

Upper Delaware Council
WATER USE/RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMM. MEETING MINUTES
September 19, 2017

Committee Members Present: Fred Peckham, Doug Case, Pat Jeffer, Al Henry, Debra Conway
Committee Members Absent: Tony Ritter, Jim Greier, Andy Boyar
NPS Partner: Don Hamilton
Staff: Laurie Ramie, Pete Golod, Cindy Odell
Guests: None

The UDC's Water Use/Resource Management Committee held its monthly meeting on Tuesday, September 19, 2017 at the Council office in Narrowsburg, NY. Chairperson Peckham called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

A motion by Case, seconded by Jeffer to approve the August 15 meeting minutes was carried. There was no public comment on the agenda.

Old Business:

Scenic Wild Delaware River Geotourism Stewardship Council August 21 & September 18 Calls

Update: Ramie reported that the William Penn Foundation renewed the grant that this program has been operating under for another two years at \$275,000 per year. She spoke of how the funding will be used.

Ramie reminded members that the Scenic Wild Delaware River geotourism initiative is sponsoring "The River Unites Us" conference on Thursday, September 28 from 8:15 am to 5 pm at the Woodloch Pines Resort in Hawley, PA. Registration has been extended to Friday, September 22nd. A reception to honor departing members of the Stewardship Council will take place the day of the conference. Ramie named those that will be recognized.

Dates are being discussed for a fall in-person meeting of the Stewardship Council, Ramie said. The focus of topics will include improving the MapGuide, advertising the Scenic Wild Delaware River initiative, and how they can become part of the current pollinator project.

Ramie said that Roberta Byron Lockwood, CEO of the Sullivan County Visitors Association, mentioned during the call that they were hosting the editor of an Irish newspaper that they would be taking out on the river along with other international media members who have recently visited. Ramie said Lockwood will share any articles about the river that result.

Upper Delaware Scenic Byway August 28 Meeting Minutes: A copy of the August 28th meeting minutes was provided in members' packets and Ramie provided some highlights. She reported that the Town of Lumberland has filled their vacant representative position with Noah Kalina, a professional photographer.

The third round of Butterfly Habitat Promotion Grants took place at this meeting. One application was received and they approved a grant award of \$565 to print 50 copies of each of the two booklets, "Salute to Milkweed" and Monarchs in Mexico" by Ed Wesely. Ramie said there is still a balance of the money that was set aside for this program.

Ramie noted that a motion to purchase an ad for the 2018 Sullivan County Catskills Travel Guide was made and carried.

Ramie said the Byway approved covering the registration fee for one of its members to attend and represent the Byway at "The River Unites Us: A Geotourism Conference" to be held on September 28 at Woodloch Pines Resort in Hawley, PA.

A decision was made to apply to the 2018 Sullivan County Legislative Discretionary Contracts Program for \$20,000 by the September 30th deadline, Ramie stated.

The Byway Committee approved a quote of \$2,087.25 from Spencer Printing to print another 6,500 copies of the Revitalizing the Monarch Butterfly brochure.

Discussion about a viewshed inventory took place at this meeting. It was suggested that developing this inventory does not have to take the form of a photo contest. A list of specific images could be developed and photographers asked to submit them. After some discussion, it was decided to continue this as a Discussion Item on next month's agenda.

Discussion regarding a special cancellation to promote U.S. Postal Service “Protect Pollinators” stamps took place.

Ramie said she brought up to the Byway the UDC’s initiative for Emergency Call Boxes on NYS Route 97 in the Town of Lumberland. In the course of discussion, one of the committee members said there is a State and Municipal (SAM) funding program that the Town of Lumberland could apply for through Sen. Bonacic’s office if they were interested. Ramie reported she has since received the information on these grants and learned that the minimum request for these grants is \$50,000 and there is a match required. Members decided they would like to explore the Town of Lumberland’s thoughts on this issue. The Lumberland representative Kalina will reach out to the town and report back to the committee.

The latest plans for the “Route 97 Corridor Signing Improvements” project were passed around at the meeting. They include proposed signage within DOT Region 9 for both Delaware and Sullivan Counties in the Village of Hancock, Lordville, Long Eddy, Hankins, Callicoon, Cocheton, Skinners Falls, Narrowsburg, Minisink Ford, Barryville, Pond Eddy, and Mongaup. There are a few outstanding questions on individual signs in Cocheton and Callicoon.

