WATER USE/RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMM. MEETING MINUTES
October 21, 2025

Committee Members Present:	Evan Padua, Bill Dudko, Jim Rodgers, Al Henry, Pat Jeffer, Christine Martin (Zoom)
Committee Members Absent:	Bob Lindquist
Staff:	Laurie Ramie, Kerry Engelhardt (Zoom), Stephanie Driscoll
NPS Partner:	None
Guests:	Ginny Dudko

The UDC's Water Use/Resource Management Committee held its monthly meeting on Tuesday, October 21, 2025. Chairperson Padua called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

Approval of the September 16, 2025 meeting minutes: A motion by B. Dudko seconded by Rodgers approving the 9/16 meeting minutes carried.

Public Comment on Agenda: None.

New Business:

NYC DEC Policy OGC-9: Public Rights of Navigation and Public Fishing: Ramie updated the committee on the DEC Office of General Counsel memorandum concerning public rights of navigation and fishing on navigable waters. The policy reaffirms that the public maintains the right to navigate and fish in tidal and navigable non-tidal waters even when the beds are privately owned. Town of Hancock UDC Representative Katt Judd said her neighbor had brought this to her to approach the UDC about seeing if there was anything we could do. That person is part of the Upper Delaware Landowners United, who have had issues with the DEC's policy that came out in May. A copy of a 10/6/25 Delaware Currents article on the subject is included in tonight's packet, as well as a copy of the policy. Judd pointed out that the Town of Hancock is still involved in the issue. Padua said if you read that policy, it's pretty cut and dry; the public has the right to navigate on the waters. There isn't a lot the UDC can do since most of the folks concerned are on the East Branch. This has been an issue since at least 1991. He and one of his clients were victims of harassment this year by a property owner along the Delaware River. It's unfortunate that people think they own the water and waterbed. B. Dudko said that is no different than someone harassing a hunter on public land. Padua asked if Judd's neighbor is on the East Branch? Ramie said she believes so. Rodgers said if you look on the map, all of the people are on the East Branch. Padua said he knows a few landowners personally with signs up on their property that say "No Fishing"; that's technically breaking the law. G. Dudko said historically, there are people that leave litter behind at the highwater mark. The issue can go the other way too. Padua said there are definitely people who break the law by littering and trespassing, but that shouldn't affect people just floating down the river. G. Dudko agreed. Padua said the East Branch has signs along it that say "Public Fishing". This group will likely sue the DEC.

Rodgers said he did some research on the deeds traced back to 1771, before we won the Revolution and when the Treaty of Paris ended all legal land claims of the crown in NYS. You can go to Albany to look up the Hardenbergh Patent. The original deed went to the middle of the river, yes, but that was with Queen Anne. All those rights were null and void and to be determined by state law, AKA the DEC. That's how it's been dealt with in NYS since its incorporation.

Henry said this was an issue on the main stem of the Delaware River, primarily around George Frosch's island. He enforced some of the Salmon River's Douglaston Manor decision requirements, even though he didn't meet them. NYS at the time didn't want to enforce the law and file any kind of charge for interfering with fishing. NPS and PA Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) hands were tied. NPS was hamstrung therefore. Since former Hancock UDC Representative (and Frosch's nephew) Fred Peckham sold the property, he isn't sure if they are still "enforcing" that. How do you know if you're floating into a restricted area; what are you expected to do? It saddens him that they didn't enforce anything then. The state doesn't want to be a part of the decision-making process; it will likely be a civil matter to remedy in courts. Padua said the issue is likely not over, unfortunately.

