

WATER USE/RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMM. MEETING MINUTES

January 20, 2026

Committee Members Present: Bill Dudko, Jim Rodgers, Al Henry, Pat Jeffer (6:48pm), Michael Keller (Zoom), Bob Lindquist (Zoom, 7:09pm)

Committee Members Absent: Evan Padua

Staff: Laurie Ramie, Kerry Engelhardt, Stephanie Driscoll

NPS Partner: Tom Kearns (Zoom)

Guests: Ginny Dudko

The UDC’s Water Use/Resource Management Committee held its monthly meeting on Tuesday, January 20, 2026. Vice-chairperson B. Dudko called the meeting to order at 6:32 pm.

Election of Chair and Vice-Chair: A motion by Henry, seconded by Rodgers for Evan Padua (Town of Tusten) and Bill Dudko (Town of Deerpark) to remain as Chairperson and Vice-chairperson for 2026, carried.

Approval of the December 16, 2025 meeting minutes: A motion by Henry seconded by Rodgers approving the 12/16/25 meeting minutes carried.

Public Comment on Agenda: None.

New Business:

6th Annual Upper Delaware Litter Sweep Planning: Driscoll said she has only started preliminary planning for the 6th Annual Upper Delaware Litter Sweep. Since last year’s art contest wasn’t as successful as we’d hoped, we will directly ask an artist to design the shirt for this year’s Litter Sweep. Ramie added that we’re considering reaching out to the Delaware Valley Art Alliance (DVAA) for artist suggestions. You have to make sure the artist you choose is capable of graphic design and t-shirt art; it’s a completely different process. Platform Industries (who manufactures the t-shirts for us) has an in-house artist we could ask as well. They did the 2022 t-shirt design with the turtle, that was quite popular.

B. Dudko asked Driscoll to send a letter to the Town of Deerpark to put the Litter Sweep on their radar. Over the years they have not seen the same level of help, and as the people who typically do it are getting older, they’d like to see someone else get involved. Driscoll agreed. Ramie said the Litter Sweep will be held for the entire month of April when Earth Day takes place. There was brief discussion about the scope of individual cleanup routes, with examples given of covering roughly half a mile of river or choosing alternate routes.

Driscoll noted that she would begin working on the necessary permits and required documentation to keep things moving administratively.

Ramie said that last year marked the first time the litter sweep had an official theme, which honored the late Ruth Jones, and suggested that we use an “America 250” theme this year. This could tie directly into the t-shirt design and give artists a creative starting point—inviting them to interpret the intersection of environmental stewardship, history, and national identity. The incentive for the design would be recognition, visibility, and having the artist’s work featured prominently on the event t-shirts and in related publicity.

Henry reiterated a long-standing concern, saying he has recommended for years that the focus should move from “litter sweep” to “litter stop.” By emphasizing cleanup, the event unintentionally glamorizes picking up other people’s trash rather than preventing litter in the first place. He suggested a much broader, coordinated effort involving the NPS, Upper Delaware Scenic Byway, Damascus Citizens for Sustainability, the UDC, municipalities, and other partners. This would include clear public education about what is legal, what constitutes an enforceable offense, and what people should do if they witness dumping or unsecured loads.

Uncovered and un-tarped loads are one of the biggest sources of roadside litter, particularly from trucks traveling to transfer stations. While enforcement can be challenging, he stressed that littering is an enforceable offense and that state police will respond when contacted. Others in the discussion agreed with the sentiment. There is little satisfaction in repeatedly picking up the same trash year after year. Driscoll said that the Litter Sweep has become a signature UDC activity and remains valuable and well-regarded. Last year’s “Don’t Be Trashy” messaging and

efforts to frame the event as “Stop Litter Before It Gets There” were referenced positively. The consensus was that the cleanup itself should continue, but it needs to be paired with stronger education, clearer guidance, and better public awareness about enforcement and reporting.

