

Upper Delaware Council
WATER USE/RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMM. MEETING MINUTES
July 19, 2016

Committee Members Present: Tony Ritter, Al Henry, Deb Conway, Fred Peckham
Committee Members Absent: Pat Jeffer, Andy Boyar
NPS Partner: Don Hamilton
Staff: Laurie Ramie, Cindy Odell, Pete Golod
Guests: Larry Neal

The UDC's Water Use/Resource Management Committee held its monthly meeting on Tuesday, July 19, 2016 at the Council office in Narrowsburg, NY. Chairperson Ritter called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m.

A motion by Peckham seconded by Henry to approve the corrected June 21 meeting minutes was carried. There was no public comment on the agenda.

Ramie suggested switching the order of the agenda and addressing New Business A. "NPS Law Enforcement Contract Discussion – Larry Neal" first. Ritter agreed. Neal, NPS Chief of Law Enforcement for the Upper Delaware, said he was in attendance to seek suggestions for ways to distribute NPS funds to local law enforcement agencies. He spoke of the difficulties these agencies are facing receiving their funding due to the relocation of the contracting office to Boston and the issues with sole-sourcing contracting. Neal noted that per the River Management Plan, one of the responsibilities of the Secretary of Interior is to contract with river towns for local law enforcement assistance. One of Neal's suggestions for simplifying the process for the agencies would be for the UDC to serve as a possible pass-through for the funding for the local law enforcement contracts. He suggested the funding, which would be earmarked for law enforcement, could be distributed similar to the way grants are. Ramie noted that in the past, the river clean-up program was funded with pass-through funding from the Park Service. She questioned if this program would be run similarly. Neal said a specific amount of money would be tagged for law enforcement. He said the agencies currently involved are Sullivan County Sheriff's Department, Town of Highland, Town of Deerpark and the Town of Lumberland. Henry shared some historical information regarding the NPS law enforcement program. He questioned if the Superintendent is "on board" with the concept of the suggested program. Neal said she is on board with finding another mechanism for facilitating the funding of the law enforcement program. Members questioned how often the payments would be made. Neal said the payments would be made once a year. Neal explained the current process by which the law enforcement funding is allocated. Ramie noted the UDC would not want to be in position of deciding how the funding should be allocated if it is to come through the UDC. Henry suggested finding out why the current process is being obstructed. He noted it should not be so hard to fund law enforcement. Hamilton said he feels part of the problem is that the NPS is under the scrutiny of micro purchase thresholds of \$3,000 for equipment and \$2,500 for services. He said that anytime you go over those amounts in either category, you have to acquire multiple bids for the goods or services. Henry does not feel it should be so difficult to justify sole-source status for law enforcement in our area. After more discussion, it was decided that Neal would check with NPS Upper Delaware Administrative Officer Karen Henry on the feasibility of having the UDC serve as a fiduciary pass-through for the local law enforcement funding in FY 2017 and advise the UDC whether a letter from the UDC would be helpful to address payment processing issues that the local law enforcement agencies are facing. Neal asked members to consider the idea and to share any others they may come up with.

Old Business:

DRBC's Water Management Advisory Committee June 23 Webinar Update: Golod announced that he has been appointed as the UDC's representative to the DRBC Water Management Advisory Committee for a five-year term that began on July 1, 2016. He said he participated in the June 23rd meeting via webinar. He experienced some technical difficulties with the webinar format, he noted. Included in members' packets was a written report that he summarized from the Power Point presentation that was given. The next meeting is scheduled for October 27th. Ramie said he could consider attending that meeting in person.

Hamilton stated that sometimes it does help to be there in person. He said that the Park Service could try and coordinate travel with him in the future. They were not available to attend the June 23 meeting.

Upper Delaware BioBlitz June 24-25 Report: Hamilton reported that this year was the third BioBlitz. He said there was good participation from team leaders and scientists and the weather was good. He noted that the totals are not in on how many species were identified in the nine different groups. He feels the event was a successful one, although they would have liked to have seen more public there. The event was well advertised, but competed with a number of other events scheduled for the same day. Hamilton spoke of the scheduled events and workshops that took place, and exhibitors that were in attendance. Henry suggested holding the event while school is still in session. He feels it would be a good way to get kids involved if it could be worked into their curriculum. Ramie noted there will likely be a lot of interest in the report especially since there is now two years for which to compare the data. Hamilton said the Boy Scouts property that the BioBlitz was held on is a really neat area filled with much biodiversity. He spoke of the varied habitats. Golod said this was his first BioBlitz. He agreed with Hamilton about the low public participation, but thought the event ran like a well-oiled machine. He was impressed with the amount of diversity and the amount of the time devoted by those involved. Members shared ideas for increasing public participation. Henry offered a suggestion for a BioBlitz location in Beach Lake and passed along the contact information.

