

WATER USE/RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMM. MEETING MINUTES
August 17, 2021

Committee Members Present: Ginny Dudko, Andy Boyar, Fred Peckham (Zoom), Al Henry, Evan Padua (Zoom)
Committee Members Absent: Pat Jeffer
Staff: Laurie Ramie, Shannon Cilento, Ashley Hall-Bagdonas (Zoom)
NPS Partner: Don Hamilton
Guests: Bill Dudko

The UDC's Water Use/Resource Management Committee held its monthly meeting on Tuesday, July 20th, 2021 at the UDC office in Narrowsburg, NY. Dudko called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Approval of June 20th, 2021 Meeting Minutes: A motion by Boyar, seconded by Henry approving the July 20th, 2021 meeting minutes carried.

Old Business

Ten Mile River Access Update: Ramie said this was discussed at the 8/5 full Council meeting in terms of the possible NPS acquisition of the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) property and whether we should go any further until that develops. JHA Companies did provide their written comments to describe why they proposed the access that way and why they chose the specific materials they did. Ramie forwarded that out to members after last month's meeting. Padua circulated some photos today of the gravel that had been put at the access. She presumes it was by the NPS maintenance division. Padua said he's thankful; that's what we have been asking for three years. He said it goes to the water's edge and it's a pretty low flow right now. Hamilton said he knows Superintendent Salvatore mentioned at the last UDC meeting that he was going to have Maintenance do some cleaning up at the access but he wasn't aware of the gravel until he saw Padua's photos. Henry recommends keeping this topic on the agenda until after the FY 2022 budget 2022 is passed since it's a line item.

Boyar said his friends took a trip from Ten Mile River to Zane Grey and they counted 127 smallmouth bass in that trip. Dudko said you always hear about tubing, rating and kayaking industries in the Delaware River but fishing on the Upper Delaware River is really a great industry.

Hamilton asked Padua if he received the information from the Fish and Boat Commission about native fish. Padua said he did and that cleared up a bit of the confusion about the smallmouth bass. Hamilton said they were not native to the Delaware, Susquehanna or Potomac River.

2021 Delaware River Sojourn Event Report: Cilento said the Delaware River Sojourn ran from 8/6-8/13. 8/6-8/10 days were in the Upper Delaware corridor. On Friday, 8/6, there was a pre-first day litter clean up in Hancock at the Bard Parker Access. It was well attended and capped at twenty people with National Canoe Safety Patrol (NCSP) volunteers and some of the sponsors' staff as well. There were about 75-90 participants each day and they camped at Northeast Wilderness Experience (NEWE) in Damascus which is a beautiful launching area. She took a lot of photos Monday and Tuesday. There was a lot of great feedback. Cilento gave an informal information session on the UDC at one of the take-out spots where she talked to people about the UDC and had brochures. There is a recap meeting 9/14. The 2021 Honorees for the Lord and Lady High Admirals of the Sojourn were Saturday, Dan Plummer from Friends of the Upper Delaware River (FUDR); Sunday was Kevin Reish recently retired from Upper Delaware NPS; Susan Beecher and Lori McKean from the Delaware Highlands Conservancy Eagle Institute were Monday; and Assemblywoman Aileen Gunther was on Tuesday.

7/26 Upper Delaware Scenic Byway Meeting Minutes: Ramie went away for a week and didn't get a chance to do the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway minutes. She will forward them to members with this meeting's Action Items. At the 7/26 meeting, there was a road trip to Callicoon and a walkthrough of the Callicoon Depot to remind people

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what the central space of the building looks like for development into the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway Visitors Center. They then met across the street at Catskill Provisions which graciously opened up on a night they generally are not. Hamilton asked if there is a timeframe for when the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway Visitors Center is supposed to open? Ramie said that is a moving target and it has been four years currently since the project began. They are now operating under a new management entity, the Callicoon Depot Inc., which was specifically formed for the sole purpose of getting this project done. It's a nine-member board of directors. They are now working with Matt McMahon, an architect from the Long Eddy area. McMahon is helping put together a Request for Qualifications to send out to see who is interested in doing architectural services for this restoration project. Ramie said a timeline was presented at last night's Callicoon Depot Zoom meeting and if everything goes perfectly, construction could begin around 1/10/2022. A lot of it is internal with renovating the space so she doesn't think winter would be a deterrent. The thirty-year lease with the railroad company is in place.

