

# WATER USE/RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMM. MEETING MINUTES

## April 16, 2024

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

Committee Members Absent: None

Staff: Laurie Ramie, Kerry Engelhardt, Stephanie Driscoll

NPS Partner: Michelle Stevens, Kaetlyn Jackson, Carly Marshall (Zoom)

Guests: Ginny Dudko

The UDC's Water Use/Resource Management Committee held its monthly meeting on Tuesday, April 16, 2024. Chairperson Padua called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

**Approval of March 19, 2024 meeting minutes:** A motion by Dudko seconded by Rodgers approving the 3/19 meeting minutes carried. There was no public comment on the agenda.

**New Business:**

**4<sup>th</sup> Annual Litter Sweep Updates:** Padua said Damascus Township held their Litter Sweep earlier that day and that it was successful. He likes that the Litter Sweep raises awareness about litter in our area, but feels that we should focus more on prevention. He said the supplies the UDC gives out are great, but shirts may be a little much to purchase every year. There may be a better use of the funds for the Litter Sweep. Maybe there is another option, like the reusable safety vests? G. Dudko said she doesn't wear the vest since the t-shirts are printed in a safety color each year. Driscoll said she's noticed that the reusable safety vests don't get returned. We only had brand new ones left over from last year; none were used and returned. A lot of people sign-up for the Litter Sweep just for the t-shirt. Ramie agreed and said it also identifies people as a "team". G. Dudko thinks the t-shirts are good PR; a lot of people stop while they're doing the Litter Sweep to ask what the UDC is, since the logo is on the back. Maybe we should put some of the UDC brochures with the supplies that go to each team, so they have something to hand out if someone stops to ask what the UDC is. Driscoll agreed, especially for the teams like Highland and Tusten that will have a "kick-off" to their Litter Sweep with tables. Henry agreed with Padua; we need to start focusing on the prevention of litter instead of picking it up after. A lot of the trash is coming from trucks that don't tarp their load. Padua said there are hand-made signs that say "Please do not litter" along a few of the major roadways. G. Dudko thinks a lot of the litter comes from people passing through the area, not people who live here. Padua said for next year, maybe we could focus more on not littering in the first place during the Litter Sweep.

**NPS Loaner Life Jacket Return Stations:** Jackson reported the NPS Loaner Life Jacket Return Stations will be located at West End Beach in Port Jervis and PA Fish & Boat Commissions (PFBC) Boat Access in Matamoras. The stations and signage will be installed by Port Jervis and PFBC at visible locations decided by all parties. The signs will have both NPS and UDC logos and include the Water Safety message. The stations will be placed on a base up off the ground to allow air flow to keep the life jackets dry. The stations will be checked and cleaned on a daily basis. The number and sizes of life jackets will be reported to keep a record of how many life jackets have been returned to each access as well as how many were loaned out at the Mongaup Access. Staff at the Mongaup Access will tell people borrowing the life jackets about water safety and the importance of the life jacket loaner program. Guests borrowing life jackets will be given information on how to return the life jackets.

NPS Maintenance has come up with a new system for the Loaner Life Jacket Return Stations, using a carabiner and metal wire to secure the life jackets. NPS will try the new system at Skinners Falls before installing it at all other stations. Jackson asked everyone to encourage everybody to return all NPS Loaner Life Jackets. Livery and NPS life jackets can be returned to the stations, and NPS will make sure they get back to the appropriate livery. The stations will be removed at the end of the season.

Rodgers asked if you can tell the difference between an NPS Loaner Life Jacket and one from a livery? Jackson said the NPS life jackets are visibly marked, and she believes most liveries mark theirs as well. You can also point people to certain liveries who want to purchase a life jacket. Henry asked if they thought about putting a station in Sparrowsbush? Jackson said they will be trying out the first two locations first before putting out additional stations. Henry said he thinks more people take out their boats at Sparrowsbush Access at Number 2 Bridge than West End

so a return station should be available there. Jackson said she will take that info back to UPDE NPS. A photo was shown later in the meeting of the Loaner Life Jacket Return Station.

