

**WATER USE/RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMM. MEETING MINUTES**  
**August 15, 2023**

Committee Members Present: Ginny Dudko, Al Henry, Dennis Bernitt, Fred Peckham (Zoom), Evan Padua, Andy Boyar (Zoom), Pat Jeffer  
Committee Members Absent: None  
Staff: Laurie Ramie, Stephanie Driscoll, Kerry Engelhardt  
NPS Partner: Don Hamilton- Chief of Natural and Cultural Resources  
Guests: Bill Dudko- Deerpark Alternate

The UDC’s Water Use/Resource Management Committee held its monthly meeting on Tuesday, August 15, 2023 at 6:30 p.m. Chairperson Dudko called the meeting to order at 6:32pm.

**Approval of July 18, 2023 meeting minutes:** A motion by Henry seconded by Padua approving the July 18th, 2023 meeting minutes carried. There was no public comment on the agenda.

**Old Business:**

**7/21 Pike/Wayne County Homeowners’ Resource Fair:** Engelhardt tabled at this 2<sup>nd</sup> annual event. It was held indoors at the Environmental Learning Center in Lake Wallenpaupack where there was a better turnout this year than last year. Engelhardt spoke to a lot of people at the event, handed out brochures and had several people sign up for the newsletter. G. Dudko commented that it’s good to let people know the UDC exists, even if they don’t live within the corridor. She said that it was an event she wasn’t aware of and Engelhardt replied last year the event was smaller, with only 4 or 5 tables. Dudko thanked the staff for all their involvement with events to get the word out on the UDC. Ramie asked if the event is Pennsylvania oriented and Engelhardt said yes, it comes out of the Pike/Wayne Conservation Partnership. The makeup of that coalition will be changing with the Deputy Director of the Pike County Conservation District, Michele Long, retiring. Ramie said that people said their goodbyes to Long at the Pennsylvania Legislative Breakfast that she and Robinson attended on July 14<sup>th</sup>.

G. Dudko mentioned that B. Dudko was using the new tablet that was purchased to test out converting from paper meeting packets to electronic packets.

**7/24 Upper Delaware Scenic Byway Meeting:** A copy of the minutes were included in the packet. Ramie reported there was a grant application for the Promoting Butterflies program by a new company called Educational Innovations, LLC of Pond Eddy to install a garden for pollinator propagation. There were a lot of questions on the topic, so it was deferred until next month so the applicants can come in and answer some questions, since people aren’t familiar with their new LLC. The project would include installing a garden parallel to Route 97, and holding workshops to make seed pods and discuss what butterflies need to survive.

Program Manager John Pizzolato reported his meetings coming up in August with the Governor’s office, Congressmen Pat Ryan and U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand to discuss a budget proposal of \$150,000 that he and the byway would like to raise for 2024. The budget breakdown would include funds to support the UDSB Visitors Center operations. August 6<sup>th</sup> was the end of Pizzolato’s 6-month contract as program manager. There is a pause on the position until there is new funding to support it.

The next UDSB meeting on August 28<sup>th</sup> will have a presentation by Apptegy, a company that designs and maintains websites. The update of the UDSB website has been in progress for a couple of years. Apptegy has staff of 22 dedicated people on call for the website and has an app available for emergencies such as road closure or flooding alerts. The UDSB committee will weigh pros and cons of working with a company like that in terms of costs and services.

Richard Lowe III had a prototype built of the solar Wi-Fi enabled trash receptacles that had been talked about in years past. It will be ready in a couple of months to start testing and will be placed along private property within the corridor to monitor how it functions. Lowe also spoke about testing out a tracker device that counts people in public spaces. The device pings off cellphones and gives information such as where you are, how long you stay, and when you come and go. Hancock has been using a device like this at their Electric Vehicle charging stations and their dog park to track how many people the sites are attracting. Lowe said this would be something that would be available to any other byway corridor community as well. On behalf of the NPS, Ingrid Peterec said they are expert at counting people and they have that data available for the Route 97 Roebling Bridge traffic if it's ever useful for grant applications or any other reason.