7/28 D&H Transportation Heritage Council Meeting Report: Ramie said this is a quarterly meeting which met this time in Hawley, PA. They were able to walk the new extended trail from the D&H Canal Park at Lock 31 to Settlers Inn. Wayne County Historical Society also built a pavilion that will eventually have a canal boat façade on top so when you are driving by on Rt. 6 you will get the illusion that it's floating there. One announcement at the 7/28 meeting was that they are trying to incorporate the D&H group. There's interest in pursuing grants and you need at least a NYS incorporated status, if not a federal incorporated 501(c)3. Ramie said that paperwork has been submitted. There has also been progress on the National Historical Landmark Designation from the same sites that may need to be expanded from the original designation that occurred in the 1960s. Videographer Bill Bollinger plans to resume filming on Chapter 4 for the historic DVD series as soon as weather is appropriate. This will focus on the section of canal from Port Jervis to Spring Glen. Footage and historical photos will be edited down to 15 minutes like the other videos. Planning is underway for the 200th Anniversary of the D&H. There is a committee within the D&H working on a timeline of what the milestones were for the D&H and its history across 108 miles. They've decided it's going to be a rolling celebration and all milestones will be commemorated in the localities where they took part. Orange County has a plan to create three new D&H trails. Many support letters had been written including one by UDC for that proposal. The next meeting is 10/27 in Cuddebackville because that would be the hub of where the trails would start. The 2021 World Canals Conference is coming up from 8/30-9/3 in Hagerstown, MD. Cliff Robinson, Jr. will be attending and giving a 20-minute presentation on the D&H Canal. He's putting together a teaser video to show the first three DVD chapters for that purpose. They also appointed Don Drewett to the task of seeing if he can elevate the canal prominence with federal or state grants. He was given an official title: Legislative Liaison.

Emergency Response Plan Update: Ramie said this discussion came up during the Water Use/Resource Management Five Year Tasks on where we stand with the Railroad Emergency Response Plan which we have been trying to get updated since 1997. Ramie asked NPS Chief Ranger Keith Winslow for an update and he responded that NPS has been moving forward. They have been working in conjunction with federal, state and local agencies. No decisions have been made as of yet on the funding sources or how they would be used on the project. It's a large project with a final product possibly two years out. COVID has had a large impact on the progress and coordination. One aspect of this project was that Central New York Railroad would agree to do this update until they heard that this grant was a possibility. Ramie said hopefully UDC will be further involved she wasn't aware that much had happened. She assumes that NPS is working with emergency service providers and they don't necessarily consider UDC in that audience. She will reach back out to Winslow and ask him to keep UDC updated on this project more directly.

NY and PA Endangered and Threatened Species Lists: Ramie thanked Hamilton for providing the updated NY and PA endangered and threatened species lists as a follow-up from last month. Hamilton said there are a number of things he didn't put on the list that are lesser designations that the states have of species that are a special concern. These lists include all current threatened and endangered species by federal status for NY and PA. Hamilton said there are other items he did not put on there because they're not in this region. Dudko said it's nice to see that our national bird is no longer listed federally. Hamilton said bald eagles are a real success story among the Endangered Species Act.

Hamilton said the last three years NPS has had a project working with the Academy of Natural Sciences at Drexel University to sample American eels in the Upper Delaware river. They did depletion sampling at a number of locations. Boyar asked how they get a baseline of the population? They have sections of the river that they electro

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fished, they also had sections where they netted, confining between the shore and where the net was set. They would catch all the eels they could in one pass and go through on a second and third pass to see how the numbers declined to get an estimate of how many are in that reach of the river based on the reduced number you catch in successive passes. They also tried tagging eels for recapture in some deeper pool areas but that wasn't as successful. Hamilton said the Delaware River is a stronghold for American eels but range wide, they are declining. This is the last place in the country where there is a commercial fishery that goes on for the up-migrating silver eels and they are trying to assess how well they are doing here. The silver eels are the color phase American eels go into when they are sexually mature and migrating to the ocean.

