad Emergency Response Guide Status Update:** Dudko said that Kurnath was a little confused while emailing about this subject earlier today when it appeared on the agenda and wanted to clarify that they were not going into depth tonight. Ramie said that a person working at the Ollie Grey's food stand in Callicoon on July 14 in the early evening had called 911 to report a fallen tree on the train tracks. She was concerned about what might happen should a train come along and strike the tree. The operator who answered the 911 call reportedly did not offer much help. Knowing that Larry and Peggy Richardson are connected with the Cohecton Erie Station and maybe knew how to reach the railroad company, the employee asked her mother to reach out to them. Larry Richardson said they could not find a listed phone number for Central New York Railroad and suggested calling Norfolk Southern Railroad, which is what she did. They said they would call Central New York Railroad and the tree was immediately taken care of. Richardson recalled that the UDC had spent a lot of time putting together an Emergency Response Handbook for railroad emergencies and wanted to see what the procedure should be if anyone ever got that call again. Bill Dudko stated that it sounds like 911 dropped the ball, and that they have the number for Central New York Railroad and should have immediately contacted them. Bernitt said they could also have called the fire department. Bill Dudko said, from his knowledge as a former railroad employee, if you call 911, they call the Railroad and it's "as simple as that". Numbers are posted at the crossings.

Peckham agreed that 911 has the railroad's numbers. If you give them a mile marker, they will know exactly where to come and they would have a crew dispatched. Peckham said he has those phone numbers and he could send them out to the UDC if needed. Ginny Dudko said the person who called absolutely did the right thing but the ball was apparently dropped by the 911 Center. Henry asked if anyone had called the dispatch center to see why this happened. Ramie replied that it was not necessarily a UDC staff responsibility and we are hearing this story second-hand without verification of details. Henry said someone should call and see what dispatcher took the call and find out why such a poor job was done. Henry said if it happens once, it can happen again, and he would want the center to know proper protocol was not followed. Henry said someone should find out which center took the call and have it taken care of. Bill Dudko suggested that Nadia Rajsiz may be able to help. Ginny Dudko asked Henry who he suggests should contact the center. Henry agreed with Bill Dudko that Rajsiz should deal with it as a Sullivan County legislator. Bernitt commented that he was raised in Callicoon and witnessed many train crashes with loss of life that could have been avoided. Ramie reminded everyone that on August 3<sup>rd</sup>, newly appointed Sullivan County Commissioner of Public Safety Scott Sculte will be the UDC's speaker. That would be a good time to bring this up. Henry said sometimes it's a center from another county which picks up the call however.

**Updates on UDC Events – 8/1 RailRiders Promotion; 8/6 Raft Trip (7/28 Reservations):** Ramie gave credit to Engelhardt for designing the wonderful poster that is being distributed around in local establishments by Driscoll and put on our social media. The UDC has 25 reserved tickets to sell. Ginny Dudko asked if there was a cutoff date and Ramie replied no, just before the game happens on August 1<sup>st</sup>. It is a mobile ticket service and after purchasing the ticket(s), Kerry will send the buyer an email with instructions on how to download the ticket(s) to their cell phone. That is the only option. Ramie said a welcome packet had been sent that outlines the instructions for the promotional part. She had been waiting for that to make arrangements with Ingrid Peterec at the NPS for the water safety messaging, but it was only received the day prior to the meeting and Ramie wants to look over it a little closer. Ramie mentioned again that we need someone to throw the first pitch. Evan Padua had shown interest and we need to confirm that to provide the Scranton/Wilkes Barre RailRiders organization with the name in advance. Henry commented that he would like to reserve 4 tickets and asked about transportation to the game. Ramie replied that chartering a bus didn't make sense after only nine people expressed interest in it, but they were looking into a van instead. Aaron Robinson is getting a price for that with a local connection that he has. Kurnath asked if it was okay that she email the National Park Service staff to let them know about the game or if there were only 25 tickets and we couldn't get any more. Ramie said yes of course, to let as many people know as possible, 25 is the minimum number of tickets, there is no cap to the amount they can get. Henry asked how many tickets had been sold at this time, and Ramie replied five. She said she thinks people do intend to go but just haven't purchased the tickets yet. Henry asked if the people who are coming to do the "promotional stuff" have to buy tickets and Ramie replied there are 2 complimentary tickets given. Ramie said she plans on giving hers to a NPS intern. The committee moved on to the Family Raft Trip on August 6<sup>th</sup>. Driscoll is currently taking reservations for this. Driscoll noted that there are 6 groups currently registered, 27 people in total. There is a deadline of 7/28 for people to get their reservations in, with Ramie commenting that a lot of people hold off registering to see what the weather will be like. Driscoll said that people have been calling, so she thinks more people will be joining. Henry asked about the RailRiders game again, when the UDC folks should be arriving at the stadium. Ramie said that the gates open one hour prior to the game and the exhibitors can get in about 20 minutes before that. We had talked about having the transportation leave Narrowsburg at 4 p.m. Henry asked how many people need to be there early, and Ramie said only the exhibitors which consists of staff of the UDC and the NPS.

**Delaware River Flor & Storage Report:** Everyone reviewed the handout and Ginny Dudko mentioned we are up again, depending on where you are. Dudko also said in West Point and New Jersey they got hammered again with heavy rain. Dudko asked NPS how the traffic has been on the river. Hamilton said

he okay and that the river had been busy that weekend. He commented on the drowning in the Delaware Water Gap of a 19-year-old. Dudko asked if liveries will not rent out crats during high or muddy water. Hamilton said they have thresholds where they are required to use rafts only. Bill Dudko asked about personal crafts and Hamilton said that there are no regulations to stop people going out on their own. Hamilton said he recalled a boy scout leader coming to him and asking if they should take out their boy scouts on the river after a heavy rain, and the NPS had to give very strong advice against it. Hamilton commented on closing the Delaware River if conditions are not safe and Dudko said that she hoped people use common sense.

**Other:** Ramie said that she and Aaron Robinson attended the Pike/Wayne Conservation Legislative breakfast on July 14. While there, Pike County was offering brochures and pocket guides on ticks that she was now distributing. They have a pre-addressed envelope inside which can be used to send in a tick after being bitten for testing to identify what type it is, if the bite produced a bullseye rash. This appears to be limited to Pennsylvania residents, likely because it's funded through the Commonwealth.

**Public Comment:** None

**Adjourn:** The meeting ended at approximately 7:30 p.m.

*Meeting minutes prepared by Stephanie Driscoll, 7/24/23*