There were two new "Keep the Byway Clean" sign installed in Narrowsburg. That leaves Port Jervis, Lumberland, Callicoon, and Hancock that still need to have signs installed on Route 97. They will be installed on existing route markers.

Ramie reported there are some disgruntled citizens who are remaining anonymous, but have written many inflammatory letters and accusations against the current leadership and board for the UDSB Visitors Center at The Callicoon Depot project. There was a public Town Hall style meeting held on August 1<sup>st</sup> that she could not attend due to the UDC sponsored Scranton/Wilkes-Barre RailRiders game. Legal action is being contemplated, including a cease-and-desist letter to that email address. This situation may lead to the UDSB reassessing its relationship with The Callicoon Depot project because of all the controversy and damage that it's causing publicly and privately to the individuals involved.

The DOT reported on a guide rail replacement project that is taking place in the Town of Lumberland. It will be approximately 5 ½ miles long, beginning east of Berme and Church Rd and ending at the Sullivan/Orange County line. This will happen during this construction season, with no specific date given. There will be some temporary lane closures controlled via flaggers.

Sullivan County is applying for another river accesses improvement grant with a request for over \$1 million dollars. This is the type of funding that was put into the Highland River Access. Ramie isn't sure what that grant consists of; she said it was unusual that the UDC nor the UDSB was approached to write a letter of support. Sullivan County Planning Commissioner Heather Brown had sent requests for such letters to various towns along the corridor. They will try to find out more about that. The next UDSB meeting date is Monday, August 28<sup>th</sup>.

Boyar directed the committee's attention to page 2 at the bottom of the minutes. He said it seems that there is a lot of funding available and that was made clear in the newspapers with the Highland Access. Reflected in the minutes were Pizzolato's meetings with NYS Lieutenant Governor Antonio Delgado, U.S. Congressman Ryan, and Senator Gillibrand where he plans to present a \$150,000 budget for 2024. He said that it's an indication that the UDC had missed opportunities for funding. Boyar said it's frustrating that the UDC can't get officials' attention. G. Dudko agreed with Boyar and brought up the next item on the agenda; the \$4.2 billion Environmental Bond Act. She said that if that doesn't include what the UDC does, she doesn't know what would. B. Dudko mentioned he believes the UDSB has lost the direction they are supposed to be going. He thinks they have become a "a business association" for everyone. The UDSB was only supposed to support businesses along the byway. Boyar commented that we need to "put our thinking caps on" and figure out how to obtain funding for the UDC.

**7/26 NYS Environmental Bond Act Listening Session:** A report on the July 26<sup>th</sup> listening session was included in the packet. Driscoll reported the session took you through what the NYS Environmental Bond Act is; how much money is available and to what categories; and how to apply. Applying seems fairly easy. You fill out one application that narrows your choices down based on the appropriate category. There were a couple examples on past projects as well, and some questions from listeners were answered during the session. G. Dudko said she knows they break it down into their own categories but the point is, there's a lot of money. Driscoll said they broke down how much money, not more than or less than, would go into each category. Driscoll reported that there were over 100 listeners during the session.

Boyar mentioned the fires in Hawaii, and that there was no alarm or signal that had gone out to alert people of the fires. One of the categories in the Bond Act is flood risk reduction. The council has been talking about having a warning system and we never seem to get past the first step of just talking about it. He thinks that if something were to happen in the middle of the night that a warning system is important, as the people of Maui unfortunately learned. We'd have the same situation if there was a catastrophic dam failure. He said that maybe that's something to think about for a grant. G. Dudko agreed that it was something to look into.

**7/26 D&H Transportation Heritage Council Meeting:** Ramie reported the meeting took place in Hawley at the D&H Canal Park at Lock 31 under the newly dedicated Clinton Leet Memorial Pavilion. The pavilion looks like a canal boat sitting on the water, but is a façade of a canal boat on top of a pavilion. It was built to give the illusion of what a post 1850's boat would look like floating on the water. Sally Talaga from the Wayne County Historical Society said the entire project cost approximately \$100,000, but \$80,000 of that was for the pavilion specifically that came in a kit shipped from Florida. A lot of volunteer labor went into the construction.