Dry Hydrant Installation in Lackawaxen Township: Ramie said she and Engelhardt were copied on an email sent to the NPS, but since the staff isn't able to be here tonight, we will report on their behalf. Lackawaxen Township Supervisor Mike Mancino contacted UPDE Superintendent Lindsey Kurnath on 9/26 stating: *"At last night's Fire*

Commission meeting, we were talking about the township's many dry hydrants. These are set up next to a water source and give our fire crews a quick way to refill their tankers. A dry hydrant can apparently fill a 3,000-gallon tanker in under four minutes. That time can make a big difference when fighting wildfires or structure fires. Assistant Chief Jimmy Johanson mentioned that adding a dry hydrant at the Lackawaxen/Delaware River along on Scenic Drive, just before the Zane Grey boat launch, would be a real help for our fire service. I've attached a couple of pics and this link for your review. https://dnr.maryland.gov/forests/pages/fire/dryhydrants.aspx. I wanted to reach out and see if this is something we might start talking over with you." Kurnath responded on 9/29 thanking him for looping in the NPS. She told Mancino that she is still on a detail and Acting Superintendent Weinman in her regular position of Facility Manager would probably be the one to involve anyway. They set up a meeting on 10/6, but unfortunately the government shutdown occurred. That meeting will likely be rescheduled. B. Dudko said dry hydrants work very well. Henry said this has come up numerous times and what sometimes stops it is the fact that most dry hydrants have to be 4-5 feet off the ground. If you put anything in the flood plain, ice will likely crush it or high water will impact it. B. Dudko said there is one in Sparrowbush and they've never had an issue with it. Henry said that one is elevated. If you've ever been to the access in Lackawaxen you'll notice it's very close to the water. He isn't opposed of the dry hydrants; on static water; they are great, but on moving water it would be a waste of time and money. Ramie and Engelhardt thanked Henry for that insight. Henry said that is a Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission access, so they should be looped in too. It would be a matter of where the dry hydrant would be placed for best proximity and usefulness.

Drought Status in the Delaware River Basin: Engelhardt said that New York City reservoirs remain at seasonally appropriate levels, though regional rainfall continues to trend below average. While there is no official drought declaration, hydrologic conditions are being closely monitored. Members discussed the importance of continued coordination with the Delaware River Basin Commission and the City's Bureau of Water Supply to ensure communication about potential drought triggers.

Delaware River Flow & Storage Report: Padua said they are using the Cannonsville Reservoir to push out the salt front. They are using Beltzville a lot too. He asked what the creek that comes out of Beltzville into the Delaware? Engelhardt said Beltzville discharges to the Lehigh River.

Indian Orchard River Access Opens on Lackawaxen River: Ramie announced that the Indian Orchard Access on the Lackawaxen River is officially open for public use. She thanked the partners and volunteers who contributed to the effort and noted that feedback has been mostly positive. This is the third access along the Lackawaxen River Trail. It's been amazingly ambitious to see these connected from White Mills, Hawley, and Honesdale. They did all the foundation and grant funding. Rodgers asked where this is? Padua said it's next to the Dime Bank. Ramie said it is off of Texas-Palmyra Highway on Route 6. Padua said he's always wanted to spend more time on the Lackawaxen. He knows some people aren't happy about it but it will bring more boat users. Henry said there is more water in the Lackawaxen River now than there was two weeks ago. Rodgers asked if there is a hiking trail from one access to the other? Ramie said no, just in the immediate area of each access. It's more of a walking path, not a hiking trail. Padua said there is a walking path in Hawley that goes up the Lackawaxen River. It's a shame there is so much private property there that it just ends abruptly. He asked how they funded the new access? Ramie said all of the funding sources are listed in the article that is in the packet. Engelhardt said Lackawaxen River Trails is the group responsible primarily.

Other: Padua said there is a 5 x 5 (point antler) Elk currently in Sullivan County after it crossed the river from PA. It escaped one of the two high-fence farms in Northern Wayne County. Henry said an animal came from there that had Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD). A red stag that was in captivity tested positive for CWD. There should be more laws on high-fence farms requiring them to have double fences. Padua said Elk is legal to shoot if you see it, that's what the Game Commission would do. They would then test the animal for CWD. Henry said you would need to have an Elk tag. Padua said this elk escaped from captivity; it's not from a local herd in PA. The river is a natural boundary for CWD, but deer cross every day. Martin asked how we would know the Elk has CWD? Padua said we don't know the Elk has CWD but there was an animal it was in captivity with that tested positive for CWD. Testing your deer harvest for CWD is optional right now. You won't really know if it has CWD unless there are visible signs.

