

# WATER USE/RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMM. MEETING MINUTES

## March 17, 2026

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, Stephanie Driscoll (Zoom)

NPS Partner: Tom Kearns (Zoom)

Guests: Ginny Dudko

The UDC’s Water Use/Resource Management Committee held its monthly meeting on Tuesday, March 17, 2026. Chairperson Padua called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

**Approval of the February 17, 2026 meeting minutes:** A motion by B. Dudko seconded by Rodgers approving the 2/17 meeting minutes carried.

**Public Comment on Agenda:** None.

**New Business:**

**4/10 Spring Fishing Guides Meeting, Hancock:** Ramie said this is the pre-season meeting NPS has with local fishing guides. It will be held at 11am at the Hancock Town Hall and any UDC members are welcome to join.

**4/16 Livery and Recreation Operators Meeting:** Ramie said this is a new meeting being introduced this year by NPS in coordination with Commercial Use Authorization (CUA) operators. At the 3/5 full council meeting, Superintendent Lindsey Kurnath said that NPS is currently restructuring their Water Safety Committee. This 4-16 meeting is part of the new structure being launched this season by the NPS. This new format is aimed at bringing together CUA operators such as liveries and camps in a way that mirrors the established meeting structure used for fishing guides and outfitters, and to improve operational coordination between the operators and the NPS. NPS hopes this creates a more consistent flow of information, establishing a feedback loop where operators can share input and concerns, and generally fostering a stronger sense of cooperation between all parties involved. The NPS plans to share updates and actively seek input on river safety from all CUA operators during these sessions. UDC members are invited to join this meeting as well. Rodgers asked where the meeting will be held. Ramie said it’s a virtual only 10am meeting through Microsoft Teams. UDC staff will participate and report back to the committee.

**Water Safety Billboards Update:** Ramie said the UDC has been provided with a \$5,000 allocation to contract with Adams Outdoor Advertising for billboard placements through the NPS. This is the third year the UDC has undertaken this effort. NPS has encountered some administrative challenges in managing the contract directly, so it’s significantly easier for the UDC to take it on under our authority. The billboards have already been brought up at the full council meeting; the contract has been received, reviewed, and signed; and the billboard locations have already been determined. The question was whether the Council wants to reuse the existing design or pursue a new one for this season. The current design is the “Always Have Their Backs” message, a water safety campaign centered around life jacket usage. Ramie followed up with Adams Outdoor Advertising to understand the timeline constraints for making any design changes. Any redesign would need to be worked backwards from a May installation timeline, meaning decisions—and design work—would need to happen quickly to meet production deadlines. Due to the recent restructuring of the Water Safety Committee which was not available to consult, she said it’s no longer practical to develop a new design this year. The NPS has a very deliberate approach to messaging, requiring professional review through their Office of Risk Management. The existing design will be reused instead. This particular design was only been introduced last season, so it’s far from overexposed.

The billboards placements include: Two digital billboards along Interstate 84 East, targeting traffic coming from New York and New Jersey into Pennsylvania, a digital billboard on Route 6 in Hawley, near Lake Wallenpaupack, across from the IGA supermarket, a new static bulletin board on Route 434 in Pennsylvania, near Greeley heading toward Route 6, and three additional static poster boards along Route 6 between Milford and Greeley, Route 652 in Honesdale, and another in Pike County. Rodgers said the absence of a billboard along Route 97 feels like a significant gap. Ramie said that the previously used location on Route 97—near the Roebling Bridge—was unavailable this year because another advertiser secured the space; the closest alternative offered was the Route 434 location. Henry questioned whether the current locations—particularly those clustered around Lake Wallenpaupack and along Route 6—are really reaching the intended audience. Padua said that while it’s certainly beneficial to promote life jacket use anywhere, the campaign is specifically meant to address river safety, not general boating

safety on lakes outside the NPS jurisdiction. The signage reads “Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River.” Henry suggests that the Council should communicate back to the NPS that missing Route 97 is a significant oversight, especially given its importance as a primary access route to the river. Maybe additional locations could be explored or future efforts could prioritize securing more strategic placements closer to the river corridor. Ramie said billboards are only possible where the company has property rights. Kearns offered to follow up. He has a meeting with the management team tomorrow and can look into the situation further to see if there are any options or explanations worth bringing back.