The conversation circled back to the America 250 theme, with strong agreement that it presents a unique, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Pennsylvania and New York are both heavily investing in commemoration, and Driscoll said she felt it would be a missed opportunity not to align the litter sweep with that broader effort. The idea of tying environmental responsibility to the nation’s 250th anniversary resonated with the group, especially when framed as part of a vision for a clean, cared-for country. A press releases and website content could help reframe media coverage, shifting attention from how much trash was collected to how it got there and how it could be prevented.

Ramie said, as in past years, letters would go out to each town and township asking them to appoint a Litter Leader responsible for organizing volunteers locally. With the theme identified and the timeframe set for the month of April, Driscoll noted that outreach and solicitations could now begin.

PennDOT Memo on Section 106 Process, Pennsylvania Abutment: Ramie said the memo included in the packet represents the most recent update on the status of the Pennsylvania-side abutment; the mitigation phase is now on hold until the abutment issue is resolved. The UDC’s mitigation proposal to initiate a cultural, historic, and interpretive grants program related to the bridge removal is still pending. However, because the question of what to do with the Pennsylvania abutment remains unresolved, no action is expected on that mitigation proposal currently. Any potential removal of the abutment would itself require review, making that decision the next necessary step before mitigation could proceed.

Henry raised a question about language in the second paragraph of the memo, which states that the Pennsylvania abutment of the former Skinners Falls Bridge was “under consideration for removal.” He asked who was considering that removal. Kearns explained that through the Section 7 evaluation process, the NPS had stated that if PennDOT ultimately decides not to rebuild a bridge at that location, then the abutment should be removed. This position is based on RM-46, which provides guidance for managing resources within a Wild and Scenic River corridor. RM-46 specifically states that if a bridge is being demolished and not replaced, then all components of that bridge should be removed. During the emergency removal process, the immediate priority was addressing the public safety threat posed by the bridge. At that time, the NPS was willing to allow the abutment to remain, provided that PennDOT committed to revisiting its removal if a decision was made not to rebuild the bridge. PennDOT has stated in its Purpose and Need document that there is a need for a bridge at this location, but there is currently no funding identified. As a result, PennDOT has not yet made a definitive decision about whether a replacement bridge will or will not be built. If a replacement bridge is ultimately constructed at that location, the abutment would be removed as part of that process anyway.

Henry raised concerns about how Section 7 of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act is being applied in this situation. While Section 7 sometimes applies to federally owned land, much of the Upper Delaware corridor consists of private or state-owned property. The Park Service’s jurisdiction generally extends only to the ordinary high-water mark, and the Pennsylvania abutment itself is state-owned, not federally owned. He said the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act explicitly states that the federal government does not have jurisdiction over state-owned property, even when it lies within a designated corridor. How could the NPS review the abutment under Section 7 when it is not on federal land? In the Upper Delaware, the federal government owns relatively little acreage compared to what the Act allows elsewhere. Ramie said that there is ongoing litigation related to property ownership, with adjacent landowners asserting that land reverts back to them as their private property if there is no bridge. Henry said that litigation is a separate matter and not the basis on which the NPS or other agencies would decide whether to remove the abutment.

Kearns responded by clarifying that the Skinner’s Falls Bridge removal was a federally assisted Water Resources project. Because of that federal involvement, the NPS was required to review the project in its entirety, including all structural components of the bridge. When a project is federally assisted, a Section 7(a) re-evaluation is required regardless of whether specific elements are located on land owned by the NPS. The key factor is that the project falls within the Upper Delaware River corridor, which is managed by the NPS as a park unit.

Public Input on Sullivan County’s Hazard Mitigation Plan Update: Engelhardt said information on this had been included in the meeting packet. Rodgers asked whether there was a deadline for submitting comments.

Engelhardt said she could not find a closing date in the materials. Ramie agreed that while the handout explained how to participate and where to go for more information, it did not clearly state an end date.

