

## WATER USE/RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMM. MEETING MINUTES

**July 20, 2021**

Committee Members Present:	Andy Boyar, Ginny Dudko (phone), Fred Peckham, Al Henry, Pat Jeffer, Evan Padua
Committee Members Absent:	None
Staff:	Shannon Cilento, Ashley Hall-Bagdonas
NPS Partner:	Don Hamilton
Guests:	None

The UDC's Water Use/Resource Management Committee held its monthly meeting on Tuesday, July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021 at the UDC office in Narrowsburg, NY. Boyar called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Boyar said he was asked to co-chair because Dudko is a little under the weather and we wish her a speedy recovery.

**Approval of June 15, 2021 Meeting Minutes:** A motion by Henry, seconded by Padua approving the June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021 meeting minutes carried.

### **Old Business**

**WU/RM Tasks from Five-Year Plan:** Cilento said Henry was the sole respondent to the WU/RM Five-Year Plan comments. A few comments were organization-wise including adding numbers and she changed the document so you now can see numbers on the printout. There were a few tasks that had actionable items she felt were attainable in the short term. Henry said we had a meeting with Central New York Railroad (CNYK) in October 2019 where NPS Chief Ranger Keith Winslow reported that the Department of the Interior has funding available through the Inland Oil Spill Preparedness Project to cover such areas as risk assessment, Area Contingency Plans/Geographic Response Plans, training exercises, and projects that expand intergovernmental partnerships. NPS is working on submitting an application, with a pre-proposal application due by 11/15/19 and the full proposal package due in December. This funding could potentially cover the cost to hire a contractor or reimburse for staff time to develop a comprehensive emergency response guide with a notification plan based on an ICS model. If it was successful, NPS said they would seek partnerships to work on this jointly. Melanie Boyer said CNYK would be interested in participating in that, including providing any GIS data or other information needed. John Yagecic said that DRBC would like to be involved also. Henry said this project was supposed to be part of a valley-wide Emergency Response Plan. Hamilton said that Keith Winslow would be the best contact to reach out to. Henry also recommended working with hunting clubs directly, saying UDC can support conservation groups, but the best and most long-lasting groups would be the owners of the land and that would be members of hunting clubs. Henry also asked if there is a list of unique landforms? Hamilton said there were some that were identified in the Geologist Report NPS receives and he believes there were some identified in the river corridor. The committee requested a copy of the report. Henry also suggested coordinating the work of the Townships, PA and NY, DRBC and NPS to identify and protect endangered species and habitat in the river corridor. Members will inform the council of their respective protection programs and efforts through their UDC representatives. Also, identify flora and fauna that may be endangered or threatened and circulate the list. PA's list is very outdated and incorrect. It lists species that don't exist in the corridor.

Padua noted task four: Offer comments on any proposed changes to the National Park Service's Commercial Use Authorization (CUA) licensing system. He noted that Bonnie Sheard recently retired from NPS and he is not sure who will be handling the next CUA cycle. His concern with the last few years is that it gets done in March that year. Padua's business guides in the winter as well and there is a lapse from January 1<sup>st</sup> to whenever it's redone. He suggested getting it done before the turn of the new year. Hamilton said some of that is driven by when NPS staff gets reports in from CUA guides. He asked Padua to send that request to him via email. Padua noted task seven: Work with the NPS, NY and PA DOT, and other entities, as requested to develop new public accesses, river rest stops, and fishing accesses where appropriate. Padua recently went to a Back County Hunters and Anglers meeting

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where they expressed interest to improve accesses in the corridor. They mentioned Deposit and Hancock. He noticed that Long Eddy was named, that's been a stalemate recently. He suggested getting an update from DEC on that access. Cilento said if anyone else has comments or suggestions to email staff. Henry suggested prioritizing the tasks.

