

WATER USE/RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMM. MEETING MINUTES

February 17, 2026

Committee Members Present: Evan Padua (Zoom), Bill Dudko, Jim Rodgers, Al Henry, Pat Jeffer, Christine Martin (Zoom), Bob Lindquist (Zoom)

Committee Members Absent: None

Staff: Laurie Ramie, Stephanie Driscoll

NPS Partner: Lindsey Kurnath (Zoom)

Guests: Ginny Dudko

The UDC's Water Use/Resource Management Committee held its monthly meeting on Tuesday, February 17, 2026. Chairperson Padua called the meeting to order at 6:29 pm.

Approval of the January 20, 2026 meeting minutes: A motion by B. Dudko seconded by Rodgers approving the 1/20/26 meeting minutes carried.

Public Comment on Agenda: None.

New Business:

6th Annual Upper Delaware Litter Sweep Update: Driscoll said the press release is included in the packet, so advertising has begun. She displayed the 2026 Upper Delaware Litter Sweep artwork by artist Jeff George for the committee to see. Everyone commented that it is a beautiful design. The design will be printed on safety green (yellow) t-shirts through Platform Industries in Honesdale. Driscoll said that Jeff George also donated the original artwork to the UDC to use. She is looking into how to raffle the artwork to raise funds for the Litter Sweep. Ramie said there is a threshold of \$15,000 in proceeds to require a permit. It's unlikely it will hit that amount. B. Dudko said we should reach out to Larry Richardson since he's done raffle work in the past for other organizations. Driscoll said she plans to.

Driscoll said that WJFF Radio Catskill will serve at the Upper Delaware Litter Sweep media sponsor again this year, with their logo printed on the t-shirt's left sleeve. Litter sweep volunteers have already started reaching out, eager to participate. We need to secure Litter Leaders most immediately. Driscoll said Ramie has forwarded her paperwork for Sullivan County Discretionary Funding that she hopes to start filling out next week. Ramie said that Driscoll has also started the permitting process through NYSDOT.

Ramie said the Boy Scouts in Sparrowbush are planning a Litter Sweep with UPDE's Ranger Susie Kaspar on March 10th. Kaspar called Driscoll to see if the UDC would be able to provide t-shirts like we did this year, so Driscoll submitted the t-shirt order quickly to hopefully have them in time for that sweep.

Ramie said the Litter Sweep is entirely volunteer-driven and supported exclusively through donations. To keep track of those donations, she has started compiling a list. The first contribution came from JoAnne Merritt, UPDE's former IT Specialist, of \$50. The Delaware River Basin Commission has pledged \$500 towards the Litter Sweep. Rodgers asked how much money we started with this year. Ramie said there was a balance of \$2,544.01 in the dedicated Jeff Bank account. Driscoll said the largest immediate expense is for the t-shirts.

Martin said the Town of Highland committed to April 18th for their litter sweep. Padua volunteered as Litter Leader for Damascus Township. Driscoll noted those and thanked Martin and Padua. Padua said he's been watching un-tarped loads more carefully since the discussion on that last year. Though, most litter he sees likely comes from people throwing garbage out of their car windows.

Delaware River Flow & Storage Report: Included in the packet for review. Rodgers said this report looks very similar to last month's. Driscoll said this is last week's report, since the latest wasn't available on the DRBC website yet, probably due to the holiday on Monday. Padua said that numbers should start to go up next week with rising temperatures and a little bit of rain in the forecast.

Other: Ramie said that Tom Kearns was not able to attend tonight but had emailed that he received confirmation from PennDOT on Friday (2/13) that the final components of the railing had been installed at the PA abutment at the Skinners Falls Bridge. Kearns also told her that Hartgen Archaeological Associates have requested to present their findings from the Cowen Farm project at the June full council meeting. The NPS also requested the October 1st full council meeting to present findings from the UPDE geological report.

