

WATER USE/RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMM. MEETING MINUTES
September 17, 2024

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

Committee Members Absent: None

Staff: Laurie Ramie, Kerry Engelhardt (Zoom), Stephanie Driscoll (Zoom)

NPS Partner: Lindsey Kurnath- Superintendent; Tom Kearns- Natural and Cultural Resources Manager

Guests: Ginny Dudko

The UDC’s Water Use/Resource Management Committee held its monthly meeting on Tuesday, September 17, 2024. Chairperson Evan Padua called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

Approval of the August 20, 2024 meeting minutes: A motion by B. Dudko seconded by Jeffer approving the 8/20 meeting minutes carried. There was no public comment on the agenda.

New Business:

Introduction: Tom Kearns, Natural and Cultural Resources Program Manager at the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River: Padua welcomed Kearns to the meeting and the Upper Delaware region. Kearns thanked everyone for having him tonight. He said he has spent the last 16 years in Nevada and Utah and has been with the NPS for a little over 10 years. His background is mostly in Cultural Resource Management and archeology specifically, but has been involved in a lot of Natural Resources projects as well over the last few years. He is excited to be in the Upper Delaware region and closer to a river. This area is very similar to where he grew up in Iowa. He commented that it’s great to be back next to a river after being in the desert for so long. His wife is from Pennsylvania and is currently making the move out to the Upper Delaware. He does a lot of compliance work for large scale projects, invasive species removal, rattlesnake work, forest thinning projects, and other things of that nature. While at Great Basin National Park in Nevada, he worked closely with the Natural Resources team and the fire/rescue teams.

Ramie asked what his enter on duty date was? Kearns said August 26th was the day he started moving from Nevada; his first day in office was September 9th. Padua asked Kearns if he has seen the Knotweed in our area yet? Kearns said some people have pointed it out to him. Padua said he doesn’t hate the plant, there are pros and cons to it. If you look across the river where County Route 114 meets Route 97, you can see a homeowner has taken a bulldozer to the Knotweed around five years in a row. Eventually it stopped growing and now there is grass. B. Dudko said the Town of Deerpark repeatedly cuts it down too. Kearns said there are ways to deal with the Knotweed. That is one of them. He has a lot of studying to do on invasive plants in this area. Henry said whenever PennDOT or NYS DOT moves soil, you know you are going to get Knotweed there. Rodgers said he has Knotweed that grows on one side of his driveway that he just kept cutting it down over and over again, never letting it get beyond a certain height. Since then, he’s had other plants grow there. If he’s not careful though some Knotweed will pop back up.

Kurnath said she will still attend WU/RM meetings when she has the opportunity. Kearns will be attending going forward. She commented that it’s been nice to have other NPS staff pop in as needed, like Jessica Weinman from maintenance, Community Planner Carly Marshall, Chief Ranger Keith Winslow, and others. She will continue to send other staff as it seems necessary, since she reads all of the minutes and can suggest to Kearns who she thinks should attend along with him.

Ramie said that Rodgers asked if we could get a presentation on the school programs that NPS does. He suggested having it at one of the WU/RM meetings, but we opted to do it at the next full council meeting on October 3rd. That will give them more time to talk on the subject. Kurnath said Rodgers told her that he is interested in the submerged archeological study that UPDE is working on. They will be adding that in more detail to the NPS monthly report handout that’s given at the full council meetings. She also thinks the researchers may be interested in giving a

presentation to the UDC after they crunch their numbers. She plans to reach out to them to see if they would be willing.

Update on Barryville Gage: Ramie said a memo was sent out on August 20th to parties that may be interested on getting the Barryville Gage funded. Anyone interested was asked to respond by September 20th to further discuss. So far, she has heard back from Sullivan County Planning and Friends of the Upper Delaware River. The memo was sent to Congressional representatives as well. Since UPDE NPS has offered to pick the gage up with Stop Gap Funding for Fiscal Year 2025, the issue isn't as urgent.

Update on River Accesses: Ramie said there are three access updates tonight.