**Ten Mile River Access Update:** Cilento said Ramie relayed there will be an article in *Sullivan County Democrat's* Friday edition about the Ten Mile River (TMR) Access property. Ramie received a response from JHA Companies Structural Engineer Mark Ross. She emailed Boyar, Cilento and Hall-Bagdonas: "We just had a call at 4:40 from Mark Ross from JHA Companies in response to our June 21 letter. I explained our dilemma in receiving the feedback from the NPS Hydrologist that the current boat ramp design would likely not pass muster for the reasons stated and said we had hoped they would consider modifications to the design since they haven't completed their contract with us. He explained why they suggested the profile and materials that they did for this site from an engineering standpoint. I suggested that if they could articulate their rationale in a written document, that would be helpful for us since obviously we're not engineers. He said he will try to send us a response by 5. I told him if he needs to dedicate more thought to it based on our conversation, it's already a packed agenda and we can share it with the committee electronically when he's ready." Henry said the lease expires in March 2022. Padua asked if NPS would reconsider what they call TMR in the River Management Plan (RMP). It's considered a river rest stop in the RMP. Hamilton was in touch with Dan Gahagan who is the Chief Engineer with PA Fish & Boat Commission. They discussed plank ramps which can be found at some other NPS accesses. They are fabricated by PA Fish & Boat Commission. Gahagan said he would look into whether they can make the ramps for other agencies. Hamilton said Sullivan County got a project funded to rehabilitate the Highland Access which should be completed by the end of this summer. They are going to install a boat ramp for the carry-in access. It will also be handicapped accessible. The sediment of the riverbed there is very soft, like TMR. He feels it will be worthwhile to see how that boat ramp works out there. Boyar said TMR is a popular high use access and does the usage change justify the change to a river rest stop. The definition of TMR is not a river rest stop. The definition of a river rest stop tells you what you can and cannot have. River rest stops are not supposed to have roads going by them or ramps. Henry referenced a letter from NPS Regional Director Gay Vietzke to Larry Richardson where she references TMR as an access, not a river rest stop.

**USGS Response to UDC 7/1 Lordville Gage Letter:** Ramie sent the letter that was approved at the 7/1 meeting regarding flood stage information for the Lordville Gage to Jim Brewster, the Service Hydrologist/Meteorologist from the National Weather Service. Brewster said to expect a minimum of 3 months for processing the paperwork and providing a decision as to whether or not he can move forward.

**6/17 DRBC Water Management Advisory Committee Report:** Ramie provided a written report from the 6/17 DRBC Water Management Advisory Committee in the meeting packets.

**6/26 Keep Hawley Honesdale Beautiful Lackawaxen River Cleanup Report:** Hall-Bagdonas said the 6/26 event was organized by Keep Hawley-Honesdale Beautiful (KHHB) in cooperation with Housefly Fishing, the Upper Delaware Council and the Sea Scouts of BSA. The KHHB group started at the Honesdale CVS and proceeded along the Lackawaxen River towards White Mills, while a group of several dozen started at Housefly Fishing in Hawley and focused on the Lackawaxen from there. The cleanup netted around 25 tires, dozens of bags of litter, rusted scooters and bikes, and a parking meter. All trash was picked up by MMM Waste Removal and by Hawley Borough. Liam Mayo of *The River Reporter* wrote an article on 7/7 and also participated in the event. Hall-Bagdonas said Cilento shared about it on UDC's social media. Cilento said we are still accepting nominations for the UDC Award Banquet if Boyar would like to nominate KHHB and Housefly Fishing.

**6/28 Upper Delaware Scenic Byway Minutes:** A copy of the 6/28 Upper Delaware Scenic Byway minutes were provided in the meeting packets.

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**6/29 Highland River Access Bid Meeting:** Cilento and Hamilton attended the 6/29 meeting arranged by Sullivan County Planning. Cilento said there were two or three contractors there to hear about the work. On 7/9 the county extended the bid date through 7/21. As the project progresses staff will keep members updated. Padua said it seems crazy to him to put a concrete ramp into the river where people have to walk 120 steps to get there to use it. Hamilton said it's in order to provide a correct slope for handicap access.

**7/9 Local History Roundtable Meeting Report:** Hall-Bagdonas attended the 7/9 meeting and reported that the Local History Festival will be September 25<sup>th</sup> at the Dorflinger Factory Museum in White Mills, Pa and will feature a presentation from S. Robert Powell at 10 a.m. with the festival to follow from 11-3 p.m. with displays and slideshows. Set up will be at 8 a.m. The theme this year is "*Rediscovering Local History After the Pandemic*". The next D&H THC meeting is July 28<sup>th</sup> at Lock 31 Park, Hawley There will be an Equinunk Volunteer Fireman's Car Show August 21<sup>st</sup>. Canal Fest by the Wayne County Historical Society is also Saturday August 21<sup>st</sup> in Hawley.