Engelhardt said Sullivan County is in the process of updating its Hazard Mitigation Plan. The plan update process includes soliciting public input not only from residents but also from stakeholders, which would include local municipalities. Additional information had been received through a divisional newsletter from the Sullivan County Planning Department. It notes the county's interest in meeting in person with local jurisdictions as part of the plan update. Specifically, representatives from towns and other local entities were invited to meet directly with the county's consultant for the Hazard Mitigation Plan, Tetra Tech February 18. Municipalities may sign up online. A Tetra Tech planner would work directly with each jurisdiction to complete its annex to the Hazard Mitigation Plan. That process would include reviewing jurisdiction-specific risks, discussing existing capabilities and previous hazard impacts, identifying problem areas within the community, and developing or refining mitigation strategies.

Henry asked about the NPS-led planning work focused on train derailments and emergency response. Ramie said that those efforts are primarily focused on oil spill mitigation, particularly spills resulting from train derailments. Those plans being developed by the U.S. EPA are known as Geographic Response Plans for the Upper Delaware and are centered on emergency response. While Sullivan County has participated in meetings related to those Geographic Response Plans, including sessions held at the county's Emergency Operations Center, the Hazard Mitigation Plan update under discussion is a separate effort. The Hazard Mitigation Plan is specific to Sullivan County and its municipalities and is distinct from the Park Service-led oil spill and emergency response planning initiatives.

Delaware River Flow & Storage Report: Included in the packet for review. Driscoll commented that the report in tonight's packet is last week's (1/12) since the latest report was not available yet due to the holiday on Monday.

Other: None.

Old Business:

12/18 NPS Fishing Guides Post-Season Virtual Meeting: Driscoll said that turnout for the meeting was fairly small, with only four non-NPS participants in attendance. This was not entirely unexpected, particularly since the meeting had originally been scheduled for October and had to be postponed to December 18 due to the government shutdown.

Chief Ranger Keith Winslow opened the discussion with feedback from the 2025 season and areas that could be improved or addressed heading into 2026. One of the guides raised a concern about striper fishing on the Delaware River, saying he had heard there might be consideration of banning striper fishing on the Hudson River next year. Winslow responded that he had not heard anything about that from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC), but he planned to follow up to see if that was true. Jeff Skelding of Friends of the Upper Delaware River (FUDR) echoed that response, noting that he also had not heard anything indicating a pending ban.

Skelding said that he had spoken with several anglers prior to the meeting and that, as in previous years, frustration around illegal guiding was a major theme. Winslow acknowledged the concern and said they would look into the issue again. He said they are only aware of one or two individuals guiding illegally, and he asked the group whether they knew of others. Skelding said the problem was larger than that and likely involved more than just a handful of people. Another guide asked whether signage at boat launches could help address illegal guiding. Kurnath responded that signage had not been done for the 2025 season but could be considered for 2026. She agreed that stopping illegal guiding needed to be a priority moving forward.

Law Enforcement Ranger Ryan Schumacher mentioned making improvements to the website to clearly explain how to guide legally, including outlining the proper process and requirements. The information is now much easier to find and understand, and he encouraged guides to contact him directly if they needed assistance or had questions.

Another suggestion raised during the meeting was to attend a fly fishing show in Edison, New Jersey. The idea was that representatives could observe whether vendors were advertising Delaware River trips and verify whether those

trips were being offered legally. Skelding said they planned to put information about legal guiding on FUDR materials in the spring to help further educate anglers and guides.

Skelding also raised a concern about congestion on the river, particularly with Northeast Wilderness Experience creating a new access point at Balls Eddy. He expressed worry that this could lead to an increase in boat traffic. Kurnath said no laws were being broken by that activity. Skelding added that ownership of the river bottom on the East Branch continues to be an unresolved issue and remains a concern.

The Spring Fishing Guide meeting has been scheduled for April 10, 2026.

Rodgers asked whether any changes to CUAs were anticipated for the upcoming season, particularly so that guides would not be caught off guard as they had been the previous year. Kearns responded that, to his knowledge, the process for applying for a CUA would continue through the same online portal and would not change. When asked about fees, Kearns offered to check and follow up with a clear answer. Ramie that CUAs operate on a two-year cycle so fees were likely locked in for that period. Kearns agreed.