**Comments on Skinners Falls Bridge Draft PEL Document:** The press release to publicize the meeting on April 25<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 pm at the Narrowsburg Union is included in the packet. Ramie said the subject of the meeting is to go over the Planning and Environmental Linkages Study (PEL). She had sent out the PEL study via email for anyone interested in reading it. The meeting is described as “informal” open house. The DOT will do this sometimes, setting up stations around the room to ask individual questions. There is a 45-day comment period that the UDC will want to weigh in with our consistent message: rehabilitation of the historic Skinners Falls-Milanville Bridge. She will get together a draft document of comments for the council to approve after reading the PEL study and attending the meeting. The deadline for comments is May 26<sup>th</sup>. Henry asked if the chain link fence barrier on both sides is still up at the bridge? Padua and Ramie said it is.

**Delaware River Flow & Storage Report:** Included in the packet for review. Padua said we are at 100+% at all the reservoirs, which is expected for this time of year. NYC DEP’s Jennifer Garigliano will be at the May 2<sup>nd</sup> full council meeting to give an update on the Aqueduct Shutdown. In the past people were concerned about flooding when closing the dams; this would be that exact scenario if we close the dams since all the reservoirs are at 100+%. It’s a common misconception that if you close the dams, we will get flooded. It’s good to remind people that it happens every year.

Padua said that the Barryville Gage has been discontinued on the USGS website. It says the funding has disappeared for the gage, but if you click there it doesn’t lead anywhere. Martin asked if Padua had tried reaching out to the contact number to find out more. Padua said he did send an email. Ramie asked him to send the email address to the WU/RM Committee. Henry said he can’t believe USGS would pull one of the major gages off the website. B. Dudko quoted from the USGS website: “This site's discharge data was discontinued on April 1, 2024. Although historic data and stage and water temperature will remain accessible, no new discharge data will be collected after this date unless one or more new funding partners are found. Users who are willing to contribute funding to continue operation of this streamgage should contact Rob Breault of the USGS New York Water Science Center at 518-285-5600 or [dc\\_ny@usgs.gov](mailto:dc_ny@usgs.gov).” Henry said the gage NPS has used for years is upstream of the Lackawaxen, about a mile and a half. There is another gage on the Barryville Bridge. Jackson agreed, there are two gages in Barryville. Henry said the one on the Barryville Bridge is sporadic. Martin asked if we could write a letter on behalf of the UDC about the discontinued gage? Henry said it’s not just that gage, there are a bunch of other gages like this because of funding shortages. Since it’s not the gage that NPS uses, it’s not really public concern. Padua said he wouldn’t be opposed to getting more information. A motion by B. Dudko, seconded by Martin to send a letter on behalf of the UDC to find out more information about the discontinuation of the Barryville Gage carried. Padua likes the Barryville Bridge gage because you can easily see how the Lackawaxen River is affecting the Delaware River.

**Other:** Padua had mentioned Pond Eddy Access possibilities when PFBC had given their presentation at the April full council meeting. He asked B. Dudko if he had any suggestions on the PA side with the railroad. B. Dudko said there is space on the PA side between the river and the railroad but most of the land is private property. He said the best section would be between Silver Canoe and Indian Head. Henry said he thinks the property below the old motel (by the Millbrook Inn) on the NY side is privately owned; that spot was reviewed as a potential access. Padua said Sullivan County owns a lot of the property under the Pond Eddy Bridge. It’s a tough area to put an access in. The land surrounding the river is very steep. Peckham said the railroad may not own the property along the river on the NY side; it’s just a right-of-way in some cases. If the railroad goes defunct then the property goes back to the owner of the deed. Former NPS UPDE Superintendent Sean McGuinness found out that was the case in a lot of sections when trying to make the railroad a path to walk along. Henry said the PFBC was advocating putting an access across from Ten Mile River (TMR). They thought there was a road across from the railroad tracks, but there isn’t. Padua said PFBC looked at putting an access right across from the Long Eddy Boat Launch. That road is mostly inaccessible by car. Henry asked, how would people get to that access? Ramie said she is speaking with PFBC Executive Director Tim Schaeffer tomorrow and she can bring any questions the committee has to him during their phone meeting. Henry asked Ramie to ask Schaeffer about the safety maintenance Don Hamilton had brought up at the Damascus Access.