B. Dudko said that the Matamoras Bridge is open, but the traffic pattern has changed while still under construction.

Padua said he had run into Don Hamilton, former Chief of Natural Resources at UPDE, who told him that the mussel study done in the Upper Delaware near Hankins recorded what could be the highest density of freshwater mussels ever recorded, possibly in the world. Formal data will likely be released sometime in the future. Padua said that finding is directly linked to the exceptional water quality of the Upper Delaware. Freshwater mussels act as natural filtration systems; their presence in high density would significantly contribute to the river's clarity and ecological health.

Old Business:

2/2 Upper Delaware Scenic Byway Meeting: Ramie said this meeting had been the January meeting, which was delayed by one week due to weather.

She reported that the 2026 General Budget and Program Management Budget were approved as presented. These budgets had been developed and proposed by the Scenic Byway Treasurer, Larry Richardson. Richardson suggested initiating a conversation with Sullivan County about establishing the Scenic Byway as a permanent line item in the County's budget. Once the Visitor Center at The Callicoon Depot is operational, the depot will function as a tourism destination for western Sullivan County, bringing with it continuous operational and maintenance responsibilities. The current structure of competing annually with other nonprofits for discretionary county funds does not provide the stability needed to sustain a physical facility. While grant funding may fluctuate, a building, once renovated and opened, represents a permanent obligation. Richardson said he would reach out to Nadia Rajsz, chair of the Sullivan County Legislature, to explore how to formally make such a request.

Ramie said the Byway also approved a \$300 sponsorship rather than a traditional grant to support the Third Annual Paddle for Pride river trip, organized through the TriVersity Pride Center of Milford. The event is scheduled for June 27. The sponsorship secures the Byway's name on the commemorative t-shirt and in promotional materials. Beyond branding, the funds will help offset participant costs for the river trip, which includes components of LGBTQIA+ education, river safety instruction, and regional river valley history.

David Krantz, the Scenic Byway Program Manager, introduced a new shared Google Calendar initiative designed to centralize regional events. He has been soliciting events from organizations along the corridor. The calendar is now live on the Byway website, UDSB.net, appearing both on the homepage and within the visitor services section. The goal is to continue expanding participation, so the calendar becomes a comprehensive resource for visitors and residents alike.

Krantz also presented a concept for a summer Scenic Byway Photo Contest that would not involve categories but instead broadly showcase the byway and its adjacent recreational and cultural activities. The contest would serve multiple purposes: engaging the public, increasing awareness of the Scenic Byway's existence, and building a usable image library for promotional materials. The long-term vision includes a traveling exhibit of selected images displayed up and down the byway.

B. Dudko said the Byway had a conversation with Legislator Tom Faggione regarding Orange County funding. While he was reportedly impressed with the Byway's work, Orange County does not have a discretionary funding structure comparable to Sullivan County's.

The Byway issued a press release announcing its 2025 grants and sponsorships, which collectively amounted to \$8,675 in community support. This figure reflects funded or co-sponsored community projects and demonstrates the Byway's reinvestment in corridor initiatives.

Ramie said the Request for Proposals (RFP) for construction services, titled "Renovation and Repurposing of the Callicoon Depot" has been released. Bids are due by March 11. The RFP has been distributed widely through press releases and direct outreach to regional contractors. Site inspections are already being scheduled, indicating genuine interest. However, there was candid acknowledgment that the available funding for this phase is \$250,000, and the scope of work will ultimately depend on whether bids can meet that budget. The project is scalable, meaning only as much work as funding allows will proceed.

Looking ahead to 2026 programming centered at the depot, several concepts are taking shape. One proposed program titled "The Birds and the Bees," would focus on pollinators and involve partnerships with organizations such as the National Park Service, the Delaware Highlands Conservancy, Cornell Cooperative Extension, and Audubon.

Ramie said she volunteered to assist with an Earth Day celebration scheduled for April 25 at the depot. Building on last year's event, this year's celebration will incorporate the Upper Delaware Litter Sweep on the same day to increase activity and engagement. A small planning committee is forming to coordinate these efforts.