Upper Delaware Scenic Byway June 27th Meeting Minutes: The minutes of the June 27th meeting of the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway were provided in members' packets for their information. Ritter questioned if the high number of attendees was due to the presentation on Commercial Solar Energy Arrays. Ramie said that an extensive presentation about large scale commercial arrays was given by Co-Executive Directors Carol Roig and Stephen Stuart from Sullivan Alliance for Sustainable Development. Much information regarding this issue can be found on pages 4 – 6 of the minutes, she added.

Ramie said that a couple of representatives from NYS DOT Sullivan County Operations were in attendance to provide information on the Adopt-a-Highway program. The Byway is considering how they can use the program for litter clean-ups along Route 97. She said there will be more discussion at the July 25 meeting as to whether the Byway could adopt the entire mileage of the designated Byway and then go out and look for organizations or citizens that would be interested in participating in clean-ups.

Ramie said it was learned at this Byway meeting that Sullivan County had written a letter to NYS DOT asking if federal grant monies that had been secured by Rep. Hinchey in 2004 for a UDSB Visitor's Center and then thought lost could be used to build a visitor center for Montreign Casino. Ramie said interested parties had been told in good faith years ago that the money had been swept and all of a sudden it has resurfaced. The grant money available is approximately \$539,940. Ramie shared the history of the UDSB's Visitor's Center proposed project. She said the Byway organization was dismayed to have received no direct notification that the federal appropriation appears to still be in active play. A copy of their July 12 letter to NYS DOT was provided in members' packets. Ritter questioned if the UDC would want to get involved to the extent of writing its own letter to the NYS DOT. Ritter referred to the copy of the July 19th editorial from the *Sullivan County Democrat* provided in members' packets. Ritter shared his frustration with the local newspaper and a local business owner being supportive of the concept of the visitor center being in Monticello. Conway said she feels if decision makers were educated as to the history of the funding, they may be supportive of the Byway Visitor Center project. After much discussion a motion by Ritter to draft a letter regarding the proposed "re-purposing" of federal funding originally earmarked for an Upper Delaware Scenic Byway Visitor Center for action at the August 4 full Council meeting was seconded by Henry. Henry said he would like to know how over half a million dollars of federal funding has suddenly reappeared. Ritter read from the *Sullivan County Democrat* editorial which said "Our point is that while both destinations have a lot going for them, the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway has many supporters that will sustain it for generations to come. The rest of Sullivan County needs to have the same. Montreign will get the visitors here. We need a visitors center to tell them why they should stay and what else there is to do, and get them to come back again and again." After much discussion, a vote was taken and the motion passed with Peckham abstaining since the Town of Hancock is not a member of the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway, Inc.

NY-PA Interstate Bridges July 13 Meeting Report: Ramie referred to her written NY-PA Interstate Bridges July 13, 2016 Meeting Report provided in members' packets. She said the notes are a summary of

both the 3:30 meeting for municipal officials and the 6:30 meeting for the general public. Ramie said the evening meeting was much better attended than the afternoon one. Also included in members' packets was a DOT handout which includes bridge project information along with a time line showing the capital project schedule as of July 2016 for each project. Ramie said they are insistent that the Skinners Falls Bridge emergency repairs to bring the bridge back to a 4-ton limit will take place by August 29th. It was noted that it is in the contract with Leeward Construction that the repairs need to be done by that date or they face penalties. Detailed information of the proposed work is contained in the written report. Ramie did note that an 8'6" clearance portal (aka "headache" bar) will be installed to prevent oversized vehicles from crossing it. A brief discussion about the detour signs took place. Ramie reported that a series of emergency repairs will start in late July or early August of this year on the Cohecton-Damascus Bridge with one-lane traffic allowed. A capital project to replace the deck and do structural repairs will take place in 2019. Although not part of the NY PA Interstate Bridge system, Loren Goering of the NPS provided an update on the Roebling Bridge repair project. Regarding the Pond Eddy Bridge replacement project, it was noted that work is scheduled to begin in July 2016 with alternating boater diversions. Discussion about the justification for replacing the bridge given its limited use took place. The Narrowsburg-Darbytown Bridge rehabilitation project is still on schedule. The final design phase is 90% complete. The bids for the \$9.6 million project will be advertised in March 2017, opened in May, construction will occur over two seasons, and is slated to end in the fall of 2018. Much discussion took place regarding the 15 overnight closures. It was reported that the Kellams-Stalker Bridge will be closed for 8-9 months in 2017 for structural repairs and painting. An August 2016 public information meeting is to be scheduled in Callicoon to provide an overview on the Callicoon-Damascus Bridge project scheduled to take place in 2018. Ramie said that a discussion took place regarding DOT communications. Agency representatives were reminded that the Upper Delaware is a bi-state community and that it would be helpful if there was a combined source to share both PA and NY information regarding the bridges. Ideas for a central source, one of which included the UDC website, and ways to share information were discussed. NYS has 511ny.org for traffic alerts. PA issues alerts through its Public Information Officer, James May, who will include anyone on his email list who wishes it by contacting him at jamay@pa.gov. Ramie said the audience urged the DOT's to prioritize maintenance funding for the interstate bridges since decisions are often based on economics. Ramie referred to the letter of thanks to both NYS DOT and Penn DOT for holding the meeting that's been advocated for two years provided in members' packets. Henry questioned if any reports about the meeting have been published in the local press and referred to the closing of the Kellams-Stalker Bridge for 8-9 months as "pretty significant" due to the lack of bridges in that area.