The Damascus Access was closed from 9/9 – 9/12 so Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) could repair and maintain the ramp. That project was finished on time and on 9/13 the Delaware River Basin Commission (DRBC) started their raft trip from the Damascus Access after their roundtable held at the UDC office. She had told PFBC about the artifact rock that Richardson had mentioned. They thanked her for letting them know and said they wouldn't disturb it. G. Dudko said if that rock artifact is legitimate, it should be protected. Kurnath said Cultural Resources Manager Alex Garcia-Maldonado is looking into it. Padua said lots of new rocks were placed as a boundary at the Damascus Access. He understands there needs to be a boundary marked, but maybe they don't need to use such large rocks. It makes navigating the parking lot difficult, even for experienced drivers, and they limit the already scarce parking spots there. Maybe we should reach out to PFBC about Darbytown and ask them not to use rocks as the boundary border there either. Getting input from the access users would be good. Kurnath said that PFBC came to the meeting on access review in April, and you can tell they are trying to maintain the accesses. Ramie said it would be a good time to suggest having an access user tag along while they are doing work at the Darbytown Access.

Now that the work is finished at the Damascus Access, Ramie said they are moving onto the Darbytown Access which will be closed from 9/23 – 9/27 for repairs and maintenance. She commented that PFBC is doing a great job in working on the accesses after the recreation season.

The Mongaup Access was brought up during the Town of Deerpark Project Review Road Show. There were concerns about the path leading down to the river and complaints of a large pothole on the road entering the access. Kurnath said Weinman knows about the pothole. She was going to have the American Hiking Society go over to the Mongaup Access to work on the path after finishing up at the Tusten Mountain Trail, but they ran out of time. She has reached out to the NYS DEC about the path, but she hasn't gotten a response back yet. That access is managed by a different department of the DEC and it has proven to be more difficult to get ahold of someone there. They are aware that the path needs work. Henry said when he worked for the NPS, they got a triaxle load of wood chips dumped there and spread for the path. There is a protected species of plant there, so it limits what can be done with the path.

Rodgers asked if the port-a-johns that the NPS maintains are being removed? Kurnath said yes, she knows the one at Skinners Falls needs to be removed. Rodgers said he's seen other ones out still too. Padua said the NPS asked the UDC a while back which ones we thought should stay out later into the season. Rodgers said there are still a lot of people at Ten Mile River and the port-a-johns are gone there.

Delaware River Flow & Storage Report: Included in the packet for review. Padua said they are releasing water, but not very fast. He asked if they are still scheduled to start the aqueduct repairs? Ramie said yes, October 1st is still the target date to start the project.

Other: In the packet there is a handout from Sullivan County Planning for their Master Plan Survey for Parks and Recreation. The deadline for that is 9/30.

Henry asked what the current status of the Skinners Falls-Milanville Bridge is? Padua said he hasn't floated under the bridge recently. Ramie read a portion of an email she received from PennDOT earlier this week: *"The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) Engineering District 4-0 is posting the no adverse effect memo for the Skinners Falls Bridge debris netting project in Damascus Township, Wayne County. PennDOT District 4-0 had undertaken emergency procurement procedures to obtain state funding and materials for the*

protective netting of the structure and the implementation of an Aid To Navigation (ATON) plan for waterway passage on the Delaware River. This safety project will occur under an existing work order for the Matamoras project programmed under MPMS# 89017, with this Skinners netting project utilizing MPMS# 121919.” Padua said there are still buoys all over the river that need to be removed. He will email the pictures he took. Kurnath said she told Rangers about them and they were working on getting them out. Padua said there is also a sign from the Cochection Bridge that is down past Ten Mile River. Rodgers asked if construction has started at the Callicoon Bridge? Ramie said yes.

Padua asked if eel weirs require a CUA? Kurnath said no, NYS permits them. Henry said it’s not fishing and isn’t regulated, it’s a traditional use. Kurnath said she gets Padua’s point; then why do we permit fishing guides? G. Dudko said it goes back to the River Management Plan (RMP); it’s a historical thing. Padua said he was surprised that Lackawaxen UDC Representative Doug Case said he doesn’t have a CUA. Ramie said that’s a good question; it is a commercial business. Padua said it may be a grey area. Kurnath said there is an interstate commission that decides how many eels can be taken out of the system, that’s why NYS can issue the permits in PA too. Henry said yes, they limit the number of eels you can catch in PA. That’s why most people get the permit in NYS. B. Dudko said you would have to dig in the RMP to find the eel rules and regulations, but they are in there.