Ramie said the NYS DOT Region 8 replied to a letter the Byway sent asking for selective clearing at the Hawk’s Nest. The letter states in part, “We are pleased to inform you that your request will be added to a landscape improvement contract which is scheduled for construction in the summer of 2018.”

Ramie said that the UDSB Viewshed Enhancement Work Project was discussed. There is a Route 97 property in the Town of Lumberland where the owners have indicated an interest in having selective clearing done to improve the views to the river. Money has been earmarked for this project and committee members are working on different aspects to pull the project together.

The next meeting of the Byway is scheduled for Monday, September 25th.

United States Department of Agriculture Drought & Invasive Species September 14 Webinar

Report: Golod said he participated in the webinar last week. The webinar focused on the link between climate change and the proliferation of invasive species. He encouraged members to read the written report provided in their packets.

A brief debate about climate change took place.

Highland Access September 19 Meeting Update: Golod said he attended this meeting this morning. Stakeholders include the National Park Service, the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, NYS Department of Transportation, Highland Town Board, the Town historian, and Sullivan County. Stakeholder comments were submitted and reviewed. Golod said one of his comments was in regards to the erosion and sedimentation control section. There was some mention of stockpiling soil with fertilizer to be utilized for seeding. It was noted that fertilizer will not be used as on-site top soil and soil from the local area will be used in the area where they will be mitigating the Japanese Knotweed. He noted that the local seed mixes are to be obtained from Ernst seed mix. A brief discussion about Knotweed took place. Henry asked where this access is. He was told it is the NYS DEC access along NYS Route 97 in the Town of Highland, currently in use, but in need of improvements. Ramie noted it is part of the Sullivan County Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan. This access was the one they thought to be the most accessible.

Permitting was discussed. The NPS will require a Special Use Permit due to work that will be occurring below the ordinary high water mark. The NYS DEC will require an Article 15 Streambank Disturbance Permit. DEC may require additional permitting such as an endangered species permit. The NYS DOT will require a Highway Work Permit, Use & Occupancy Permit, and they stipulated that striping and signage needs to be in the site plans prior to the work beginning. The Army Corps of Engineers was not present, however, it was mentioned that they will be submitting a cut & fill diagram, data, and their own comments.

Golod said that the final designs are to be ready by the end of the year and that bid and specification forms will be submitted late winter with hopes for construction in early spring or late summer.

Ramie questioned if Sullivan County had heard anything about the grant application they filed for the construction plans at this access through the New York State Regional Economic Development Council. Golod said that Heather Jacksy stated that Sullivan County projects did not score well. Ramie stated that the program is very jobs-oriented and their focus is on economic development. Henry said that the Project Review Committee should review this project. Golod said the plans are still in the preliminary stages. Henry added that during flooding back in 2004 and 2006, the water was above this access onto NYS Route 97 about three feet. A brief discussion about the slope of the property took place.

Other: Henry asked Don Hamilton of the NPS if there are any water quality concerns being addressed currently in any of those areas that have been of concern in the past. Hamilton reported that a water sampling run was conducted earlier in the day at a limited number of sites. They continue to work with the Delaware River Basin Commission's Scenic Rivers Monitoring Program coordinating with them on the sites they want them to sample to establish existing water quality for those sites. Hamilton said he "can't say that we've noticed any issues". Henry asked if there have been any issues with Mast Hope this year. Hamilton said they haven't sampled there lately, but Mast Hope continues to be a bit of a concern. He added that they don't sample there on a regular basis, but they do monitor it from time to time. Henry said our workplan states that this committee will monitor that on a regular basis. Hamilton said if they could get the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection at all interested, that would help. They are the agency that issues the permit for it.

Golod reported that the NYC DEP has begun work on the Delaware Aqueduct repair tunnel. The \$1 billion-dollar project will repair two areas of leakage within the 85-mile Delaware Aqueduct. The primary leak will be repaired via construction of a 2.5-mile bypass tunnel which will be drilled 600 feet below the Hudson River. The largest of the two leaks is located along the western bank of the Hudson River. The tunnel boring machine, which measures more than 470 feet long and weighs over 2.7 million pounds, will build a 14-foot diameter bypass tunnel along this section of the aqueduct. Once the bypass tunnel is finished it will connect to structurally sound portions of the Delaware Aqueduct to by-pass water around the leaking section. The leaking stretch will be plugged and permanently taken offline. The tunnel boring machine will also install and grout the concrete lining of the tunnel as it bores through the rock. Work will continue 24 hours a day, 5 days a week, and is estimated to take 20 months. The finished bypass tunnel will be reinforced with linear steel and a second layer of concrete. Once all components are in place, the DEP will shut down the Delaware Aqueduct for approximately 6 months to connect the bypass tunnel to the existing aqueduct. This is expected to occur in October 2022 with a completing date of 2023. Hamilton asked how many gallons the tunnel is leaking a day. Golod told him 35-50 million gallons a day. Golod said he has his written report available from the October 20, 2016 "Water for the Future: Upstate Water Supply Resiliency (Overview of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement), New York City DEP Public Hearing" for anyone interested. Hamilton asked Golod to send him a digital copy of that report and the update he just provided. A brief discussion about how this project may affect the Upper Delaware took place.