Hamilton said concerning the relicensing for the Mongaup project they have small American eels that come up at the base of the Rio dam and try to go upstream and they are going to capture them and put them back in the Delaware River upstream of the Mongaup so they can continue their migration. They will see how many they can catch. They can also be used for a restocking in streams and other systems. Dudko asked when they get to the base of the system, what do the eels do? Hamilton said they will try to climb up it and they can climb dams, go through wet grass and come out of the water. American eels are a keystone species in that they are a primary host fish for Eastern elliptio mussels. Those mussels reproduce and make up the greatest biomass in the river. They contribute to water quality, clarity and nutrient processing. They play a key role in the American eels in enabling them to reproduce. It's something that's been interrupted in the Susquehanna River because you have dams without fish passage that works so you have an aging population Eastern elliptio mussels in the upper reaches of the of the Susquehanna that aren't reproducing and all the excess sediment and nutrients get washed down to the Chesapeake Bay. Millions of dollars are spent to clean up water pollution problems there whereas that ecosystem service could be done for free. NPS sampled Eastern elliptio mussels as part of the Microplastic study and they had small amounts of plastics but not as much as suckers and smallmouth bass did.

Other: Henry asked for an update from DEC on the Long Eddy fishing access. Ramie said she had reached out to Bill Rudge and is waiting to hear back.

Hall-Bagdonas said 8/14 was the fifth year of the "Get Trashed" Upper Delaware River cleanup sponsored by Pig Farm Ink, Friends of the Upper Delaware River, Happy Tattoo, House Fly Fishing Delaware River Club, Dette Flies, the UDC and a handful of other groups. There were 60 participants. 70 tires were pulled from the river. Most people cleaned from Rt. 191 bridge to Buckingham. They reported that there was less litter than last year. Hall-Bagdonas thanked the sponsors and Chris Calabrese who was a Litter Leader for the Upper Delaware Litter Sweep, who has been a huge component in these events for the last five years. UDC approved a monetary contribution for this year's event at the July 2020 Operation meeting.

Ramie said Kittatinny Canoes continued their "On and Under the River Cleanup" on 8/9 in Barryville and 8/10 in Matamoras. Cilento shared information on UDC's Instagram page.

New Business

OSI Climate Change Catalyst Grant Proposal Feedback: Cilento said this is regarding the 7/20 WU/RM approval of a Letter of Intent being sent to apply for funding for Sullivan County's Earth to Sky program through NASA doing Upper Delaware-based training on creating communities that help tackle climate change. We got notification on 8/10 to submit a full proposal. Cilento said there was a team meeting today and they are creating a ten-page booklet to be distributed to landowners or property owners on how to protect their land. Cilento will mention the River Management Plan in the booklet. The full application is due 9/15. Hamilton said if they need any letters of support let NPS know. Cilento said she thought this would be a good piece of literature when reaching out to hunting clubs as was mentioned in previous WU/RM meetings.

7/26 Mongaup River Hydroelectric Projects: Ramie said this is the relicensing that's coming up for the expiration at the end of March 2022. In the meeting packet responses are provided to various questions. All of the attachments are proposals for the capital costs and the operation engagement system for the various facilities.

Hamilton said it's been about a four-year process NPS has been involved in. It's been pretty intensive the last year as they hammered out a settlement agreement with 15 different stakeholder parties. It's a 50-year license a good opportunity to try to get license requirements that are going to benefit our resources and values. They've been advocating for constraints on releases at times from the Rio that count towards the Montague gauge that influence

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what the Delaware River Master calls for in directed releases from NYC reservoirs which affects our river all the way down. The Delaware River supports the biggest canoe livery industry in the country, so it's important for recreation. Hamilton said we also know about water needs for aquatic life and have advocated for flows that will support those resources and values. He said NYC is fiercely protective of their water rights and want to do some modeling about how that it will affect their storage in the reservoirs. That modeling in conjunction with DRBC will take until mid-December. Henry noted the Executive Summary reading "Provide whitewater boating flows into the Mongaup River below the Rio Dam and Rio Main Powerhouse as established by the July 2021 Offer of Settlement" but it doesn't mention what kind of flows. Hamilton said they have a number of days they want single tube releases and double tube releases. They have American Whitewater, Canoe and Kayak Club advocating for the recreational releases. They also count towards the Montague gauge and potential impact what we get from NYC reservoirs from above. Hamilton said it's a balancing act and they have been at the table and made it known that's not going to take priority over 95% of our river above the Mongaup gets shortchanged sometimes. They have advocated for a limitation of a number of flows below 929 cfs at Callicoon. A 1000 cfs was identified as an adequate flow for recreational use on the river. If you project from Barryville onto Callicoon it's in that neighborhood of 1000 cfs. They also know that's needed to provide a fully wetted perimeter and minimum wetted perimeter for dwarf wedgemussels at Callicoon. They are advocating for no flows below 558 at Callicoon and limitation on the number of times they can drive flows below 929 at Callicoon. Those are in there as license requirements right now. On 5/28 13 out of 15 of the stakeholders signed the settlement agreement.