**7/15 NPS Water Safety Committee Meeting Report:** Cilento attended the 7/15 meeting. New Water Safety Program Manager Ron Babus led that meeting. Lifejacket wear and the recent drownings were a huge topic. The conclusion of the meeting was that Superintendent Salvatore and Law Enforcement would be applying to the Regional Office to do a Behavioral Study of why people are or are not wearing life jackets. Cilento suggested that we need to do something now. Salvatore said NPS doesn't really have time for a PSA campaign. Cilento said she had spoken with Ingrid Peterec and Susie Kaspar of NPS before the meeting and they were on board with it. Peterec, Kaspar and the Interpretation staff are going to work to do more social media outreach. Cilento made a graphic about river safety with safety tips and what to do if you capsize. That post got over 200 shares on Facebook and over 14,000 people saw the post. On Instagram we had 1,000 people reached. 32% of those 1,000 people reached didn't follow UDC. That means we are reaching out beyond our followers which is great. Cilento has been brainstorming with Hall-Bagdonas as well as with Peterec and Kaspar and she would like to share mini-PSA videos and use the hashtag #WhyIWearIt. Cilento said it would be important to have someone from the Highland Rescue Dive Team, Law Enforcement, UDC members, anglers and others to contribute a 15-second video on why they wear a lifejacket to get the message out. They will be working with Sullivan County 180 to do some outreach in Spanish with the hashtag #PorQuéLoUso because 4 out of the 5 drownings were Hispanic individuals, therefore targeting that demographic was important to NPS. There's a huge Hispanic community in Sullivan County. Cilento said she thinks important that we're getting the message out to everyone that uses the river.

Boyar ran into Fred Stabbert from the *Sullivan County Democrat*. He printed up 200 posters to be placed in Cedar Rapids area and by campgrounds. Cilento said Stabbert called asking if UDC wanted to pay for printing and Ramie told them UDC would be happy to help with distribution and getting the word out but as far as hard costs we can't because we have no advertising budget. Boyar asked if NPS has pinpointed where the incidents happen? Hamilton said NPS has a database. Boyar said the NPS data with location, age, and whether alcohol was involved is very valuable. He said it would be valuable to know where so those posters and the NPS life jacket lawn signs can be placed there. Cilento said in addition to the 5 drownings there were 2 close calls. One was a small child who couldn't swim by Skinner's Falls. Hamilton said the life jacket loaner stations have been places at some of the high incident locations. Hamilton said some of the liveries are reluctant to scare their clientele by telling them it's a dangerous river. Boyar said he had heard as far as river-related deaths the Delaware is most dangerous in the country. Hamilton said he doesn't know about that but the Delaware River supports the largest livery industry in the country. There are thousands of people on it on some weekends. Liveries are required to give safety talks to people before they go out on the river. Hamilton said on a hot day people don't want to wear life jackets and unfortunately a lot of those people end up being fatalities. Boyar said he thinks the Water Safety Committee should know if this river is the most dangerous in the national park system. These are the first drownings in the Upper Delaware in four years. Boyar said he thinks there is a trend with heat events. Hamilton said he was amazed there were no fatalities last year with the high use in the river corridor. There were a few close calls. Henry recommended contacting the Washington office and request the fatality statistics. Henry said it's a mindset with the drowning deaths. It's hard for people to come from places that don't require wearing a life jacket like the beach or pools and be told to wear a life jacket on the river. Boyar said there is work to be done to figure this out. Cilento said she brought up at the 7/15 meeting she heard people locally saying "I don't wear a life jacket because I grew up here and I know the river."

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She said that's really dangerous for people to say and the message of life jacket safety needs to be relayed to everybody.

**Plastic Free July and Leave No Trace Digital Campaign Partnership:** Cilento said for Plastic Free July we did a post on social media with Friends of the Upper Delaware River (FUDR), Orange County Land Trust, Delaware Highlands Conservancy and New York League of Conservation Voters to promote Plastic Free July and removing single use plastics in the month of July. It described how you can make simple changes at the campground or in the kitchen to reduce that use. Cilento also mentioned the NPS Microplastics study that was just released. That got good traction on social media.

**UDC Litter Clean-up Kits Update:** Cilento said at last month's meeting we discussed cleanup safety guidelines and disposal options. Cilento and Hall-Bagdonas took those suggestions and came up with a list of all the disposal options in all four counties to put in the buckets. They also have to sign a waiver when they sign out the litter clean-up kits. Cilento asked Peterec from the NPS to laminate a dozen of the lists so they can be put in the cleanup kits.