There is also discussion of organizing an Indigenous Peoples program at the depot. This idea connects to an upcoming UDC presentation by Chief Adam Waterbear DePaul (Lenape Nation) and the Lenape Nation's Rising Nation River Journey, which occurs every four years. The concept would be to potentially coordinate a stop in Callicoon during the journey this summer. When asked whether the March 5 Lenape presentation at the UDC would be in-person or virtual, Ramie said she awaits confirmation on that.

Rosie DeCristofaro, Chairperson of the Scenic Byway, is exploring additional community-centered uses for the depot, including a community yard sale concept and the introduction of a repair café. Repair cafés, where residents bring items to be fixed rather than discarded, are already popular in Narrowsburg, Livingston Manor, Roscoe, and Port Jervis. The idea would be to schedule such events at times that do not conflict with similar programs in neighboring communities. Tusten Repair Café's do not occur during the summer.

The New York State Department of Transportation provided a unsolicited letter of support for the Byway's application to the National Scenic Byways Association under the Communications Award category for its scavenger hunt initiative. The letter was strong and thoughtful, highlighting the merit of the project.

The announcement date of the Sullivan Catskills Tourism Grant program has been delayed for the third time and is now scheduled for March 3. Demand reportedly exceeded available funding by 700 percent, prompting restructuring considerations. A second round of tourism grants will open, with an April 14 application deadline. Both the UDC and the Scenic Byway may apply again if unsuccessful in the first round.

The next Scenic Byway meeting will occur on the regular fourth Monday schedule—February 23.

Rodgers asked about filming he had observed taking place at the depot earlier that day. A tripod was facing into the depot, with what appeared to be a traditional clapperboard in use. B. Dudko texted a CDI board member and confirmed there was scouting for a film production.

Henry asked whether the roof is being prioritized, given its condition. Ramie explained that roof repairs were separated from the \$250,000 grant funding because that allocation wasn't enough to cover roof replacement. An emergency repairs grant application through New York State Historic Preservation is pending, but the award announcement—expected in mid-December—has still not been received. Members expressed concern about proceeding with interior renovations while water continues to infiltrate the structure. Staff acknowledged the logic of addressing roof and foundation issues first but noted that the project has some scheduling flexibility once bids are accepted.

2/6 Site Visit for 3/11 Citizens Preparedness Training Class: Driscoll said that New York National Guard Captain Kyle Kilner and a colleague visited the UDC office on Friday (2/6) to assess the Tusten Town Hall Community Room space in advance of the training. They assessed how many people the space could realistically accommodate. The registration cap was re-adjusted from 50 to 70 participants. At this time, the registrations had already reached the 70-person cap and Driscoll reached out to Capt. Kilner to increase the cap to 80 if possible. That would most likely be the most comfortable limit, as anything beyond that might begin to feel crowded. Walk-ins will still be encouraged, with inevitable no-shows. Capt. Kilner also reassured that they bring extra emergency go-bags.

Ramie said reaching the numbers required for the course required nothing other than standard publicity. Capt. Kilner himself was impressed when registration surpassed 50 participants. Kilner had conducted a similar training in Roscoe the day of their site visit where 23 participants attended.

2/11 Water Management Advisory Committee: Ramie provided a written summary of this meeting was included. The next two WMAC meetings are scheduled for June 18 and October 15. WMAC has several positions that are either expiring or vacant. The UDC occupies the "watershed organization" category. Other seats include Environmental Organizations, Fisheries, Recreation, and Civic Organization. This doesn't mean current representatives are stepping down; the committee has a reapplication cycle.

They give a Hydrologic Conditions Report during this meeting, similar to the one the council receives during full council meetings, but for longer periods and more detailed. They look at 30, 60, and 90-day periods, with an overall takeaway that the Delaware River Basin has been experiencing persistently dry conditions. The Upper Basin has

received approximately 50 to 55 inches of precipitation over the past year, and DRBC staff noted that groundwater levels are influenced by those broader precipitation patterns. New York City reservoir storage was described as below the median, but not drought level. The salt front was reported as of 2/11 at River Mile 77, which is higher than the monthly average location of River Mile 69, but is not characterized as concerning. Ramie said all UDC counties in NY and Pike County on the PA side are under drought watch. The U.S. National Ice Center reported that the seasonal outlook for spring was 50/50 for warm vs. cold and wet vs. dry.