Bylaws were adopted during this meeting. Since the D&H had become incorporated organization, a board of trustees has now been named so clauses about that needed to be incorporated into these bylaws. It also changed the meeting schedule and now the full council will meet three times a year, and the trustees will meet four times a year. Ramie said, for the D&H Canal 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, one of the board members has a connection with someone who can get an American postage stamp commissioned to recognize the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. It's a three-year process to do this and would be ready in 2028, which is still within the time-frame. They are talking about ways to commemorate other milestone dates involved. It was mentioned was that the NPS has an existing program called "Take a Hike" that provides patches after hiking trails they list on a map in the brochure. Canal trails could be put in a brochure and digital publication for a similar initiative.

Talaga had given a tour of the Daniels farmhouse. Ramie commented that it's amazing how the farmhouse has been transformed from the early days when she had seen it, when it was a deteriorating old structure. They put new plaster on the walls and uncovered what was beneath the wallpaper and different paint to restore it back to its original appearance. They found people had scrawled across the walls with messages, dates and names from the 1800's. As they restore each room, they are furnishing it to the period for interpretation. The Canal Park will be the site for this Saturday's 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Canal Festival from 10am-4pm with free admission. There will be vendors; live traditional music; guided history; nature walks; demonstrations and programs such as Native American dancing, an archaeology dig, blacksmithing, textile arts and wood carving; youth activities; and food for sale by a professional chef who donates his time.

During the DHTHC meeting Ramie passed around the summer issue of "The Upper Delaware" newsletter and spoke about the raft trip which was still pending at that time and the River Valley Awards on September 10<sup>th</sup>.

Additional actions were to re-order more of the popular historic DVDs. There are now 4 chapters covering different sections of the canal corridor and the gravity railroad. Chapters 5 and 6 are being filmed now, and are the final two in the series that started in Carbondale and goes up to Ulster County.

The next DHTHC Board of Trustees meeting will be September 27<sup>th</sup>, hosted at the UDC meeting room. The full membership of the DHTHC will meet on October 25<sup>th</sup> possibly in Wurtsboro.

G Dudko told Ramie she saw that Judy Gunmaer Testa gave a report on the canal museum in Cuddebackville and asked if there had been any progress. Ramie said no, Orange County closed it abruptly and locked the museum out of the facility. B Dudko mentioned they approached Historian Norma Schadt in Deerpark but that they don't have the man-power to help.

**8/8 Delaware River Sojourn Steering Committee:** Engelhardt reported that this was the first Sojourn Steering Committee since the Sojourn happened in June. In 2024 they will be looking at similar paddles that were done in 2022. They will be going into Lower Delaware this time and possibly adding an extra

day and doing a paddle in the tidal portion of the Delaware. Engelhardt said they suggested doing some tributaries, that they have paddled the Lackawaxen River in the past. They will contact Brookfield Renewable Energy to make sure they get a release on that day to have sufficient water in the river. Financials were discussed. They wouldn't be able to put the paddle on without a grant as they aren't self-sustaining. They will try to be more self-sustaining this year by increasing income opportunities and decreasing expenses. They discussed a family who had originally signed on for the whole week that had disappeared halfway through and didn't tell anyone. They later said it was because someone had pulled a muscle getting out of a boat, others said they heard them talking about rain later in the week and that they had wanted a refund. PayPal gave them a refund, because they did a charge back. They talked about how to address situations like that moving forward, and are looking for PayPal alternatives. One of the bussing vendors may be interested in bussing the entire sojourn and having their drivers camp with the sojourners next year, as they were very excited about the event. Driftstone Campground, which was the middle Delaware campground this past year, is under new ownership but they were enthusiastic about the program, charged a much lower rate, and stated they would continue to give a discount. Engelhardt is looking forward to finding to programs and paddles for next year. She likes being involved in the project and will try to take a more active role in day planning this coming year. G Dudko commented that developing partners is a great thing. Henry recommended no refunds. Engelhardt said there is a refund policy. Henry said that if you make a plan to go on a trip down the river and it rains, you shouldn't get your money back. Engelhardt said the current refund policy is that, to get your money back, you have to cancel the week before. Henry said to be cautious going down the Lackawaxen River. In past Sojourns and NPS runs on the Lackawaxen, they had major problems with near-drownings. The Lackawaxen is not at all like the Delaware River. He said that when there's a release, it's not a place for beginners. It's not easily accessible for rescues and to get people in and out. Ramie asked if there were confirmed dates for 2024? Engelhardt said yes, June 14<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup>. Ramie asked if they had a theme yet, and they do not.