Old Business:

Lake Jefferson Dam Update: Ramie said we spoke about this previously when the UDC submitted a letter of support for a grant to support for this project. An email is included in the packet providing an update. They are working through the design and permit phases to remove the spillway and restore the stream. They have secured the funds for the first phase. This project is through American Rivers who have hired Red Fish Engineering and they have been on site to come up with specs for what needs to be done. The message mentions that the spillway is a public safety concern due to the flood damage in 2006. Once they remove it, they will restore the Callicoon Creek to a free-flowing stream. B. Dudko said the power house for the radio station is there. Ramie confirmed WJFF Radio was hydro-powered at one time. Rodgers said he noticed that the Grefs signed the email. Ramie said the Grefs own the property and house there. Kevin Gref was the manager of WJFF at the time. Rodgers said there is a lot of water impounded behind that. Padua said it's better to get rid of that dam. Ramie said it's crumbling. Padua noted Jeffersonville has survived floods. Ramie said before they deconstruct the dam, they will engage the public to explain how they will do it and what the objectives are. There will be more to come. Rodgers said unfortunately it's still a couple of years down the road.

9/17 NPS Water Safety Committee Meeting: Driscoll reported that Life Jacket Wear Rate forms were sent to the company that will add up all the numbers up. Updated drowning data will be included at the fall Water Safety Partners meeting on 9/26. Water Safety Committee Chair Jasmine Leung accepted a position at Grand Tetons National Park. Leung will work with UPDE staff to transition a new Water Safety Committee chair. The fall Fishing Guide meeting will be at the Hancock Town Hall on Friday 10/24 (if the government is not shut down). We will discuss the fall Water Safety Partners meeting that happened on 9/26 later in the agenda. The next meeting was scheduled for 10/8; however, it didn't happen due to the government shutdown. Driscoll will wait for updates on scheduling of the next Water Safety Committee meeting.

9/22 Upper Delaware Scenic Byway Meeting: Ramie said the committee opted to meet on site at the Callicoon Depot for this meeting. Unfortunately, they didn't have a quorum and therefore could not take any action. They still went through the items and a copy of the unofficial notes is included in the packet. At the end of the discussion, they toured the depot to visualize the visitor center portion. There will be more of a focus on the visitor center at the upcoming meetings since they have the architectural drawings our for comments then just need funds released to go out to bid. The next byway meeting is on 10/27 at 7pm at the UDC office.

Padua said there has been a lot of movement on the visitor center. Is there anything on the park in Callicoon? Ramie said Coulter mentioned Callicoon Riverside Park at the full council meeting. The DEC and Sullivan County are going ahead with the development of the park. It's a county park with a DEC river access and boat launch. We saw Coulter at the Upper Delaware River Rendezvous where he mentioned that DEC has been on location quite a bit.

9/24 D&H Trustees Meeting: Ramie said the trustees meet in the off months when the full council doesn't. Minutes were in the packet. This 9/24 meeting was only 30 minutes long. The next full council meeting is tomorrow in Kingston, NY. President Bill Merchant has arranged a tour of the 1825 Erie Canal boat replica, the *Seneca Chief*. The boat is traveling along the Hudson River for the 200th anniversary of the Erie Canal. They will combine their usual business meeting with that private tour opportunity.