1/5 (December) Upper Delaware Scenic Byway Meeting: A copy of the UDSB minutes were included in tonight's packet. Ramie said this was the December meeting that was postponed due to the holidays. A draft budget for 2026 was presented; this was an initial review only, and the budget would be revisited in more detail at the regular fourth-Monday meeting this month.

At the time of the meeting, Sullivan County's \$40,000 discretionary contract payment for 2025 had not yet been received. Since then, a \$40,000 check arrived by mail directly from the Sullivan County Treasurer's Office on January 12. Because there had been uncertainty about available funding at the time of the meeting, there was discussion about potentially limiting outgoing grant programs in the coming year, possibly by placing caps on awards. The committee ultimately decided against adopting any hard-and-fast rules. Instead, they agreed that grants should continue to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. There was also a clear desire not to prohibit repeat applicants, as some organizations consistently bring forward strong ideas year after year, and it did not seem equitable to exclude them simply because they had received funding in the past.

They expect to have a draft press release ready for the next meeting that will outline the Byway's programs for 2026, and describe available programs, identify any themes the Byway wants to promote, and note any restrictions or parameters that might apply.

The Byway's website now includes a new interactive lodging map, which is located in the visitor section and represents a useful new tool for travelers. Program Manager David Krantz has created a shared events folder that will be populated monthly with events submitted by organizations throughout the multi-county region covered by the Byway. The goal is not only to promote events to a targeted audience, but also to help organizations avoid scheduling conflicts and, eventually, to serve as the foundation for an interactive calendar at the future Visitor Center. This shared calendar will be tested during a three-month trial period to see how it functions and what issues might arise. Krantz has already sent out the first call for events and is actively entering submissions. The calendar is hosted through Google and is free to use, so there is no cost associated with the trial.

Ramie said Krantz also presented a new tri-fold brochure concept, intended to promote the UDSB at sponsored events. The format would include a map, which was viewed as a particularly strong feature for a geographically focused organization. It will continue to be refined and reviewed.

Architectural drawings for the Callicoon Depot restoration were revised by the original architectural firm in response to agency feedback and were subsequently submitted to the Town of Delaware Code Enforcement Officer as part of the permitting process. The Code Enforcement Officer indicated that a contractor name would be required to proceed. No contractor has been selected yet, as they are still preparing a draft solicitation. That contractor selection process will mirror the approach used to hire the architectural firm. Although current funding is limited to the visitor center portion of the building, the solicitation will seek proposals for the entire property, on the rationale that it makes sense to evaluate the full scope of work at once. The timeline for this process is expected to extend through the winter, allowing time for proposal submissions, site visits, proposal review, shortlisting, interviews, and final selection. The goal is to identify a contractor by late spring so that Phase 1 of the project can move forward.

The hazardous materials survey for the building has been completed, and the report is now in hand. While the details of the report were acknowledged to be technical and somewhat difficult for a layperson to interpret, there did not appear to be any major red flags. Completion of this survey was identified as a critical prerequisite for issuing the contractor solicitation. The survey involved sampling materials throughout the building and testing for hazards such as lead paint and asbestos.

The Upper Delaware Scenic Byway Scavenger Hunt was submitted for a National Scenic Byway Association Award in the promotional marketing category. Applications are due by February 28, though no announcement timeline has been provided. Ramie also noted that the Sullivan Catskills Visitors Association has rebranded its logo, launched a new website, and released a redesigned travel guide in magazine format. That publication debuted at SCVA's annual meeting on December 18.

The Byway's original SCVA Tourism Grant submission deadline was extended due to technical difficulties with the required online application system. The first round of tourism grants will now be announced on February 13 instead of January 15. The Byway is seeking just under \$25,000 through this program to support visitor center materials, including interpretive panels, a large-format map, a digital kiosk, and new brochures. Securing this funding would be a significant boost, helping ensure that interpretive materials are ready as soon as renovations are complete. As a final note, the packet included the UDC's December 8 letter of appreciation thanking the Byway for its \$1,500 donation, which had been presented by B. Dudko to Vice Chair Padua at the December 4 meeting. The next regular Byway meeting will be Monday, January 26.