**Trash Clean-up at the Railroad Bridge #2 Sparrowbush Access:** Ramie said that B. Dudko had shared photos of the overflow of trash at the Sparrowbush Access dumpsters and asked if something could be done. Ramie sent the photos to various contacts explaining the issue is outside the corridor boundaries, but was trying to find out who should be alerted. Town of Deerpark Highway Superintendent Ed Hughson wrote back saying Orange County owns the land, the DEC takes care of the trash removal, and the Highway Dept. usually goes over to clean up after the weekend. He planned to look into it to see what they could do. Ramie thanked him for his prompt response and how environmentally conscious the Town of Deerpark Highway Dept. is. Ryan Coulter also added thanks and that he would see what he could do on the DEC's end to get there more often. Ramie wanted to bring the topic to a close now that the question was asked and answered. G. Dudko asked where the boundary ends. B. Dudko answered right after the Number 2 Railroad Bridge. Padua commented that the DEC should be getting there more often. B. Dudko said that they have a contract with a private company for the garbage pick-up and that's done once a week. Padua said this is the reason there are no dumpsters on the Upper Delaware corridor, so there's nowhere to put garbage. G. Dudko thanked Ramie for following up on the Sparrowbush Access dumpster issue.

**Other:** None.

### **New Business:**

**Upper Delaware Council Public Safety Concerns Briefing:** A handout was included in the packet of the email that was sent to Sullivan County Public Safety Commissioner Scott Schulte with the UDC public safety concerns after the August 3<sup>rd</sup> presentation he gave at the UDC meeting. Ramie said the danger that Boyar had earlier mentioned with the reservoir was mentioned and the 911 call about the tree threatening the railroad tracks in Callicoon that happened, among other concerns. Around 1pm today Ramie forwarded an email from Schulte to the council members about the investigation on the 911 call from that July 14<sup>th</sup> incident. Ramie read the transcript from the 911 call and Schulte's email saying that

since the caller only stated the tree had fallen “on the bridge” and not the tracks, the dispatcher immediately alerted the DOT which oversees issues impacting the bridge and Route 17B. Schulte said that additionally, they had confirmed that the Sullivan County 911 Center has a current contact number for the New York Susquehanna and Western Railroad dispatch center, and incidents involving railroad property are routed through them. He wrote that he hoped this information settles some nerves and ensure community members that the Public Safety Emergency Service dispatchers are committed to safe and appropriate incident resolutions. Ramie asked if there were any more questions or concerns about the incident. Henry said he would hope that if someone called 911 and said there was a tree down that the dispatcher would ask where the tree had fallen. He thinks the dispatcher should have gotten more information. B. Dudko commented the dispatcher might not have known there were railroad tracks in the area. He thinks that the dispatchers should be shown their territories. Ramie said the article about the incident in the *Sullivan County Democrat* never mentioned the DOT. They handled it by calling in a private tree service and the caller ended up being the person to contact Verizon and NYSEG to make sure power lines weren’t affected. It seems like 911 would have taken those steps, not the individual who witnessed it. Norfolk Southern ultimately did respond and handled the situation by calling in Woodbourne Lawn and Garden to remove the fallen tree. Henry asked if there was a tree actually on the tracks or if it had fallen on the viaduct. Ramie said the tree was leaning on the Norfolk Southern Railroad trestle and had not fallen all the way to the ground. Ramie said she presumes that Schulte and his office are looking into the other concerns listed on the report she had sent. Henry referred to number 3 on page 2 of the public safety concerns report about the Railroad Emergency Guide. He said it’s been since 2018 that the NPS said they were waiting on a grant to combine the railroad emergency guide with the rest of emergency protocol and it would be nice to know when that is going to happen. Ramie said Kurnath had given an update on where the NPS was with the process. The next step is a live exercise for the training scenario. She said things are happening; they are just behind the scenes and Ramie said that the UDC has participated in some of the exercises. Hamilton asked how long ago Kurnath gave the update on the topic. Ramie said it was on the July 18<sup>th</sup> WU/RM meeting as an agenda topic that Kurnath had given an update, that she knew that the process had taken longer than some might have hoped, however she disagreed that the project had gotten lost. The committee discussed the status of the response plan in February at a WU/RM meeting and then in March at a full council meeting and Kurnath included an excerpt of the meeting minutes to refresh everyone’s memory. The report Kurnath had given back in July was that the response to the East Palestine disaster has taken up the EPA’s bandwidth these last few months. Now the NPS is in the peak summer season. Kurnath hopes that everyone could agree they are appropriately focused on the visitors recreating on the Delaware River. The attention will be turned back to the response plan after the summer season.

