WATER USE/RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMM. MEETING MINUTES
December 16, 2025

Committee Members Present:	Evan Padua, Bill Dudko, Jim Rodgers, Al Henry, Pat Jeffer
Committee Members Absent:	Bob Lindquist, Christine Martin
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, December 16, 2025. Chairperson Padua called the meeting to order at 8:06 pm.

Approval of the October 21, 2025 meeting minutes: A motion by B. Dudko seconded by Henry approving the 11/18 meeting minutes carried.

Public Comment on Agenda: None.

New Business:

12/18 NPS Fishing Guides Post-Season 2 p.m. Virtual Meeting: Ramie said this is a reminder about the upcoming National Park Service fishing guide post-season meeting scheduled for December 18. Padua said that he expects turnout to be fairly low. The meeting is being held virtually at 2:00 p.m. on a Thursday, which is not an especially convenient time for many guides, and it was acknowledged that post-season meetings in general tend to draw limited attendance even under the best circumstances. He said they might try to attend if possible. Ramie asked whether the Zoom link had been distributed yet, Padua said he hasn't seen it come through yet. Driscoll said she had not received the link but had reached out to inquire about it. Padua said he is curious whether the Park Service would consider some type of prorated or adjusted rate for commercial use authorizations, given the two months during which government operations were shut down. He said an email was circulated asking guides to confirm whether their businesses were still operating, and stated that if no response was received, it would be assumed that the business was no longer in operation. This struck him as extremely odd, particularly because it came during a government shutdown, when such administrative communications were not expected to be happening at all. Padua said he's never received anything like that before, either as a guide or as a business owner. After responding, the reply that came back essentially said that the office was closed and responses would be delayed, which only added to the confusion. That issue might come up during the post-season meeting, as others may have had similar questions or concerns about the communication and its implications.

Registration Open for Citizens Preparedness Training Program, 3/11/26, 5 p.m., Tusten Town Hall Community Room: The flyer for the Citizens Preparedness Training Program is included in tonight's packet. This program will be held on March 11 at the Tusten Town Hall and registration is officially open. Engelhardt attempted to register using her Pennsylvania address and ran into an issue, not with entering her personal information, but with the required drop-down menu that only listed New York counties. Driscoll reached out to the program contact about this, and the guidance they received was to proceed by completing the registration as usual and simply selecting Sullivan County as the host location. The program is not closed to Pennsylvania residents; it is simply New York–funded, which is why the registration system is structured that way. The training is conducted by the New York National Guard on behalf of the New York State Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Services. There will be a clear note explaining how Pennsylvania residents should register so there is no confusion when the flyer is advertised. Advance registration is required, both for attendance tracking and because registered participants are eligible to receive a free emergency preparedness "go-kit". The program requires a minimum of 50 registrants; if that threshold is not met, the training could be canceled. For that reason, everyone was encouraged to register promptly and to help spread the word widely. The Sullivan County Local Emergency Preparedness Committee has agreed to distribute the information through its emergency response channels, noting that it benefits everyone to have residents better prepared for emergencies. Sullivan County agencies, the New York State Police, and the Sullivan County Emergency Operations Center will also help circulate the information.

New York City Watershed Agreement: Ramei said, included in the packet is a recent two-page article from *The Reporter*, a Walton-based newspaper, outlining what was described as a monumental new agreement between Delaware County and the New York City Department of Environmental Protection regarding the future management of the watershed and reservoirs. The article detailed the many years of negotiations, relationship-building, and trust

development that ultimately led to the agreement. At this point, all parties have signed on, and the general consensus among those involved appears to be satisfaction with how the agreement turned out. Having this agreement in place is a key component of New York City's continued filtration avoidance status, which saves the city billions of dollars. Because of that, it is very much in New York City's interest to maintain positive and cooperative relationships with its watershed partners, and this agreement represents an important step in that direction.

While Delaware flow & storage conditions were described as "doing alright" at present, concerns were raised about long-standing infrastructure issues tied to New York City's water system. Henry referenced the presentations by Dr. Peter Kolesar, highlighting the ongoing problem of an estimated 40 million gallons per day leaking from the Delaware Aqueduct. This issue has persisted for decades, with little visible progress toward a permanent fix. It was argued that this is Delaware River water being lost daily and diverted into the Hudson system, and that addressing this leak could significantly alleviate downstream flow concerns, including debates over minimum flow targets at Montague. Several members expressed concern that while stakeholders are frequently asked to make sacrifices or adjustments related to flow management, a relatively straightforward infrastructure fix—patching the aqueduct leak—remains unresolved. Members voiced frustration with repeated cycles of presentations, promises, cancellations, and rebidding processes, all while the water continues to leak. There was general agreement that this issue warrants renewed attention and pressure Henry said we should involve political representatives and the media. Padua said the UDC had sent correspondence on this issue previously, but it may be time to revisit the matter more forcefully. Henry said we should put this issue on the next WU/RM agenda and engage elected officials.