**Delaware River Sojourn Planning Update:** The event is from 8/6-8/13. 8/6-8/10 are in the Upper Delaware corridor. There's going to be a pre-first day litter clean up in Hancock at the Bard Parker Access on 8/6. On 8/9 and 8/10 Michael Crane who will be doing UDC's Fiscal Plan is coming from Vermont. Cilento received a comp ticket because she is on the Sojourn Planning Committee and he will be using that to participate on the river and get stay here for a few days to get a lay of the land and experience the area. Cilento said Crane is excited for the event. The Lord High Admirals for the four days are Dan Plummer from FUDR, Kevin Reish who recently retired from NPS, Lori McKean and Susan Beecher are being honored, and on 8/10 Congressman Matt Cartwright may be the Lord High Admiral. Cilento said there are about 100 signed up for every day.

**Upper Delaware BioBlitz Update:** Cilento said BioBlitz is still happening and UDC is promoting it via social media. A few teams still need to go out and finalize the results. Everything should be done by fall.

**Other:** Boyar asked if anyone had an update of the Knotweed Eradication Program? Hamilton said they are doing various treatments at the three sites at Skinners Falls DEC / NPS boat access which has a solid mature stand of Japanese Knotweed. A similar site is at Deposit Village Park. There will be another demonstration site at Hancock Firemen's Field. Hamilton attended the demonstration at Skinners Falls. It was well attended with about 35 people. Hamilton said the results haven't been quantified yet. Ramie will be doing an article about the demonstrations in the latest newsletter. Padua said a unique spot on the Delaware River is Skinners Falls, where there are large Sycamore trees and also Japanese Knotweed but if you see a spot with a lot of small Sycamore trees there isn't any Japanese Knotweed there. Hamilton said there are some trees that have allelopathic chemicals that suppress Japanese Knotweed and he believes Black Walnut is one of those trees.

Padua said regarding the Highland Access being improved and including a handicap access; besides Mongaup is there another public access south of Highland in the corridor? Hamilton said Barryville Access, which you access through the gate under the bridge. He asked if you launch your boat at the Highland Access; Sparrowbush is the next public access? Hamilton said you could carry a boat down the Barryville access. Padua said there's not much room to have a river rest stop. Henry said there was the Quicks Eddy River Rest Stop but the Boy Scouts of America sold the land. He said NPS also contemplating having a River Rest Area at the Cowen office but there are problems with ramps there.

Henry said the only way we're going to seriously address drownings is if the local liveries enforce their contracts that say you must wear a life jackets at all times. They could improve upon that and say if you are camping at their liveries you must wear a life jacket when you go swimming in the river.

**New Business**

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**Draft Letter: Orange County D&H Trail Grant Application:** Cilento said UDC had received a request through the D&H Canal Transportation Heritage Council which we are part of. There is a CFA grant application before Orange County for a grant for trail development for the Orange County D&H Canal along the Neversink. A copy of the draft support letter was provided in the meeting packet. A Motion by Henry seconded by Padua to approve the draft letter for support of Orange County D&H Trails Grant Application carried.

**Earth to Sky Brochure Proposal for UDC Sponsorship of OSII Grant:** Cilento said she and Hamilton participated in the Earth to Sky program through NASA doing Climate Change training and Upper Delaware-based training on creating communities that help tackle climate change. Cilento was on the Sullivan County team and they would like to apply for a program that would enable them to produce a landowner outreach brochure that discusses the River Management Plan (RMP) and the protections it has in the document such as a riparian buffer. Cilento said the purpose of this letter is that in order to apply for the grant you have to write a Letter of Interest. UDC would be the main applicant but there would be no cost to us. A Motion by Henry seconded by Jeffer carried with one abstention.

**7/25 World Drowning Prevention Day:** Cilento said this is relevant to the discussion earlier. 7/25 happens to be World Drowning Prevention Day and UDC will be doing social media posts around that topic.

**Delaware River Flow & Storage Report:** A copy of the 7/19 DRBC Hydrological Conditions Report was provided in members' packets. Total combined storage was at 100.2%.

**Other:** Peckham said Town of Hancock was flooded. He said the drainage system is terrible there because they try to pump it all through the sewage treatment plant.

Peckham said Hancock Fireman's Field Days are 7/23 and 7/24. They have great fireworks on 7/23 and a Lumberjack Festival on 7/24.

**Public Comment:** None.

**Adjournment:** A motion by Henry seconded by Peckham, to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 p.m. was carried.

*Minutes prepared by Ashley Hall-Bagdonas 7/30/2021*