**Skinnners Falls-Milanville Bridge Update:** Ramie had put together a slideshow of photos of the detour sign and Skinnners Falls-Milanville Bridge barricade. She said Rick Lander had approached her about some complaints so she went to the bridge to look for herself on August 14<sup>th</sup>. The first photo was the detour sign. Lander thinks the detour signs are unnecessary and confuse people. The detour sign is pointing down Skinnners Falls Drive but that is not the detour; that’s where it’s closed. The signs do say the bridge is closed, and the road is opened to local traffic to the local businesses along the road. Lander thinks that the detour should be taken out and the rest of the signs should remain. The next photo was a close up of the sign to show its mixed message. Henry said the sign complements the rest of the detour signs that direct people from Pennsylvania. The sign points to Skinnners Falls, which is the right place. The sign states the destination, not the detour. He said that the detour signs all over are confusing, with people having taken the Skinnners Falls part off or the detour part off. The sign is set up that way to get to Skinnners Falls access, since they don’t want people going up the Pennsylvania side. Ramie said it’s confusing if you’re starting in New York. Ramie said when Peterec was at the August 3<sup>rd</sup> UDC meeting, she had mentioned the agency level meeting on site at Skinnners Falls Bridge. Perhaps after that meeting, they installed a barricade over the bridge. The barricade is pictured made out of metal rebar with Danger and No Trespassing signs posted. You can no longer walk on foot or take your bike across the bridge. The

next photos show the barricade from different angles and a close up of the deteriorating wooden planks. The bridge had been closed to traffic and pedestrians, but people were ignoring the signs and still walking on the bridge. Hamilton asked what year the wooden planks on the bridge had been replaced. Henry said maybe 20/30 years ago. G. Dudko said that it had probably been about 30 years. Henry said some of the nails started coming out of the planks. When Lander spoke to Henry, he wanted the pile of dirt that was acting as a barricade cleaned up and said that it looked terrible. Padua said that the Skinners Falls Bridge has been sitting for a while, and they keep adding more signs and different barricades.