Delaware River Flow & Storage Report: Included in the packet for review. Ramie said that Pike County is currently under a Drought Watch. Padua mentioned that there has been plenty of snow, but it has been too cold for it to melt. It is supposed to warm up the next few days, and hopefully that will help.

Other: None.

Old Business:

11/24 Upper Delaware Scenic Byway Meeting: Ramie reported that the UDSB awarded a $500 signage grant to The Hamlet Dream, a gift shop and juice bar in Barryville that had previously come before the Project Review Committee. The grant supported the replacement of an existing sign with one that was more aesthetically pleasing. The Byway had also provided a $1,500 donation to the Upper Delaware Council for 2025 to support general operations, presented by B. Dudko to Padua as Vice-chair at the last UDC meeting. A formal thank-you letter was prepared and sent on behalf of the UDC.

Ramie said the byway covered the cost of an environmental assessment required to identify any potentially hazardous conditions in The Callicoon Depot before construction could begin. A proposal from Atlantic Testing Laboratories of Campton, New York, totaled $6,295, and none of the project partners had been able to cover that expense because it was not eligible under the existing $250,000 grant funding. UDSB Treasurer Richardson proposed reallocating surplus funds from the Vista Enhancement Grants budget to cover the cost of the environmental study. That decision cleared a major hurdle and will allow the project team to move forward with soliciting construction bids. The byway also approved a $3,000 allocation to help cover depot-related overhead expenses, including property taxes, utilities, and insurance. These costs had largely been absorbed by the Callicoon Business Association to date, even though the depot project involves three nonprofit partners. Ramie said that is an appropriate investment by the byway, given that the renovated depot will ultimately serve as a Visitor Center tied directly to the byway's mission.

Ramie shared that the Scenic Byway intends to apply for the same SCVA tourism grant program that the UDC applied to. Their application would focus on funding for graphic displays and interpretive exhibits inside the future Visitor Center. With a professional graphic designer now serving as the byway's program manager (David Krantz), detailed cost estimates have already been developed for digital kiosks, high-quality displays, and informational installations. Award announcements are expected in January.

Ramie reminded the group that a few meetings earlier there had been mention of a newly formed organization called the Western Catskills Visitors Association, which had first come to light through an article in the *Hancock Herald*. Richard Lowe, the Village of Hancock's representative to the byway, established the organization as both a self-funded S-corporation and a nonprofit. This dual structure is intended to make it easier to channel I Love NY funding

into the western Catskills region as a whole, rather than through individual counties, which often focus their tourism spending inward. The goal is to serve the entire Upper Delaware region. The organization's tagline is "Wild West Wonder." The organization is not meant to replace existing tourism or marketing entities, but rather to act as an additional hub that can cross geographic and administrative boundaries.

Ramie referenced a November 12 workshop focused on byway programming and events for 2026. Ideas discussed included creating a comprehensive events calendar for activities along Route 97, developing a lodging map, and producing trade-show-style publications, tabletop displays, and exhibits. One concrete outcome from that planning has already emerged in the form of a new interactive Google Map on the UDSB website, which lists lodging options along the corridor, including bed-and-breakfasts, Airbnbs, and other accommodations. There was also discussion about potentially reviving the byway's online scavenger hunt, which had been offered the previous summer. While enthusiasm remains, the challenge is securing prize packages, as the byway currently lacks the capacity to assemble the same types of outdoor prizes that were previously offered.

Ramie volunteered at Operation Toy Train at The Callicoon Depot that brought a memorable moment to several Upper Delaware communities. Unlike typical freight trains that pass through without stopping, this train made scheduled stops, allowing Santa Claus and volunteers to disembark and collect new, unwrapped toys for the Marine Toys for Tots Foundation. Stops included Hancock, Narrowsburg, and other area locations such as Shohola and Lackawaxen. Each stop lasted approximately 25 to 30 minutes. The Callicoon Depot stood out because it invited people inside the station, creating a festive atmosphere complete with hot cider, hot cocoa, cookies, and a generous spread of refreshments. The depot also hosted a gently used toy exchange, allowing children who brought a new toy donation to select a toy from the freight room. Remaining toys will be donated to other local toy drives.