Delaware River Flow & Storage Report: A copy of the 8/16 DRBC Hydrological Conditions Report was provided in members' packets. Total combined storage was at 93.9%.

Other: Dudko said she and Boyar were talking about how pleased they were that the thermal water release worked last week.

Henry said a reliable source has told him an Upper Delaware NPS boat has been transferred to the Delaware Water Gap (DEWA) and the concern was from a public safety standpoint for 74-miles you only have one boat. Is that an adequate amount of response vesicles? Hamilton said it's his understanding that Upper Delaware NPS has two River Pro boats. One was sent to DEWA because they were having a problem keeping their boat running. Upper Delaware NPS has their boat stationed at the Cowen Farm. Hamilton said they have other boats but they are not river proboats and said this may be something that Keith Winslow could address. Hamilton said they have also looked into a radio-controlled motorized buoy they are using at other parks that you can throw out to a drowning person. They are looking into potentially purchasing one. Padua said he's not sure what the response time is to get a River Pro boat on the water if something is going wrong but about four years ago, he was involved in an incident where his boat was reported floating down the river with nobody in it at 7:30 a.m. and at 1 p.m. NPS pulled up to Padua's boat with three people in his boat including himself to check on them. He said he's not sure where the NPS boat was stationed at the time. He had about ten missed calls on his cellphone when he got home but a five-hour response time for two miles below Ten Mile River was a little disappointing. He said NPS staff laughed it off at the time because it was a mistake but he felt discouraged that it took 4 ½ hours if his boat would have been truly missing, to see them at 1 p.m. Padua wonders what the response time is to get a boat in at Zane Grey to Ten Mile River area if there was a true emergency. Hamilton said he would see what he can find out. Peckham said the emergency response in the upper portion of the corridor is better left to the locals because by the time that NPS gets there, there are three or four different emergency squads there usually. Hancock has an airboat, Equinunk has an emergency squad, etc.

Henry noted that DEWA wants to become a National Park. Cilento said there was a big article in the *Tri-County Independent*. Hamilton said he heard that being mentioned in the past but he doesn't know what that status of it is. Ramie asked what the distinction was between a recreation area vs. a national park? Hamilton said probably some of the regulations. In some recreation areas you are allowed to hunt, trap, etc. and in a national park you are generally not allowed. Cilento said in the article it said there would be stipulations. Henry said if you shut off hunting in DEWA it will be a response like it was to NPS in the Upper Delaware. DEWA is 70,000 acres. Henry said he thinks it's ridiculous. They count people that drive across the Interstate 80 Bridge to pump their numbers for visitation up to 4.9 million. Ramie said we will share that article.

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Padua said regarding the Emergency Response Plan, he requested the contact for the Central New York Railroad and Ramie had given him Melanie Boyer's contact. He reached out to her on 6/16 with a concern about one of the culvert pipes he had seen on the river that didn't seem to be working well near Hankins, NY. He never got a response from her. He suggested an overall letter of keeping the Delaware River Corridor safe to Central New York Railroad. That derailment was a huge event a few years ago. Even though it was outside of the NPS corridor all of that diesel fuel then flooded right through our corridor, and some of those culverts and the railroad is downstream of that. Padua would include the google pin of the culvert under the railroad tracks with the letter. Peckham said the railroad goes by mile markers and that may be more helpful. Padua said it may take him more time to get the mile marker number but, in this day, and age, he feels GPS is equally effective. A Motion by Padua seconded by Boyar to send Central New York Railroad a letter regarding the culvert of concern carried.

Public Comment: None.

Adjournment: A motion by Henry seconded by Boyar, to adjourn the meeting at 8:13 p.m. was carried.

Minutes prepared by Ashley Hall-Bagdonas 8/23/2021