Golod read in part an August 28, 2017 article from the *PA Environment Digest* titled, "Harvey: PA Climate Change Impacts Assessment Warns of Increased Risk of Injury, Death From Extreme Weather Events". He read, "But much closer to home, the August 2015 Comate Impacts Assessment Report done by a team of scientists at Penn State University for the Department of Environmental Protection during the Corbett and Wolf Administrations warns 'The risk of injury and death from extreme weather events could increase as a consequence of climate change. The report continues, saying climate change 'will increase the probability that individual storms will be stronger and with heavier rainfall' and 'non-tropical extreme rainfall events are expected to increase.' The consequences of more extreme weather events both in warm and cold weather will, according to the report, increase pathogen loads, nutrient and sediment runoff polluting streams and rivers, cause damage to infrastructure from flooding, wind and snow and ice storms (including related snow-melt flooding), deaths caused by heat waves or extremely cold weather, increased tree mortality and increasing trigger events for pollen-induced asthma." Another debate about climate change took place.

New Business

DRBC Development of Natural Gas Regulations: Ramie referred to the copies of the DRBC press release dated September 13 titled, "DRBC Approves Resolution to Publish Revised Draft Rules Addressing Natural Gas Development Activities within the Delaware River Basin" and a copy of the September 13 DRBC Resolution provided in members' packets. The press release states in part, "As directed by the approved resolution, the revised draft rules to be published no later than Nov. 30 will include prohibitions related to the production of natural gas utilizing horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing within the Delaware River Basin." Ramie said the timing of this news was such that she was able include the information in the upcoming Fall/Winter edition of "The Upper Delaware" newsletter. She shared details of the article. Henry asked if her article includes any information about the drilling going on in the

Susquehanna River Basin. Ramie said that Pennsylvania Representative Jonathan Fritz brought that up in his quote in his statement in response to the DRBC news. Henry made a motion to seek an objective speaker to discuss the positive and negative impacts from Marcellus shale gas drilling in the Susquehanna River Basin for a UDC meeting educational presentation. Henry spoke of the September 2014 National Park Service Natural Gas Summit that was attended by Upper Delaware Council staff, members and others. Henry's motion was seconded by Peckham. A brief discussion about the objective of having a speaker come in took place. Hamilton spoke of the differences between the Susquehanna River Basin and the Delaware River Basin. He stated that the Susquehanna River water quality "is nothing compared to the Delaware River's water quality." After more discussion, a vote was taken and the motion passed.

Friends of the Upper Delaware River "Water, Water Everywhere" October 11 Conference: Ramie referred to the preliminary agenda for the conference provided in members' packets. She stated that she and Golod are already registered for the one-day event and Peckham has requested that the Council cover his \$20 registration fee. A motion approving the Council to pay Peckham's registration fee for the day to represent the WU/RM Committee was made by Henry, seconded by Jeffer and carried.

DRBC Regulated Flow Advisory Committee September 28 Meeting: Ramie stated that she personally finds it significant that RFAC has scheduled this meeting because they are the ones that will inform if we get a new Flexible Flow Management Plan or not. This meeting will be held in West Trenton, New Jersey from 1-4 p.m. It is hoped that an agreement can be reached before the very low flows occur starting October 10th. The meeting is open to the public.

Delaware River Flow and Storage Report: A copy of the September 18th NYC Current Reservoir Levels was provided in members' packets. Total combined storage was at 84.4%, normal for the same date is 76.6%. Peckham said he has observed a large cutback in the releases in the past few days. A brief discussion about the renewal of the New York City Filtration Avoidance Determination took place.

Other: None

Public Comment: None

Adjournment: A motion by Jeffer, seconded by Conway to adjourn the meeting at 8:14 p.m. was carried.

Minutes prepared by Cindy Odell, 9/25/17