Ramie reported that architectural drawings for the Visitor Center at The Callicoon Depot have now received sign-off from both Central New York Railroad, which owns the property, and the New York State Historic Preservation Office. The Town of Delaware determined that no special use permit is required because the project is considered an improvement to an existing historic building within its original footprint. As a result, neither the UDC nor the NPS need to conduct a separate review. The goal is to have the plans stamped and filed by December 30, which is particularly important because new, more stringent federal ADA requirements take effect after that date. While the project team intends to comply fully with accessibility standards regardless, avoiding additional regulatory layers will help control costs. Once the plans are filed, the project can move forward with issuing a request for proposals for construction. Tentatively, and with all the usual caveats, construction could begin in early 2026. Henry asked how many parking spots will be available at the new Visitor Center. Ramie said ADA-accessible parking will be provided on-site at the depot, general visitor parking is expected to rely on the municipal lot across the tracks. Henry said parking constraints could undermine the success of new visitor facilities. Ramie acknowledged the concern, noting that a nearby Callicoon Park includes approximately 25 parking spaces, though that may still be insufficient. Rodgers asked who owns the depot right now? Ramie said the building is not owned outright by the Callicoon Business Association but is held under a long-term lease of approximately 40 years from the railroad. That arrangement provides long-term stability for the investment being made in the property.

The December meeting originally planned for December 22 was postponed due to its proximity to the holidays. Instead, the Byway will meet on January 5, followed by its regular fourth Monday meeting on January 26, resulting in two meetings in January.

12/3 Eagle Committee Meeting: Engelhardt reported that this is the last meeting before the season starts. The focus was largely on logistics and readiness, with a general sense that things are in good shape heading into January. There had been a training breakfast the previous Saturday that she wasn't able to attend, but assumed that it went smoothly and accomplished what it needed to do in terms of preparing volunteers.

There are nine potential Eagle Watch weekends in January and February this year, rather than the usual eight, because February 28 falls on a Saturday. However, Ingrid Peterec confirmed that the Zane Grey Museum will not be open that weekend, so the committee agreed not to count it as an official Eagle Watch weekend. With Lori McKean now back on the committee after having stepped away from the program for some time, the program will re-center the effort on education and interpretation with McKean's help, instead of getting people out to view and count eagles. The program should do more to remind the public why the eagle's recovery is such an important conservation success story, and what actions and policies made that recovery possible. Padua said Rachel Carson is

a central figure whose work helped catalyze the environmental protections that ultimately benefited species like the bald eagle.

12/5 BioBlitz Planning Meeting: Engelhardt said this first planning meeting focused on the possibility of holding a BioBlitz in 2026; whether the event is financially feasible. In past years the NPS had provided significant funding and resources that are no longer available. Despite those constraints, there remains strong interest among participants in trying to make a BioBlitz happen. Moving forward, the group has begun soliciting nominations for potential BioBlitz locations. Engelhardt said that Henry had previously mentioned knowing of some possible sites. Henry asked Engelhardt to send him the criteria for sites and will get back to her. Engelhardt said sites should be biodiverse, typically under about 250 acres, have sufficient parking (roughly four spaces as a baseline), and be capable of hosting both scientific teams and members of the public. Rodgers asked if they need insurance? Engelhardt said sites are covered through appropriate insurance arrangements and named as additional insureds when necessary. Engelhardt said while BioBlitz sites have historically alternated between New York and Pennsylvania, are now open to locations in either state as long as they are within the Upper Delaware Watershed. Ramie said the site criteria has been posted on the UDC's Facebook page as well.

12/9 Delaware River Sojourn Steering Committee Meeting: Engelhardt said planning continues to evolve as they work through logistics for the 2026 Sojourn, particularly around river segments and overnight locations. They no longer plan to paddle the Lackawaxen river and don't plan to camp at Veterans Field. Ten Mile River had initially been discussed as a possible option. However, Dan Corrigan of Northeast Wilderness Experience (NEWE) reported that he has been in conversations with Camp Tel Yehudah which may present a much better fit for the Sojourn's needs. Camp Tel Yehudah offers showers, easier river access compared to Ten Mile River, and improved access for buses. Corrigan plans to reach out to Camp Tel Yehudah to discuss more.