The DRBC's next Business meeting will be on March 4. The DRBC has both full-time positions and internships available, with details on their website.

Ramie said on March 19 the DRBC's Subcommittee on Source Water Protection will conduct a tabletop exercise simulating a spill on the non-tidal Delaware River. Certain groups have been invited to participate in person at DRBC headquarters in West Trenton, NJ and DRBC plans to report the results at a public meeting later in spring. G. Dudko asked what counts as "source water"? Driscoll quoted from DRBC's website: "Source water includes surface water (river, streams, reservoirs) and ground water aquifers supplying over 13 million people."

Ramie said there was mention of an expansion proposal for Cannonsville Reservoir. The DRBC has been conducting a storage study, with Phase 1 released in April 2023, identifying potential opportunities to increase water storage across the basin. Phase 1 produced a list of 38 projects for further consideration. The study is now in Phase 2, described as a deeper analysis, including looking at certain opportunities like quarry sites. After hearing Cannonsville mentioned during the meeting, Ramie asked for additional information. DRBC's Manager of Water Resource Planning Chad Pindar described an approach that would increase Cannonsville's storage volume by 13 billion gallons by raising the water level 8 feet above its current elevation of 1,150 feet. The mechanism described was the installation of moveable gates on the existing spillway. The dam crest elevation would remain at 1,175 feet, but there would be a 3-foot parapet wall constructed on top of the dam to prevent wind-caused overflow. No significant changes to the outlet structure were proposed. This concept had been studied previously in 1986 for NYS DEC and is now being revisited.

Padua said the Cannonsville conversation is interesting and the first he'd heard anything about it. He explained it as essentially building a secondary barrier across the spillway, which in theory would require more water before spilling occurs. While he respects engineering, the idea of movable gates holding back that much water raised questions about failure scenarios. He said bluntly that if something like that failed, it would be a "real big problem." He also questioned the phrasing about "preventing wind-caused overflow," suggesting that sounds like a secondary rationale, while the real objective appears to be increased storage.

Henry said what stood out to him was the fact that this was the first time anyone in the room seemed to be hearing about something of this magnitude. He connected that concern directly to transparency and to prior conversations the Council has had about flows and reservoir operations, including FFMP-related discussions. Adding 13 billion gallons of storage capacity is not a minor tweak; it would have major implications, especially downstream, and it felt strange that it was surfacing almost casually in a WMAC update.

Kurnath wondered if this is still in a study phase; "Phase 2" does not mean it has moved past evaluation into an implementation track. Ramie affirmed that it is being studied, but Padua noted that the language about "finalizing contracts with New York City DEP" is what makes it sound more advanced than a purely conceptual exercise. Kurnath agreed and observed that the language seemed mixed, some parts sounded final, and others sounded exploratory, making it hard to gage the true stage of the effort. She suggested that this could be a potential presentation topic. Padua stressed that something like this would directly affect downstream flow management "100%," and he found it mind-boggling that this is the first the group has heard of it, especially considering DRBC sits on UDC's board.

Henry said in addition to reaching out to DRBC, the Council should consider contacting New York City DEP directly, since Cannonsville is their reservoir. G. Dudko said the UDC has a good working rapport with NYC DEP staff and implied that a direct inquiry might yield clearer answers. Henry said if this kind of proposal had been actively contemplated at the time of Dr. Pete Kolesar's prior presentation on the Flexible Flow Management Plan (FFMP) to the Council, it seems like it would have been mentioned—unless even he hadn't heard about it.