1/13 Delaware River Sojourn Steering Committee Meeting: Engelhardt shared that the committee is still working through the process of finalizing the various paddling stretches and overnight locations for this year's Sojourn.

However, the committee is being cautious about announcing anything publicly until that arrangement is more firmly confirmed. The goal at this stage is to have both the paddling stretches and camping sites fully nailed down so that formal announcements can be made in February. That timing is important, as it allows the group to stay on track for opening Sojourn registration, which typically begins in April.

She and Jess Yoder from Pike County Planning will be heading out together on Thursday morning to visit a number of river access points in Pike County, particularly along the lower end of the Upper Delaware. While Yoder can assist with planning and logistics, she is not able to be as involved in hands-on support during the actual Sojourn itself if the areas are not located in Pike County, so this site visit is an important opportunity to assess conditions in advance. The plan is to visit locations in Matamoras, Mongaup, and Milford, to get a clearer sense of access, parking, and overall suitability.

Engelhardt said that they have learned that the NPS at Delaware Water Gap will be charging for parking if participants are directed to park at locations such as Milford Beach. In some past years, fees for camping and parking were inconsistently applied, and there were occasions when they were waived. Those costs will need to be factored into planning, particularly for participants on the middle days of the Sojourn.

It was also confirmed that the overarching theme for this year's Sojourn will be "Our Nation's River," with a specific tie-in to America250. This aligns the Sojourn with the broader semi quincennial commemorations and reinforces the national significance of the Delaware River.

1/13 USGS National Water Availability Assessment Data Companion Seminar: Engelhardt said the webinar was short, well organized, and very well run. It focused on the extensive water-related datasets that USGS makes publicly available, emphasizing that this information is accessible to anyone and can be downloaded directly for independent use. These datasets are produced through a variety of models and cover multiple dimensions of water use and availability across the country.

At present, the available data falls into several major categories. One area is water use, which includes information on thermoelectric power generation, public water supply, irrigation, total water withdrawals, and consumptive use. Another category is water quantity, which looks at natural water supply variables such as soil moisture, evapotranspiration, snow water equivalent, baseflow, and precipitation. There is also an integrated water availability component that combines total water supply and total water use into a supply-and-use index. Together, these datasets allow users to examine where water supply is high, where consumption is high, and how those patterns

compare geographically. The data also allows for historical comparisons, showing trends from 1980 through 2020, which can be useful for understanding long-term changes in water use and availability.

Engelhardt noted that in 2026 and 2027, USGS plans to expand what is available through this platform. Future additions are expected to include more detailed categories of water use, expanded water quantity data for states outside the lower 48, and information on water availability trends over time. Water quality data is not currently included, but it is anticipated as a future enhancement.

While some mapping tools are available directly through the platform, much of the value lies in the raw data itself, which can be downloaded and incorporated into GIS systems or other databases for customized analysis and mapping. It was acknowledged that this may not be something the UDC uses heavily on a day-to-day basis, but that the ability to look at long-term trends could be particularly valuable for planning and policy discussions. The presenters clearly explained how the data is organized and how users can navigate the system.

B. Dudko asked Engelhardt to send him the link to the website. Engelhardt agreed.

Status on Water Safety Committee: Driscoll said the Water Safety Committee has been paused until NPS can find a new Chair. She confirmed that the two previous chairs, Ron Babus and Jasmine Leung, have left UPDE. Driscoll said she will give an update once the committee has a Chair.

Registration Open for Citizens Preparedness Training Program, 3/11/26, 5p.m., Tusten Town Hall

Community Room: Driscoll reported that she had spoken directly with Captain Kyle Kilner, who coordinates these trainings, and learned that current registration numbers are very low. At the time of the meeting, only six people were registered total—the 3 UDC staff members and three members of the public. The minimum target to hold the training is 50 participants. If that threshold is not met, the program will be canceled, which would be particularly disappointing given the size of the river valley and the importance of the topic.