B. Dudko announced that Town of Lumberland UDC Representative Nadia Rajsz’s brother has passed away.

**Old Business:**

**3/25 Upper Delaware Scenic Byway Meeting:** Ramie said the UDSB was visited by the newly elected President of the Callicoon Depot Inc. (CDI) Darko Hreljanovic. Callicoon Depot Inc. is responsible for turning the Callicoon Depot into a Visitor Center for the UDSB. Given that there is an almost entirely new Board of Directors, they are now looking to expedite the work under the capital construction project grant of \$250,000 through NYS. The first step is to document the existing conditions at the property, then develop a process for remediation and repair work. They are currently consulting with architects to get a package of cost estimates. They realize \$250,000 won't cover the entire rehabilitation. They are looking into fundraising options. Rodgers asked if the depot is still a part of the railroad's property? Ramie said the building is under lease, the leaseholder is the Callicoon Business Association (CBA). The CDI, CBA, and UDSB are jointly working together on this project. Rodgers asked if there is a time-stamp on the project? Ramie said no, it's been going on for many years and the grant hasn't been activated yet. B. Dudko said it is a 50-year renewable lease. The first thing they need is a roof, then heating, bathrooms, and other things. Henry said if it has a leaking roof, it likely needs structural work. Ramie said Hreljanovic and another board member are architects, so the board is lucky to have them. Eventually, the project will go out to bid.

The Tusten Heritage Community Garden (a non-profit across the street by the Library and Town Hall) applied for two grants with the UDSB. They were awarded \$250 for signage to identify where the garden is, and \$500 as a Butterflies Along the Byway Grant to plant pollinator friendly plants and hold a workshop. They were given leave to come back and apply for more with a more specific outline of what the Pollinator project would be.

The Nominating Committee reported that the current three officers will continue in their roles. The annual election will be held on Monday, April 22<sup>nd</sup> at the UDSB meeting. Someone offered to take over the role of UDSB Treasurer from Larry Richardson, but didn't mind if Richardson wanted to continue as Treasurer.

There is still a \$25,000 NYS grant that the UDSB had secured from Assemblywomen Aileen Gunther. The date that it ended was to be March 21<sup>st</sup> but it was suspended in order for revisions to be made. The grant process was flipped to covering the pass-through grant programs to covering the fee for the Program Manager retroactively from April 3, 2023 through the end of the state fiscal year. At this stage, she's not sure what will happen with that. The contact at the grant agency didn't seem concerned that the time has come and gone.

The Program Manager Position for the UDSB will be advertised with a revised scope of work focusing on fundraising and event coordination. John Pizzolato held that role previously and will work with the committee on the job description. If the grant funding doesn't come through, that position may not continue.

Ramie brought up the Upper Delaware Litter Sweep at the last UDSB meeting and Richardson presented the UDC with a \$500 donation for the Litter Sweep at the April 4<sup>th</sup> full council meeting. She commented the UDSB was very generous to donate that.

They spoke about sponsoring a Butterfly Ball that has happened in Yulan in the past to promote pollinators, habitats, etc. It could be moving to Fort Delaware as a more central location. The Butterfly Ball would happen in September to coincide with migration of Monarch Butterflies to Mexico. The ball may replace the Shadfest this year. There is a need for a small Planning Committee to focus on what UDSB should be spending their time on and coming up with events and activities.

During the UDSB meeting B. Dudko brought up the new guiderails that have been installed along Route 97 between Pond Eddy and Mongaup with reflective posts that are very advantageous for visibility. He asked the DOT representative if that is the new style. The DOT representative had to look into it, but got back and said that's how they all look initially and will fade over time.