9/26 NPS Water Safety Partners Meeting: Driscoll reported that there were 20 participants at this Zoom only meeting, including Ramie and herself. Thirty-eight thousand nine hundred and seventy-three contacts were made at NPS kiosks this summer, with the most at Mongaup. Rick Lander said that the Sullivan Catskills Visitors Association observed lower numbers this year, with 11 rainy weekends at the beginning of the season that were not ideal. They will have information on how many visitors the new digital billboard on Route 84 (going toward Matamoras) reached at the Spring Partners meeting. Those are the billboards NPS partnered with the UDC for. The Skinners Falls Bridge took a lot of UPDE's attention this season. The future is still unknown for that location. There were no updates on the Delaware Aqueduct repairs at this meeting. Glass on the river was a high priority this year. UPDE asked for suggestions. Alcohol is not restricted on the river, so cans work best. They will have numbers on how many violations they had for glass at the Spring Partners meeting. Lander asked for posters to be made on fishing regulations; the booklets they have currently are too big to read. The Ruth Jones Memorial Clean-up had 100 volunteers and approximately 50 canoes in the river. Everyone agreed that it was the least amount of trash they've seen, even with all the low water. They are looking to put loaner life jacket return stations at new locations next year. There was a 25% loss rate this year on loaner life jackets. Rodgers said that number seems much higher than what we talked about at the last meeting. Driscoll agreed, she thought the number that was discussed at the last

meeting was far too low, but she wasn't 100% sure. UPDE would like to hold an annual life jacket donation drive in May, coinciding with Water Safety Month, conjoining it with Wear Your Life Jacket to Work Day. They would partner with the UDC as a donation point. UPDE also created booklets for translated river safety talks in Spanish, Chinese, Russian, German, and Polish. They are working on Hebrew. They will paint life jacket wear decals on all concrete boat ramps with a stencil from PA Fish & Boat Commission. The Spring Water Safety Partners meeting is scheduled for Friday, April 24th, 2026.

Rodgers said he doesn't understand why a poster needs to be made for fishing regulations. Padua said right now they have a thick booklet that takes some time to read. Having a poster would make it easier for people to actually read regulations for this area. He added that on the current posters they have a brook trout, which you almost never catch on the Upper Delaware; that's misleading. They should also add baitfish regulations. Henry asked if UPDE got permission to put the life jacket decal on the boat ramps? Driscoll said PFBC leant them the stencil, so she's assuming yes. Henry said he'd hope they are using waterproof paint. Paint can get covered in algae and make it more of a hazard. He added that we should post fishing regulations on the UDC website.

Post meeting note: Ramie took photos at the Indian Orchard River Access after this meeting; the life jacket stencil is used to imprint the message on the concrete, not paint.

10/3 Sullivan County Bike and Pedestrian Advisory Committee Meeting: Ramie reported that the advisory committee will hold a series of short Zoom workshops with key municipal officials to review bicycle and pedestrian safety area maps for population centers including Narrowsburg and Callicoon. These sessions will focus on local issues such as crosswalk placement and intersection safety improvements. Once feedback is collected, the team will analyze data through the winter and reconvene in early 2026 for the fourth advisory committee meeting. Ramie added that for the Upper Delaware region, the workshop is scheduled for November 5 at 9 a.m., with invitations going out to officials from the Towns of Delaware and Tusten and other regional stakeholders. B. Dudko asked whether these sessions would include local law enforcement or emergency services input. Ramie responded that the intent is to include anyone with firsthand knowledge of those areas, and that agencies such as local highway departments are encouraged to attend.

10/6 Pike-Wayne Conservation Partnership Meeting: Engelhardt shared updates from the hybrid meeting. DCNR staff discussed the dedication of the new forestry building on Route 402 and current fire conditions, which remain moderate but may worsen this fall. She noted the PRWEN program offers forest management assistance for landowners with 10–2,500 acres, but that the program could run out of funding by the end of the year. She also reported that Jess Yoder from Pike County Planning announced the draft Open Space and Recreation Plan is now available for public review. She plans to submit comments after reading the draft.

10/14 Delaware River Sojourn Steering Committee Meeting: Engelhardt stated that the Sojourn will take place from June 20–26, 2026. While that is slightly later than usual, it still starts on Father's Day weekend, and more students may be available after school ends. The group decided to keep the trip at seven days, noting that eight-day events typically lead to higher costs and participant fatigue. The theme will be "Our Nation's River," celebrating the Delaware's role in national history in connection with the upcoming Semiquincentennial. Engelhardt said the steering committee anticipates using three camping sites and that she plans to attend the Lackawaxen Parks and Recreation Committee meeting in November to discuss potential township land use for camping and logistics for paddling the Lackawaxen. G. Dudko commented that New York schools will still be in session that week. Engelhardt said that Pennsylvania and New Jersey schools should be out, which may balance participation numbers.