Henry mentioned ongoing issues like significant water loss where the aqueduct needs to be repaired as unresolved existing infrastructure problems. He added that there has been construction like this done at a dam around Wilkes Barre.

Padua said the conclusion is that Ramie will reach out to NYC DEP and the DRBC to clarify about plans for a Cannonsville Reservoir expansion.

Ramie said at the June 18 WMAC meeting, DRBC commissioners want to better understand how the four basin states determine drought declarations and conduct drought contingency planning. Because standards and triggers vary across states, each state agency has agreed to present its criteria at that next WMAC meeting. This topic will likely make up the majority of the June agenda.

2/17 Advisory Committee on Climate Change: Driscoll said she participated in this morning's virtual meeting. Additional handouts were added to this topic later in the day regarding the DRBC Water Resources Resilience Plan – Phase 1 feedback and Phase 2 progress. The committee meeting was led by Sarah Beganskas, Ph.D. at DRBC and Alan Cohn of NYC DEP. Beganskas said the joint annual Monitoring and Coordination Committee meeting will be held on May 28 with Partnership for the Delaware Estuary's Science and Technical Advisory Committee. She also reported that DRBC is hiring summer 20026 interns.

A significant portion of the meeting focused on a presentation by DRBC's Amy Schallcross and Fanghui Chen on the impact of sea level rise on salinity intrusion in the Delaware River Estuary. The presentation examined how rising sea levels could push the salt front further upstream, potentially affecting water useability, particularly drinking water. Sea level trends are rising and have been accelerating over the past two decades. They shared historical data from 1963 through 2025 tracking salt front movement and salinity patterns. The presentation slides will be posted on DRBC's website and, once available, can be shared with the committee.

Driscoll said she had to leave the meeting slightly early but included the presentation slides on Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the Water Resources Resilience Plan. Phase 1 of the effort involved gathering input from January to October 2025 to develop the framework for the plan. The DRBC actively solicited feedback during that period where participants were invited to submit comments. Phase 2 of the plan will now focus on developing a formal list of recommended actions that the DRBC can take to address climate change impacts on water resources. Driscoll said she was particularly interested in the actionable outcomes. The salinity intrusion is a significant concern. Rodgers said he saw a PBS News Hour story about a glacier in the North Atlantic that is melting at a rate several times faster than surrounding ice. If that were to accelerate or worsen, it could contribute substantially to global sea level rise.

USGS Barryville Gage 2027 Funding: Ramie said that this topic had come up at a full Council meeting: the National Park Service is funding the gage through 2026, but starting in 2027, they can't commit to continuing. Martin said that she made a presentation at the Town of Highland to brief the supervisor. Her goal was to make sure leadership understood that the NPS funding has essentially been a stopgap for two years, and that the group is now approaching a deadline where that support ends. She described it as partly informational and partly a reminder. The town has been in discussions with Camp FIMFO and there is at least a possibility they might be able to encourage Camp FIMFO to contribute toward water monitoring systems in some form. This is not a firm plan and feels more like an idea floating within broader discussions rather than something locked in with a timeline. She asked if there was a hard deadline she should be relaying to the town? Martin also emphasized to the town that discharge at Barryville is not just "nice to have"; it's a key data point for flood warning and flood management, and she positioned it as a public-safety relevant metric, not a recreational convenience.

Padua said he had looked at AmericanRivers.org and suggested that even if American Rivers doesn't directly fund something like this, they might have connections, partnerships, or pathways to funding—and at the very least, it seemed worth contacting them. He described American Rivers' work broadly—river cleanups, gages, dam removals—basically making the case that they operate in a world where a request like this wouldn't be strange. He was realistic that they're a nonprofit too and might not have spare funds, but he still saw it as a viable door to knock on. He also suggested reaching out to the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission as a potentially strong avenue, implying they may have an interest in maintaining river data that serves anglers, boaters, and resource management given that they currently fund other parameters of this gage.