On February 24<sup>th</sup> the UDSB submitted a nomination to the National Scenic Byway Foundation (NSBF) to recognize the 2023 Shadfest under the Partnership category. Ramie announced that the UDSB has won that national award and will be presented during the NSBF Symposium in Colorado from May 1<sup>st</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup>. This is a partnership award for the collaboration of all the entities involved in funding and organizing programs during the 2023 Shadfest. The award is quite prestigious, with NSBF only giving out 8 awards among 1,000 Scenic Byways eligible. The criteria is that you need to be a member of NSBF and either a designated national or state byway. UDSB officers determined that Pizzolato, as the person who coordinated Shadfest, should be the one to go accept the award. He was happy to do so.

The UDSB received a scholarship for the \$200 registration fee for the 4-day conference. The UDSB Committee will be asked to cover the transportation and lodging. There will be media coverage at the conference with press releases being done to announce the award. Rodgers congratulated the UDSB. Henry said the premise of the UDSB was to advocate for the river. Ramie said the UDSB is actually for the highway; the UDC is for the river. Henry asked why the UDSB doesn't do something to get people off the highway to see the Delaware River? Ramie and Padua said the UDSB is responsible for the signage that points to all of the river accesses along the byway. Henry said people should be directed off the byway to see the scenic river.

**3/26 Upper Delaware River Watershed Plan Meeting:** Ramie attended this virtual meeting with 27 other participants. The Watershed Plan is in the form of an Action Agenda, strictly for the NY side. Since the funding comes from NYS DEC, the plan needs to be submitted to DEC for approval after three public meetings, gathering comments from the meeting, and signing off on the plan. During this meeting they looked at the recommendations section of the Action Agenda. The DEC already started to review it and came back with language that needed to be tweaked. A component of the Action Agenda is what would be sought if it was approved to which the DEC recommended removing the Project List. That didn't make much sense, since that was the way the Steering Committee planned on tracking the plan to make sure it was working. The committee decided to keep everyone updated via email about what response they got from the DEC about the feedback, with one more round of internal review, and then submit it. Once she hears something, she will let the WU/RM Committee know.

**3/27 D&H THC Board of Trustees Meeting and the 4/2 & 4/16 Roebing Aqueduct 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Meetings:** The March 27<sup>th</sup> D&H THC meeting mainly focused on the Roebing Aqueducts 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration planning and logistics. There is an 80-person capacity for the event, since that is what the New Inn at Lackawaxen can accommodate. As of this afternoon there were 66 people registered for the anniversary celebration. 75 tote bags were ordered for the event to celebrate the first crossing of the Aqueducts. At 10am there will be a guided walking tour, followed by a buffet lunch at the New Inn at Lackawaxen featuring canal era recipes, exhibits, history speeches, and music by Dan Engvaldsen. Ramie commented that it's shaping up to be a popular event.

**4/9 Delaware River Sojourn Meeting:** Engelhardt said we are getting close to the Sojourn. They were hoping to get registration open by this past weekend, but since that didn't happen, they are hoping before this weekend. The day plans need to be submitted and the t-shirt design has to be finalized. She sent the Upper Delaware day plans to Ingrid Peterec a few weeks ago for review. After looking them over, Peterec sent them to the Steering Committee. Engelhardt will let the WU/RM Committee know when registration opens. She asked if anyone has any ideas for the High Admiral Award (someone who has made an impact on the Upper Delaware River over the past year) to please let her know. Rodgers asked if the itinerary is still being developed? Engelhardt said no, it is finalized. Henry would like to nominate former Town of Highland UDC Representative Andy Boyar, supported by Jeffer and Martin. Engelhardt took that note. Ramie said she read in the *Tri-County Independent* that there was a Sojourn being created on the Lackawaxen River. Engelhardt said yes, it is still being developed but they are planning to do a 2-day Sojourn on Columbus Day weekend. Dan Corrigan with Northeast Wilderness Experience is spearheading that project. Ramie said the article says (subject to change) that the proposed Sojourn will launch on Saturday, October 12<sup>th</sup> from Sycamore Point Access in Honesdale, paddling to the river access at White Mills where they will get out for a safety course. Henry said they should do the safety course before they launch. Padua said that's a long paddle. Henry asked where they are camping? Engelhardt said Bingham Park in Hawley. Padua said the river might be a little low that time of year, depending on releases.