The Upper Delaware planning team still needs to meet to finalize decisions about the third paddling stretch. That segment has not yet been determined. The committee also began discussing potential VIPs to invite to participate in or attend the Sojourn. Nathan Riegner, Director of Outdoor Recreation for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, was mentioned as a possible invitee. Reigner served as keynote speaker at last year's UDC awards banquet two years ago and was well received.

Engelhardt said Jacqui Wagner, who has served as the Sojourn's safety lead for the past five to six years and was recognized with a High Admiral Award last year, has decided to step back from that role. The committee expressed appreciation for her many years of leadership and dedication. Jerry Donati will be stepping into the safety lead role going forward. Engelhardt said Donati has already been part of the safety team for several years and is well qualified to take on the responsibility.

12/15 Regulated Flow Advisory Committee Meeting: Ramie said she missed this meeting, as the staff's computers are going through an update transition and didn't notify her of the meeting. Minutes should be out soon and she will circulate those when available.

12/16 Pike-Wayne Conservation Partnership Meeting: Engelhardt said this meeting took place in person earlier that morning. One of the most valuable parts of the meeting was the roundtable introductions, where participants reminded everyone who they were and shared brief updates on their organizations. Pike County Conservation District has seen an influx of new staff, and they are planning to roll out a significant amount of new programming in the coming year. An update was shared from DCNR, represented by Austin Noguera, who works with Tim Dugan. Noguera reported that snowmobile trails are currently open, with the caveat that riders should not get stuck, as assistance is not technically available if issues arise. Pike County Planning was represented by Jess Yoder, who shared that the county has been organizing guided hikes, including one remaining hike for the year scheduled for December 21 as part of a solstice celebration. Wayne County Conservation District reported that they completed a substantial number of agricultural grants over the past year and are looking ahead to expanding into forestry grants in 2026. The National Park Service was also represented, with Marshall attending and sharing that the NPS will be seeking life jacket donations in the coming year to support river safety loaner stations. The Lacawac Sanctuary discussed plans to increase their programming next year, with a goal of offering at least two programs per month. The Lake Wallenpaupack Watershed organization noted that 2026 marks the centennial of Lake Wallenpaupack, celebrating 100 years. While they are not a chamber of commerce, they anticipate being involved in additional events tied to the milestone. As part of their fundraising efforts, they announced plans for a Dave Matthews Band

tribute concert at Harmony in the Woods on the first Sunday in August. Information was also shared about a two-day lake conference scheduled for February 25 and 26, with additional details available through palakes.org. A representative from the Hemlock Farms Conservancy said that while the organization is based within a homeowners association, all of their programming is open to the public. Their broader mission focuses on wildlife education in Pike County, with a particular emphasis this year on wildfire education, aimed at helping residents better understand how their actions impact wildfire risk. They also have grant funding available to support local nonprofit organizations.

They discussed dates for upcoming events, including the legislative breakfast and the Homeowners Resource Fair, with the idea floated that the resource fair could potentially be hosted at a farmers market next year. It was mentioned that an article was volunteered for the June newsletter, tied to the BioBlitz. Jess Yoder received a text message during the meeting from the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission that grant funding is available for boat launch sites.

12/16 Advisory on Committee on Climate Change Meeting: Engelhardt said she wasn't able to make this meeting, since it overlapped with the Pike-Wayne Conservation Partnership meeting. Minutes should be available soon and she will go through those to see if there is anything the committee may be interested in.

Update on Water Quality Monitoring Sampling at Camp FIMFO: Engelhardt said she hasn't heard back from any of the emails she sent to get a group together to discuss water sampling at Camp FIMFO. She isn't sure if Christine Martin has more information, but she isn't at this meeting tonight. She mentioned that Friends of the Upper Delaware River's Executive Director Molly Oliver's email had been hacked, so she isn't sure if she has received her email on the topic. Ramie and Rodgers confirmed that Oliver's email had been hacked. They also received a suspicious email from her account.