**CRISP Flyers:** Three flyers were included in the packet: one of the Northern Snakehead; the next on “Clean, Drain, Treat”; and the last “Don’t Lose Your Carp!” Ramie said that the UDC staff had met a couple employees from CRISP (Catskill Regional Invasive Species Partnership) at the Zane Grey Festival on July 15<sup>th</sup> and they had also stopped in the office to drop off the included flyers. Ramie has asked CRISP if they would come in to do a presentation on their services and how their program operates. There is now an opening in September, since the original presentation planned by Jen Garigliano from NYC DEP has been postponed until October with a scheduling conflict. We are waiting on a response from Leeann Bruetsch and Mary Keefe from CRISP about coming in for the September presentation at the full council meeting. B. Dudko asked Hamilton if the Snakeheads were edible. Hamilton said yes, they are actually good eating and that’s how they get spread around. G. Dudko asked Hamilton if there had been any update on the Snakeheads. Hamilton said DEC had caught some at the end of June in Callicoon and he had heard of one other caught in the inlet between Milanville and Narrowsburg. Padua said that they are trying to say that if you let your goldfish go into the river, it could turn into the massive Carp pictured on the “Don’t Lose Your Carp!” flyer. He said that in theory, that’s how the Snakehead got in our river. Padua had a CRISP employee approach him at Ten Mile River and thought they were very thorough and educated. They gave him the “Clean, Drain, Treat” flyer. Padua let the committee know that CRISP is looking for a new Snakehead specimen. Hamilton said CRISP has a good presence and asked if the person Padua had met at TMR was there regularly. Padua said not that he’s noticed, that it was similar to the NPS intern rangers and that they set up at different times at different accesses. Hamilton asked if they’ve been at the Narrowsburg access. Padua said he’s not really sure, but the person who was there recently he hadn’t spoken to before, that her name was Shannon and she was very informative. Ramie said it’s the “Watershed Steward Program of CRISP” who we invited to speak. During their presentation we can find out where they sit, and how often. The card says they are affiliated with SUNY Oneonta to which Hamilton said yes, they are. G. Dudko asked Hamilton about the invasive mussels. Hamilton said the mussel population isn’t an issue anymore because the calcium concentration is too low for them. There are 9 species of native mussels, and they are doing fine. G. Dudko commented that the Delaware River is a healthy river and Hamilton agreed that it’s clean water. The primary host fish for Eastern Elliptio mussels are American Eels. They enable mussels to reproduce and the Delaware River is one of the rivers where they have an abundance of access to host fish. G. Dudko said there was a recent article in “The Conservationist” magazine about the American Eel, and all they mentioned was the Hudson River. B. Dudko said that there is a complaint about rock salt and bleach getting into the river, but on the CRISP flyer they tell you to use it to clean your boat. Hamilton said it’s to soak boots in, or something along those lines. Ramie said that’s why they were invited to speak about these issues. Hamilton said what he’s seen CRISP advocating is having a bucket of the solution to clean your boat away from the river. B. Dudko said it just sounds contradictory.

**Delaware River Flow & Storage Report:** A copy of the report was included in the packet. G. Dudko commented that we’ve had fairly good precipitation in the last part of the summer compared to spring.

**Other:** Henry mentioned he met John Paul “Jack” Harris Jr. that day. He is a writer and wrote a self-published book “Beyond My Wildest Dreams”. Henry was in a restaurant with his orange litter sweep t-shirt on and it had caught Harris’s attention. Harris gave Henry one of his cards and wanted to drive in tonight to give a speech. Henry told him that we would let him know if the UDC would be interested in

having him in for a presentation. He said that Harris has worked with the Pennsylvania Game Commission doing bear research for many years and had done trips to Alaska to work with bear. Harris's biggest concern to Henry was trash, and how much he picks up a day. Henry thought it might be a good contact and interesting to have him in. Ramie said coincidentally she had a friend who worked for a publishing company and when she was working freelance, they asked her to be a copy editor on "Beyond My Wildest Dreams". She said the book is based on his sportsmen's adventures primarily. Henry asked if Ramie had the book to share it so people can look at it and she said yes. G. Dudko said she and B. Dudko have found that the orange litter sweep shirts gather a lot of attention and gives a great opening to talk about the UDC.

Ramie said Garigliano will be presenting information about the NYC reservoir aqueduct shutdown delay at the Regulated Flow Advisory Committee meeting which is 10am August 16<sup>th</sup> if anyone was interested in joining virtually. The same presentation will be given in October at the full council meeting, but it's possible with changing conditions the information may be different by then.

**Public Comment:** None

**Adjourn:** A Motion by Bernitt seconded by Padua to adjourn the meeting at 7:47 p.m. carried.

*Meeting minutes prepared by Stephanie Driscoll, 8/18/2023*