Geotourism July 19 Conference Call Update: Ramie stated that this call took place earlier today. It was noted that there has been good publicity since the roll out of the Scenic Wild Delaware River Geotourism MapGuide. Time Warner Cable News' Valarie D'Elia did a segment on the Delaware River for her *Travel with Val* report on NY1 after attending the May 19th media event at the National Parks Conservation Association office in New York City. A new leadership team has been named for the Stewardship Council. The three chairs are Elaine Giguere for New York, Bryan Cope for Pennsylvania, and Brienne Rosner for New Jersey. Ramie reported that the grant has run out for the program and it now needs to be locally managed. There is a team in place to accomplish this. The Pocono Mountains Visitors Bureau has agreed to manage the website portion. It is intended for the approximately 40-member Stewardship Council to set up subcommittees to deal with specific issues. Ramie has volunteered to be a member of the Marketing and Promotion subcommittee which is dedicated to developing the brand of the Wild Scenic Delaware River. An effort to have all site contributors place a cross link to the Nat Geo Website on their website is underway, Ramie stated. Ramie reported that the Memorandum of Understanding to support the principles of Geotourism currently has 19 signatures of organizations on it, including the Upper Delaware Council. The strategic plan is being customized for this location and it is hoped it will be complete by late fall. A discussion about setting up a regular meeting schedule took place. Ramie said she inquired about the August 11th tour of the Upper Delaware by Congressional staff. She learned that the invitation is to be extended to state elected officials and perhaps local elected officials. Ramie will provide more information as it becomes available.

Referring back to the Visitor Center issue, Henry questioned if an Act of Congress had been required to authorize the move of the proposed USDB visitor center from Cohecton to Narrowsburg a few years ago,

what act of Congress is authorizing the move to the proposed Montreign site? Ramie said that is one of the “burning questions” and she will pose it in her letter.

Other: Peckham noted that the UDC’s letter to the NYC DEP requesting Support for an Early Warning System for Reservoir-Related Emergencies was printed in the *Hancock Herald* newspaper and he is receiving positive feedback from it. Peckham suggested involving the towns and townships in seeking this support. A motion by Peckham to prepare a sample letter to the NYC DEP to send to river municipalities requesting support for the UDC’s advocacy for implementation of an early warning system for emergency incidents involving Delaware River reservoirs was seconded by Henry. It was suggested to ask for information on existing sirens in their communities and for them to copy the UDC on any correspondence they send to collect for our records. A vote was taken and the motion passed. A brief discussion about sirens took place. Ramie provided the information she has collected to date on sirens in the river valley.

New Business

NPS Law Enforcement Contract Discussion – Larry Neal: Addressed at the beginning of the meeting.

May 27 Reservoir Releases Report – Don Hamilton, NPS: Hamilton referred to his written report provided in members’ packets. He stated that many Upper Delaware conservation interests expressed concerns about low water releases from the NYC Delaware River basin reservoirs, rising air temperatures, and rising water temperatures in the river. Multiple communications were sent to NYC DEP officials and Decree parties requesting additional reservoir releases to provide thermal stress relief and improved water levels. An agreement was reached to increase the releases from Cannonsville from 260 cfs to 380 cfs and Pepacton from 110 cfs to 125 cfs beginning at noon on May 27th. Hamilton said he included weather data in his report to provide extra context. He noted that during times of low water levels the river can heat up rapidly during days of high temperatures. He reviewed and offered explanations of his graphs with members. Hamilton noted that he is not drawing any conclusions on the effectiveness of the releases, but simply providing the information. He noted that West Branch releases are more effective in cooling the water. Peckham stated that he read today that New York State has declared a drought. He added that precipitation is currently about 6” below normal in this area. Ritter noted that the trout season was only about five weeks long this year due to river conditions. Henry said the purpose of this request was to try and determine if these releases are effective. Hamilton said it is hard to speculate what the temperature peaks would have been during the time period without the releases. Henry thanked Hamilton for conducting this research. Ritter questioned if anyone knows why there is so much algae in the West Branch. Members shared their opinions. Hamilton questioned how much agriculture is in that area. Peckham said there is quite a bit. Henry commented there have been more over-90 degrees days this year than last year. Peckham feels the absence of anchor ice contributes to the river conditions.

Delaware River Flow and Storage Report: A copy of the July 18th New York City DEP Current Reservoir Levels report was provided in members’ packets. Total storage as of that date was 89.4% with Cannonsville at 83.4%. Normal total storage for this date is 90.2%.

Other: None

Public Comment: None

Adjournment: A motion by Peckham seconded by Conway to adjourn the meeting at 9:15 p.m. was carried.