Update on Public Safety Signage at Skinners Falls Bridge PA Abutment: Kearns reported that the permanent guardrail at the bridge was anticipated to be installed sometime during the current week. If that installation proceeds as planned, it would allow for the removal of the temporary snow fencing that has been in place. According to PennDOT, the expectation is that once the permanent guardrail is installed, the snow fence would no longer be necessary and should be taken down. He noted that concerns about the snow fence had been raised during the previous WU/RM meeting, specifically that it has repeatedly fallen down and does not provide a reliable or durable safety barrier. If the permanent guardrail is not installed as scheduled, the failing snow fence represents an ongoing safety concern. Kearns confirmed that he had communicated those concerns directly to PennDOT, relaying the issues raised by the committee regarding the condition of the temporary fencing and the importance of timely installation of the permanent guardrail. The committee expressed appreciation for the update and recognized the installation of the permanent guardrail as good news. It would significantly improve safety conditions at the bridge and help address longstanding concerns about temporary measures being insufficient.

NPS Comments on Skinners Falls Bridge PEL Study: Kearns said the committee had asked him to follow up with PennDOT to see if there was any clearer commitment or timeline tied to completion of the PEL study. The goal was to better understand whether PennDOT was truly standing behind the "needs and purpose" statement that identifies replacement of the bridge as necessary, and whether there was any sense of when a final decision point might occur. Despite those follow-up efforts, the response from PennDOT has remained unchanged from what was stated at the public meeting back in September. There is still no defined window—whether five years, ten years, fifteen years, or otherwise—by which a bridge replacement decision would be made if funding does not materialize. The understanding continues to be that the PEL study will be finalized and then remain open-ended, with action dependent entirely on future funding availability at some unknown point down the road. If funding becomes available years from now, then something could move forward at that time; if not, the study simply sits on the shelf. They they have not received any new information or clarification from PennDOT that would resolve this lingering uncertainty, and that this remains the major unresolved question hanging over the project. PennDOT had granted an extension for submission of the NPS's comment letter after the federal government shutdown. NPS staff are still in the process of finalizing their review and drafting the letter, and that while they are hoping to complete it soon. Once the letter is finalized and sent to PennDOT, the letter will also be shared with the UDC for its records.

Status of Dry Hydrants Request in Lackawaxen, PA: Kearns said prior to the federal government shutdown conversations were underway and a meeting had even been scheduled in October to discuss the possibility of

installing dry hydrants in Lackawazen. Once the shutdown occurred, however, that meeting could not take place. After operations resumed, Jessica Weinman had followed up by email offering to schedule another meeting to revisit the topic. There has been no response, and no follow-up meeting has been scheduled. Because of the lack of response, the impression has been that there may no longer be interest in pursuing the idea. Kearns did some preliminary research on dry hydrants; they tend to function best in static water bodies such as ponds, reservoirs, or lakes. In a moving river system like the Lackawaxen or the Delaware, he questioned how feasible or effective a dry hydrant installation would be. If there were renewed interest and a desire to talk it through, they would certainly be willing to entertain further discussion.

Other: Padua said he recently read in Pennsylvania Game Commission magazine that there is early discussion underway about a possible merger, or at least a financial integration, between the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission and the Pennsylvania Game Commission. It appears to be more about shared funding mechanisms than a full structural merger into a single agency like NYS DEC. He said he would prefer keeping the two agencies separate, noting that the current structure helps maintain clarity and balance between fishing, boating, hunting, and game management responsibilities. If changes do occur, they could potentially affect which agency representatives attend UDC meetings in the future. Ramie said the River Management Plan still references the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources (DER), which later split into DEP and DCNR. That change occurred after the plan was written in the mid-1980s, and the plan has never been formally amended to reflect it.

Henry shared the passing of Vince Porrego, a longtime Protection Ranger with Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River. he recalled that Porrego had worked in the unit for many years and was well regarded. He had been living in North Carolina, and that his passing came as a shock. Kearns confirmed that the news had come through NPS communications earlier in the day and that staff who had worked with him were being notified.

Padua mentioned an AI Data Center proposal in the Town of Thompson, New York, near the Neversink River, a major tributary of the Delaware River. Advocacy groups had circulated letters related to the proposal. These types of projects are becoming more common throughout the region, even if they may not be feasible directly along the Delaware River corridor itself. Henry said he knows of a nearly 600-acre solar farm in Monroe County. Members expressed concern about the long-term implications of such projects, particularly the relatively short lifespan of solar panels—often 12 to 20 years—and the lack of clear plans for decommissioning and land restoration afterward. While landowners may benefit financially in the short term, communities are often left without answers about what happens to the land when the infrastructure reaches the end of its useful life.

Public Comment: None.

Adjourn: A Motion by B. Dudko seconded by Henry to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 p.m. was carried.

Meeting minutes prepared by Stephanie Driscoll, 12/18/2025