**Delaware Flow & Storage Report:** Included in the packet for review. Padua said the recent rain has dramatically altered reservoir conditions since this 3/9 report date. Where things may have been at more moderate levels previously, the reservoirs are now way higher, signaling a rapid increase in storage levels. The Cannonsville Reservoir is reported to be sitting at around 93–94% capacity. Padua said that it may begin spilling by the end of the week. The Schoharie is over 100%. All reservoirs are expected to be at or near capacity very soon, especially if additional rainfall occurs.

Padua brought up a recent river rescue incident near Railroad Bridge #2 in Sparrowbush that had been circulated via email as an article. He had, by chance, spoken with one of the individuals involved in the incident. The person had ended up in the river after their canoe flipped and expressed strong appreciation for the rescue response. They were wearing life jackets, were able to stay safe, and didn’t feel the situation was as dire as it may have appeared from the outside, even though they lost most of their equipment, including the canoe. Rodgers asked what the river height was then. Padua said very high—possibly around 8 to 9 feet or more.

**Other:** Henry asked Kearns if UPDE is still looking for seasonal staff. Kearns said he thinks that most divisions are closed for seasonal hiring and permanent staff hiring is currently frozen. He will confirm and get back.

#### **Old Business:**

**2/23 Upper Delaware Scenic Byway Meeting:** Ramie reported that the Byway decided to take a full-page advertisement in the *Destination Hancock* summer magazine, which essentially functions as the Delaware County Tourism Guide. The ad was secured at a discounted rate by meeting a March 1st deadline—and the new ad is currently in development. David Krantz, Byway Program Manager, is actively expanding the Byway’s outreach and coordination efforts and has created a shared Google Calendar covering events and activities throughout the corridor. He has been consistently soliciting listings each month. The calendar is live on the Byway’s website, offering a centralized place for people to see what’s happening across the region at any given time. Krantz is also working on launching a photo contest, expected to run from approximately April through November. The purpose is not only to generate fresh, high-quality imagery of the Byway, but also to capture seasonal variations for the archives. Because the Byway spans about 70 miles, the contest is being structured by dividing the corridor into three segments—upper, middle, and lower—with prizes awarded within each section, as well as an overall “Best of the Byway” grand prize.

The Byway has contributed \$500 toward the 6th Annual Upper Delaware Litter Sweep. Ramie expressed appreciation for that support. It reinforces the Byway’s role not just in promotion, but also in supporting on-the-ground stewardship efforts.

Bids for The Callicoon Depot renovation were due by March 11<sup>th</sup>. The two proposals received both significantly exceeded the available \$250,000 budget. The CDI board is now reassessing the project to determine whether elements can be scaled back, costs reduced, or if the project will need to be rebid altogether.

Rather than a typical send-off, Central New York Railroad’s President Nathan Fenno has chosen to celebrate with a passenger excursion along the Norfolk Southern line, bringing approximately 190 people through the region on June 5<sup>th</sup>. The group will be stopping in Callicoon for a catered lunch and a tour of the depot. This is a great moment to showcase the depot and perhaps make a case for additional support or funding, particularly given the renovation challenges.

Ramie said Earth Day planning is in the works, with an event scheduled for April 25<sup>th</sup> in Callicoon at the depot. This event will overlap with the Upper Delaware Litter Sweep. The Earth Day event itself will run from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., with the litter sweep component taking place from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Rodgers asked what exactly will make it an “event” beyond just the cleanup. Ramie said there will be a variety of booths and participating organizations, including groups like the Delaware Highlands Conservancy, Friends of the Upper Delaware River, and Cornell Cooperative Extension. Activities will include environmental demonstrations, workshops, and educational outreach. Promotion for this is expected soon. The next Upper Delaware Scenic Byway meeting is scheduled for Monday, March 23<sup>rd</sup>.