B. Dudko said the training is scheduled for a Wednesday at 5:00 p.m.; that it may be difficult for people who work, especially those commuting out of town, to get home and then make it to the training on time. Retirees may be more flexible, but that still limits the audience. Despite the low numbers, there was optimism that stronger outreach could make a difference. Ramie said a press release is currently in progress, and staff have requested photos to help make it more eye-catching for newspapers and other outlets. She highlighted the practical benefits of attending, including the emergency “go kit” that participants receive, as a way to make the training feel more tangible and worthwhile.

G. Dudko suggested contacting local schools and circulate information through them, which could help reach families more directly. The Sullivan County Office of Emergency Management is actively assisting with outreach and promotion. They have said the more residents who participate in preparedness training, the easier their work becomes during actual emergencies. The New York State Police have offered to help with promotion as well, and flyers have already been shared with all of these partners. The plan is to “blanket” the region with information as much as possible.

Henry said he had registered for two people and received an email acknowledgment, which prompted others to ask whether registrations were being properly tracked. Driscoll said that organizers cannot disclose who has registered, likely due to privacy rules, but confirmations do appear to be going out as expected.

Ramie said we’ll have to make it clear that while Pennsylvania participants are absolutely welcome, registrants must list Sullivan County, NY as the host site when completing the form. Because the program is administered through the New York National Guard, the system only recognizes New York counties.

Other: Rodgers said the NPS had generously paid for and sponsored that Barryville gage during the last calendar year. He asked whether that funding covered only a single year and, if so, what would happen in 2026. Kearns said that his understanding is that the NPS intends to pay for the gage again in 2026 but said he would double-check and report back to confirm.

Ramie said that Kearns had previously agreed to help facilitate presentations on a few topics that had been identified as being of interest to the Council. These included the Cowen Farm archaeology study and a geological study of the Upper Delaware. Rodgers also asked about the turtle inventory work that had been discussed previously. Kearns

provided an update on each of these. Regarding the archaeology project at Cowen Farm, the contract is currently being extended due to some hiccups encountered with the contractor. Because of that extension, the NPS plans to request an additional deliverable in the form of a public presentation. Kearns is working with the contracting officer and the archaeology group involved to secure a commitment for that presentation. While nothing is confirmed yet, he said the project is moving in the right direction, and once he receives the go-ahead, he will let Ramie know so that something could potentially be scheduled later in the year, perhaps in late summer or early fall.

On the geological study, Kearns explained that he had initially reached out to the primary contact, Tim Henderson, but did not hear back. After following up again, he learned that Henderson has since left for another position within the federal government. He said he would look into whether there is another individual who could present on that work. If not, he offered that he would be willing to present the information himself. As with the archaeology presentation, this would likely be better suited for later in the year, possibly late summer or early fall, and he said he would follow up once he has more clarity.

Kearns then explained that the turtle inventory study was conducted during the summers of 2024 and 2025 and was led primarily by a graduate student from Penn State University. That student is currently consolidating the data and working through her master's program, including completing the required reporting. Because of that timeline, he suggested that a presentation on the turtle work may be more appropriate in 2027, once the analysis is complete. He said he could check in with the student to see whether anything might be ready sooner, but cautioned that it would likely be a longer-term item.

Ramie said will be no presentation in February due to the swearing-in ceremony and reception. However, a presentation is already booked for the March meeting. Adam Waterbear DePaul from the Lenape Nation will speak about the upcoming Lenape Rising Nation Journey that will take place this summer. Every four years, participants paddle the entire length of the Delaware River and sign the Treaty of Renewed Brotherhood along the way.

Henry asked whether a message could be sent out to see if anyone is interested in serving as UDC Vice-chair. Ramie said there is a formal process under the bylaws, including a requirement for 10 days' advance notice to seek candidates. Ramie explained that Town of Tusten recently switched its representative and alternate, which means Padua is now serving as an alternate and therefore is not eligible to serve as Vice-chair. With that change now fully confirmed, the chair suggested sending out a notice soon so that the matter could potentially be taken up at a full Council meeting.

Public Comment: None.

Adjourn: A Motion by Rodgers seconded by Jeffer to adjourn the meeting at 7:32 p.m. was carried.

Meeting minutes prepared by Stephanie Driscoll, 1/23/2026