10/15-16 Upper Delaware River Rendezvous: Ramie said Engelhardt, Driscoll, and she attended the annual Rendezvous event put on by Friends of the Upper Delaware River (FUDR) with two registrations subsidized by Henry and one scholarship from FUDR. Ramie reported that the federal government shutdown disrupted the planned speaker lineup, as several agency representatives were unable to attend. Despite this, the two-day program featured 22 educational sessions, and UDC staff divided up to attend as many as possible. UDC staff plan to combine their notes and photos for an article in the UDC's Fall/Winter newsletter. The agenda was included in tonight's meeting packets for reference. We gathered several new ideas for future UDC programming. Assembly Member Paula Kay delivered the closing remarks, reaffirming her support for the river. G. Dudko asked whether Kay mentioned any potential funding commitments. Ramie said that Kay is still actively reviewing UDC financial documentation and remains engaged. She requested copies of key UDC documents to assist her advocacy in Albany. Ramie provided

Kay with the 1988 MOU signed by the DEC Commissioner and a 1993 Executive Order issued by Governor Mario Cuomo, both confirming the state's commitment to UDC cooperation. Padua asked whether anyone attended the presentation on the Fisheries Management Plan and if it included discussion of the new year-round catch-and-release trout regulations on the Upper Delaware. Ramie said she was unsure but anticipates that materials from all presentations would be available online soon. Engelhardt added that the event felt "more put together and professional" than last year and highlighted an especially interesting presentation about how rocks move downstream, which she said gave her a new perspective on river flow dynamics. Padua said when he worked on the Snake River, the humming of rocks tumbling downstream was so loud it could be distracting.

Update on Water Quality Monitoring Station for Camp FIMFO: Engelhardt reported that she has reached out to Friends of the Upper Delaware River (FUDR), American Rivers, and NYSDEC to explore both technical support and possible funding opportunities for a new water quality monitoring station near Camp FIMFO. She said the outreach is still in progress, but she intends to convene discussions among those partners soon. Martin thanked Engelhardt.

Other: Padua asked if there were any updates on the PA abutment at Skinners Falls Bridge. The construction fencing there looks terrible and seems like it's going to fall into the river soon. Ramie said there has been no schedule announced for removal of the Pennsylvania abutment at Skinners Falls Bridge. The project will require proper permitting and oversight before any demolition could occur. Ramie said it isn't really a NPS issue; it's a PennDOT issue. Padua agreed that PennDOT should be notified to inspect and repair the barrier. Ramie said the UDC submitted a comment letter by the October 10 deadline requesting clarification on the removal's justification and process, including how public safety and environmental impact would be addressed. During discussion, members expressed concern about the lack of consultation from the National Park Service (NPS) regional office, saying that directives were issued without engagement with local partners. Henry emphasized that this was contrary to the cooperative management framework central to the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River.

Henry referenced the 1953 Submerged Lands Act, explaining that the law transferred ownership and jurisdiction of submerged lands and islands to the individual states. He suggested members review the statute to better understand how it affects the river's management and property boundaries. This led to a broader discussion about island ownership along the Delaware River. Padua and Rodgers noted several examples of both public and private ownership, including Big Island near Callicoon, which has effectively become a peninsula, and others owned by state or municipal entities. Padua referenced modern mapping software that identifies ownership types, though he cautioned that such maps are not always reliable. Ramie agreed, noting that jurisdictional boundaries on the river can be inconsistent.

Public Comment: None.

Adjourn: A Motion by B. Dudko seconded by Henry to adjourn the meeting at 7:46 p.m. was carried.

Meeting minutes prepared by Stephanie Driscoll, 10/23/2025