**3/10 Delaware River Sojourn Steering Committee Meeting:** Engelhardt said Dan Corrigan from Northeast Wilderness Experience (NEWE), Jess Yoder from Pike County Planning and she had a scouting trip that took place on Friday, March 6<sup>th</sup>. The purpose was to visit and assess potential access points and logistics along the river. Padua asked if they plan to use the Highland Access. Engelhardt said rather than serving as a primary launch site, the Highland Access may function more as a takeout location, maybe not for the entire group at once but in a more staggered or logistical capacity. She said they also visited other locations, including Ten Mile River. They evaluated two potential overnight camping locations at Sylvania Tree Farms in the Masthope/Lackawaxen area, and the Scouting America (formerly Boy Scouts) facility at Ten Mile River. Both sites had their pros and cons, but after weighing those factors, the group has decided to move forward with the Scout facility. While staying at that facility may involve slightly longer bus rides, it offers showers, bathrooms, and a dining hall, all of which are major advantages when accommodating a large group over multiple days, The Scout facility is enthusiastic about hosting the Sojourn and offered favorable pricing, which further supports the decision. The camp is near Crystal Lake.

Engelhardt said that Day 1 involves a lot of coordination, orientation, and setup. The current plan is to start at Ten Mile River and paddle approximately 6 miles to Highland, using it as a takeout. This is shorter than ideal, but it's difficult to find access points that can accommodate a large group efficiently. For Day 2, they're planning a longer paddle—about 14 miles—starting at Skinners Falls and taking out at Ten Mile River. This route includes navigating Skinners Falls Rapids, and the decision to schedule this on the second day is intentional. The safety team wants participants to have already spent a day on the river to “get their feet wet” before encountering more challenging conditions. For Day 3, the plan is to launch at Pond Eddy (specifically near Silver Canoes), with a lunch stop at Sparrowbush and a takeout at a park in Matamoras. This segment is also on the longer side but appears to work well in terms of spacing and available infrastructure. There was some discussion about why they are not using Mongaup as a put-in, even though it might seem like a logical option. The reasons are the presence of immediate rapids, the complexity of staging a large group there, the need to manage movement around Cherry Island, and regulatory considerations about staying on the Pennsylvania side. Jacqui Wagner, who has served as lead safety coordinator for several years, will not be covering the entire Sojourn this year, though she may participate for a few days. A new lead will be stepping in. He has prior experience with the Sojourn.

Registration is expected to open in April, though some details—like this year's logo—are still in development. Henry asked if any elected officials have been invited. Engelhardt said that no invitations have been sent yet. Several members suggested that this could be a valuable opportunity. Names like Governor Shapiro and Senator Fetterman were mentioned, along with a general suggestion to invite officials from both Pennsylvania and New York. The underlying idea is about exposure and awareness—getting decision-makers out on the river so they better understand its value and significance.

**3/11 Citizens Emergency Preparedness Seminar:** B. Dudko said he thought it was very well done. While some of the material was familiar from his past experience in the fire department, it still served as a valuable refresher. Driscoll said that Master Sergeant Caoili handled the session especially well, stepping up effectively in the absence of her partner Captain Kilner, who had been expected but was unable to attend. Attendance was slightly lower than anticipated—around 50 people, rather than the 70 that registered. Participants were actively engaged throughout the session. Everyone received a “go bag,” which adds a tangible takeaway to the event. We are already planning a second seminar, tentatively scheduled for June 8<sup>th</sup>, with June 15<sup>th</sup> as a backup date at 2:00 p.m., with the goal of attracting a different audience, perhaps people who couldn't attend the last session.

Henry asked if these types of training are offered in school settings. Driscoll said that Tusten Town Clerk Crystal Weston inquired about bringing the program to Sullivan West. That suggests there's already a pathway forming for school-based engagement. Rodgers recalled that when he was in high school, there was a dedicated portion of the curriculum focused on emergency preparedness, covering natural disasters like tornadoes, earthquakes, and floods, along with first aid and CPR certification. Today's students may be missing out on practical, life-saving knowledge that was once standard. He referenced increasingly extreme and unpredictable weather patterns—snowstorms in one part of the country and unusually high temperatures in another—as evidence that conditions are becoming more volatile. This reinforces the idea that emergency preparedness isn't just a theoretical exercise, but something increasingly necessary. Ramie said booklets were distributed at the seminar, covering a wide range of topics, including terrorism and cyber threats.