**4/10 NPS Water Safety Meeting:** There are notes included in the packet. Driscoll said National Canoe Safety Patrol (NCSP) is holding trainings in May for the upcoming season. The current Loaner Life Jacket Station at Skinners Falls is going to have a wire added to the structure with carabiners to hang the life jackets on. There are 10 volunteers so far for the Wear It Watchers Volunteer Program. Henry had called a few weeks ago about some concerns he'd like brought up at the Water Safety meetings: The first was a concern of boats being put in the water under an inappropriate CUA. NPS said they are aware of that and planned to follow up. The second was the garbage at Skinners Falls at Lander's Campground. NPS knows that trash is an issue there and plans to address it this year. Rodgers asked if the decommissioned canoes listed on the notes mean boats that need to be un-registered? Driscoll said no, they are canoes that are no longer in service (able to be used) that people have in the past taken and repurposed. Padua said on the "No Glass Bottles" signs should be collected and put away by Columbus Day or Halloween. They end up being litter all around and in the river, since they don't get picked up.

**4/15 BioBlitz Site Visit:** Engelhardt attended the BioBlitz site visit to locate where the tents will go for scientists and workshops for the public. They met with the Highlights Foundation staff who are excited about the event. They planned parking, meals, and how to set up the site. They took a walk on the hiking trails. G. Dudko asked if this event is publicized to school districts? Engelhardt said she believes so. Ramie said the BioBlitz does take place at the end of June, after schools are out in both NY and PA.

**Other:** Padua asked if the shrub/trees that have been planted at Ten Mile River are still there? Stevens said she believes so. They are a native shrub willow species that are a bit hardier.

Henry said he'd like to propose to NPS and NYS DEC, hiring a contractor in the area that's available to clean up river accesses when they pile up with debris. The NPS doesn't have the staff, the DEC is an hour or so away in New Paltz, and there just isn't anyone that can make time to maintain the accesses. The accesses need to be maintained on a more frequent basis. The Highland Access has sat for a few months piled with debris and has been unusable. G. Dudko said NYS should be able to take care of their State Accesses. Henry said that the NPS was brought here to maintain public accesses, and if the public accesses are inaccessible then people will start using private property to get to the river. Padua said maybe the letter can be addressed to the NPS and NYS DEC about hiring a private local contractor to maintain the public accesses? Henry said it doesn't have to be in the form of a letter, NYS, the Commonwealth of PA, and NPS are all here once a month for our UDC full council meetings. We can bring the proposal up then. Maybe money can be merged to maintain all public accesses on both NY and PA side. Ramie said it would be helpful to say what accesses he's talking about, otherwise it's a pretty broad statement. Henry said "Any accesses that have debris after a storm in NY or PA." Padua said the PFBC has a great grasp on maintaining their accesses; maybe it would be good to get some advice on how they do it. Last week while he was at a PFBC Access, there was a tree that was clearly across the roadway that they had already come and cut up and moved. Jackson said she thinks having a conversation with Kurnath before making that proposal would be beneficial. There are constraints and reasons why NPS isn't cleaning and maintaining accesses, beyond funding. Having a clear understanding on how the NPS is being directed to manage these areas and what's realistic needs to be understood before writing a letter or making a proposal. Engelhardt said the NPS can't just hire a contractor. Jackson said maybe the NPS can look into hiring a contractor through the UDC. That's something that can be explored. Right now, there are only 4 rangers for NPS law enforcement who are trying their best to keep these accesses maintained. Henry thinks the conversation just needs to be started.

**Public Comment:** None.

**Adjourn:** A Motion by Dudko seconded by Jeffer to adjourn the meeting at 8:05 p.m. was carried.

*Meeting minutes prepared by Stephanie Driscoll, 4/22/2024*