Rodgers said that "water monitoring" can mean very different things depending on who you're talking to. Water-quality monitoring (biological waste, certain contaminants, etc.) is a different arena than monitoring things like flow, temperature, turbidity, salinity, and related hydrologic parameters. The point was: if the strategy is to ask an entity tied to one type of monitoring to fund another type, the ask may not land unless it's framed in a way that clearly matches their mission and the benefits they'd recognize.

Padua said, "why go backwards in data?" in terms of potentially losing the CFS discharge monitoring. He voiced frustration that the cost seems so high for what, on the surface, feels like "keeping a number on a website." He

acknowledged he doesn't know the full process, but said that something about the cost doesn't feel like it lines up. Martin strongly agreed with Padua's "pursue every avenue" approach, and she was candid about her lack of confidence that FIMFO will simply volunteer to take this on. She pointed out that it may not align with their core business or operations, making it easy for them to decline. In that context, she asked if Kurnath could help draft a clear, reusable proposal or summary that explains what the gage is, why it matters, what the timing is, and what exactly is being requested—so that outreach emails can be sent to multiple potential partners (American Rivers, PA Fish & Boat, others) without everyone having to reinvent the explanation each time.

Kurnath clarified that, at least for the NPS role, the funding they're currently putting forward would carry through September 30. She also described a possible bridge strategy: since an agreement structure already exists, if the group can cobble together some donor or partner support, and if entities are willing to donate through appropriate channels, there may be a way to keep things in place without the gage going offline—but she was clear that the Park Service cannot commit to funding an entire additional year beyond this current period. Contributing "some of it" might be feasible under the right conditions, but covering all of it is simply too much. She also referenced the prior disruption—when the gage went offline and everyone had to wait for it to come back—underscoring that continuity matters not only conceptually, but operationally.

Padua said he would send along American Rivers contact information for when a draft letter or summary exists. He said the gage in question is not necessarily the Barryville gage most people reference casually. The discussion clarified that operationally. The NPS primarily uses the above-Lackawaxen Barryville gage for decision-making, because it helps isolate and understand the impact of the Lackawaxen on the main stem. The gage being discussed here, however, was described as the Barryville Bridge / below-Lackawaxen gage—valuable in combination with the upstream gage, because together they help quantify how the Lackawaxen changes flows in that reach.

There was mention of a figure in the ballpark of \$9,000 (as said in a meeting) that later increased by roughly 25%, and the earlier rough number of \$12,000 was again referenced in the context of "just for CFS data." Kurnath explained that the NPS gets a slight discount because the funding is paired with another gage they support (Lordville), but even with that, the cost is still significant.

Henry said if the primary output is discharge (CFS) and river height at the bridge, and if there are already other upstream and tributary gages (including on the Lackawaxen), then an experienced user can often approximate what the Barryville Bridge reading would be. People had a reasonably good idea during the lapse period, and from his perspective, paying that much annually for a single data value feels questionable if it can be reasonably inferred. He wasn't dismissing data as unimportant, more that the group should be sure they're funding the right instrument for the right reason and not simply paying a premium for convenience or redundancy.

Padua agreed, but he pushed back from a user and public-information standpoint. He said the problem with relying on inference is that it assumes everyone has the knowledge and habit of triangulating multiple gages. He described how he personally checks gages frequently and can "read" the river that way, but many people cannot. From his perspective, the Barryville number matters in practical, real-time terms, especially for boating and safety decisions—and said that losing it feels like rewinding progress. Even if the world doesn't end without it, it's still a step backward.

Padua said even if it isn't catastrophic if it goes offline, the group should still explore funding avenues. He will share American Rivers contact info; Kurnath will pull prior USGS materials and draft a reusable summary/proposal-style description; and the broader group agreed—explicitly and implicitly—that they should pursue multiple avenues rather than betting everything on a single potential partner like FIMFO.

Other: None.

Public Comment: None.

Adjourn: A Motion by B. Dudko seconded by Rodgers to adjourn the meeting at 7:36 p.m. was carried.

Meeting minutes prepared by Stephanie Driscoll, 2/23/2026