**6<sup>th</sup> Annual Upper Delaware Litter Sweep Update:** Driscoll said we've started promoting for Litter Leaders, and the response so far has been strong. The Dudkos confirmed they will be Litter Leaders for their group in Deerpark. Multiple inquiries and commitments are coming in, and other areas are also organizing. Padua said Damascus has a

group actively brainstorming and working toward locking in a date. Driscoll said she will be doing a radio interview on WJFF Radio Catskill the following morning to promote the Litter Sweep, with Ramie also scheduled for a follow-up interview at a later date. WJFF is again serving as the media sponsor, which includes having their logo featured on the event t-shirts. April 18th will see cleanups in Highland and Delaware. April 23<sup>rd</sup> will be the UPDE cleanup, and April 25th aligns with the Callicoon event during Earth Day programming at the depot. Additional dates are being penciled in, including Damascus on April 19th and a tentative date of April 21<sup>st</sup> for Berlin. Artist Jeff George, who was recommended by Engelhardt to do the artwork for this year's t-shirts, quickly agreed to participate. Not only did he respond immediately, but he's also donating the original artwork, which opens up the possibility of raffling it off. Driscoll genuinely appreciates his enthusiasm and responsiveness. The UDC has been lucky to have many talented artists donate their artwork and time to the Litter Sweep.

Padua said it seems like there might be less litter this year, though that could just be based on the specific roads he has been traveling. Others agree that some areas seem improved, while others—like Route 652—are still particularly problematic. He suggested that each township could incorporate a brief educational component before their cleanup events—something simple that reinforces best practices, like properly securing trash or understanding how litter can unintentionally spread (for example, when garbage isn't bagged correctly and blows out during collection). Driscoll agreed, but does not want to overburden volunteer Litter Leaders. Organizing the cleanup itself is already a significant responsibility, so asking them to also deliver educational messaging might be a little much. Padua said maybe we can create a handout or web-based content that participants can access. Driscoll said the idea of hosting that information on the website and promoting it through social media gains traction as a more manageable approach. Henry said we should be incorporating state laws and regulations around littering.

**Upper Delaware River Network Expansion to Pennsylvania Support Letters From PA Townships:** Ramie said that Friends of the Upper Delaware River (FUDR) is in the process of applying for a grant through the Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund, administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. The purpose of this grant is to support the expansion of the UDRN into Pennsylvania communities, specifically targeting townships in Wayne and Pike counties, a potential geographic and programmatic expansion of a network that has, up to this point, been only established on the New York side. The UDC has already taken a formal step in support of this effort, having issued a letter of support at the March 5th meeting. She reached out to the Pennsylvania member townships to explain the proposal in more detail—what participation would involve, and importantly, that it is entirely voluntary. If successful, it would allow the network's programming and benefits to extend across the river into Pennsylvania communities, creating a more unified, bi-state approach. She invited townships to submit their own support letters if they were interested, but made it clear that they were under no obligation. The grant deadline is March 26th, with a suggested internal deadline of the Friday prior to allow time to compile the full application package. As of this meeting, Shohola Township has submitted a support letter dated March 12<sup>th</sup>. Many townships require formal meetings or approvals to authorize something like a support letter, and those timelines don't always align neatly with grant deadlines, Ramie acknowledged.

**Recent News Articles on Milanville Bridge Abutment:** Ramie said media attention was triggered by the NPS's letter to PennDOT stating that there are—or should be—ten bridge crossings along the Upper Delaware, and that this could imply a need to replace the Skinners Falls–Milanville Bridge. While the idea of “ten crossings” is being cited in discussions and articles, she is not convinced that this represents an actual legal requirement or mandate. The New York–Pennsylvania Joint Interstate Bridge Commission (JIBC) is responsible for maintaining the crossings that exist, but that doesn't necessarily mean there must always be exactly ten. The obligation is tied to existing infrastructure, not a fixed number. Historically, there have been ten crossings. At the same time, the UDC supports having a crossing at that location and we haven't changed our position on that—but whether it is legally required is still unclear. The articles from the *Tri-County Independent* and *Sullivan County Democrat* included in the packet present varying interpretations of the situation, particularly around legal and jurisdictional issues. One of the more complex aspects involves the property claim on the Pennsylvania side, specifically regarding ownership of the abutment and whether it should remain or be removed. There is no clear timeline from PennDOT regarding a decision on whether a new bridge will be constructed. Martin said that an injunction had been dismissed, but this dismissal was based on venue, not on the merits of the case itself. As a result, the matter is being redirected to the State Board of Property, which is considered the proper venue. Ramie said that one of the articles states that PennDOT owns the bridge, but that is inaccurate. Ownership actually lies with the NY-PA Joint Interstate Bridge Commission, not PennDOT or NYSDOT individually.

**Cannonsville Expansion Project Update:** Ramie said she has no updates at this time although she had reached out to the Delaware River Basin Commission to convey the committee's questions and concerns. She suggested a

presentation to WU/RM since this is a fairly technical, niche subject. However, there has been no response from yet from DRBC. Henry said he's heard about a large freshwater reservoir located beneath the ocean floor along the East Coast, potentially dating back to the last ice age. The claim is that this resource could theoretically supply New York City with water for hundreds of years. Why does New York City continue to rely so heavily on water from the Catskills and Delaware River system? Other places and methods should be pursued. Some participants suggest that if such resources are real and viable, it raises questions about long-standing water management practices. Others pointed out that desalination is widely used in other parts of the world, particularly in Europe, and wondered why similar strategies aren't more seriously considered here. Shifting New York City's water supply system would be a massive undertaking, involving significant infrastructure, cost, and policy changes. So while the ideas are interesting, they remain largely speculative within the context of this discussion. It would be valuable to hear directly from agencies like DRBC or the NYC DEP.

**USGS Barryville Gage Funding:** Ramie said that Kurnath had followed up with Martin regarding the costs and timeline associated with maintaining the discharge component of the Barryville gage. For fiscal year 2027, the cost would be \$11,290, and for fiscal year 2028, it would rise to \$11,630 according to USGS. That amount is specifically for funding the discharge measurement portion of the gage's operations, which is the piece currently at risk. Kurnath also asked USGS whether there was any possibility of adding the Barryville gage to the Federal Priority Stream Gage program, which would presumably provide a more stable, federally supported path forward. According to the response, the gage is still under consideration, but not for FY26. It has not been ruled out entirely, but there is no immediate relief coming through that avenue. The NPS is only funding the discharge component through the end of the current fiscal year; September 30th, and after that, it is uncertain what will happen. The gage itself would not disappear entirely, but this part of the data would. Henry asked which parameters would remain if funding for the discharge portion ends? Ramie said everything except discharge/CFS would remain funded by PA DEP. Martin asks whether a letter had been sent to American Rivers? Ramie said not yet. The UDC already has a relationship with Adam Schellhammer at American Rivers, who has been in this room before and consults on the UDC's Funding Task Force. Martin asked whether Pennsylvania might be willing to cover the discharge portion as well, since they already pay for the other parameters at the gage. Does the agency even know this piece could disappear? Reaching out to the UDC's Pennsylvania representative Tim Dugan seems like the right next step. Henry asks how it can be that more than \$11,000 is needed just to calculate CFS. That prompted a more technical explanation. Engelhardt says that discharge is not just a simple static reading; it depends on factors like cross-sectional area and velocity, and because the river channel changes over time—through scouring, shifting bottoms, and seasonal variation—USGS has to send people out to recalibrate and verify those relationships multiple times a year. That's why the discharge measurement is expensive: USGS is not willing to publish values unless they are confident in their accuracy. Henry argues from long experience observing the river that the channel at Barryville does not seem to change enough to justify losing the CFS data altogether. There ought to be enough historical relationship between river height and discharge to create a close approximation if official USGS funding disappears. Engelhardt maintains that from USGS's standpoint, "close enough" is not sufficient if they are putting out official hydrologic data. Henry countered that for local decision-making—especially for river users, outfitters, or the public—a modeled estimate based on stage height might still be very useful, even if it is not formally endorsed by USGS. Henry said that if someone wanted to create a separate, non-USGS model translating river height into approximate CFS based on historic data, that might be possible. But it would have to be clearly identified as something independent—perhaps produced locally, rather than presented as official USGS output. It could be something that could be developed by the Town of Highland or another local entity if enough interest and resources existed. UDC staff will plan to reach out to contacts like Adam Schellhammer at American Rivers, talk with Dugan about Pennsylvania funding channels, and continue to explore whether local contributions might help. Martin adds that the Town of Highland is still trying to gather contributions from businesses, so there is still some hope that outside support might emerge.

**Other:** Engelhardt said since she couldn't attend last month's Eagle Committee meeting due to a conflict with the Data Centers seminar she attended, but she's since read in their minutes they will be adding another eagle viewing location in Narrowsburg at the river access.

**Public Comment:** None.

**Adjourn:** A Motion by B. Dudko seconded by Henry to adjourn the meeting at 7:43 p.m. was carried.

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