Old Business:

8/26 Upper Delaware Scenic Byway Meeting: Ramie said the UDSB approved two grants on 8/26. One grant went to the Callicoon Business Association and the Callicoon Depot Inc. for \$1,500 to promote butterflies. The project includes restoring the garden at the Route 97 “Welcome to the Town of Delaware” sign area by rebuilding the beds, adding timed solar lights, and creating a Flyway on the Byway Pollinator Rest Stop, and creating a pollinator garden at the Callicoon Depot.

An application for a Culture and History Along the Byway Grant from the Greater Barryville Chamber of Commerce was submitted seeking \$3,000 for the Butterfly Ball at the 9/21 Pollinator Festival at Fort Delaware in Narrowsburg that will start with the Narrowsburg Honeybee Festival from 11am-5pm, leading into the ball from 5-10pm. Funds will also go toward butterfly education for children and families and making butterfly seed balls with local potter Nonna Hall. The seed balls will be tossed during the Butterfly Bike Ride to be held in Cochection on 10/20 along and off Route 97 between the Cochection Pump House and the Cochection Fire Station restaurant.

The NYS Office of Children and Family Services Legislative Grant had been approved on 5/15, but Ramie didn’t find out about it until 8/22 due to the UDSB faulty email address. She was notified yesterday that the final documentation is being reviewed by their auditing department. This grant request is for \$24,500 that would be used to reimburse 4.2 months’ worth of the 2023 Program Manager fees.

The UDSB posted the Program Manager position on BreezyHR.com on 7/25. Since then, 31 resumes were received. The UDSB plans to use a portion of the \$40,000 from Sullivan County for a new Program Manager contract. However the executed contract for the 2024 year ends on 12/31, leaving only four months to spend this money which was received in September. The funding was also intended to support the visitor center development. The UDSB will also place local ads for the program manager position in the Sullivan County Democrat, River Reporter, and Hancock Herald.

The UDSB.org domain is still unusable. The byway is now using a new domain UDSB.net that does not match the one listed on the brochures. There is also a new email address of info@UDSB.net

The paperwork is being prepared to submit for the \$250,000 capital construction grant for the Visitor Center at The Callicoon Depot. They were about \$80,000 over the cost estimate and decided to remove the roof repair which came in at \$90,000 to make that a separate contract and will try to figure out how to pay for that in advance.

The next UDSB meeting is Monday, September 23rd.

9/11 Water Safety Committee: Notes from the Water Safety Committee meeting are included in the packet. Driscoll said the second Water Safety Partners post season meeting will be on 9/20. They will ask how the summer went and what can be adjusted during the off-season. Padua said he finds it unlikely that many fishing guides will express interest in a fall meeting, since they already going to a meeting in the spring. Maybe if it was held virtually

only, they would participate. As far as water safety goes, the fishing guides are all usually pretty safe. Kurnath said the notes cover everything from the 9/11 meeting well. There was a message that Ramie had forwarded her from the Upper Delaware Community Network about AirBnB's being the number one call on river safety to NPS. She said there is no data that supports that. The person said AirBnB's should be directing all guests to local liveries. The Water Safety Committee is talking about making a Water Safety brochure to give landowners resources. G. Dudko asked if the guests are allowed to take the boats on the river? Kurnath said yes, they can't stop them. They just need to be educated on water safety first, so they are trying to figure out the best way to do that. Henry said NPS should contact the towns. There has been a lot of concern about short term rentals (STR). Ramie said the woman who received the Robin M. Daniels Life Saving Award at last year's River Valley Awards saved a father and son from drowning who were using a boat from their AirBnB.

9/17 Sojourn Committee Meeting: Engelhardt said she was not feeling well and was not able to attend that morning's meeting. She received an email from the chair of the committee that the Upper Day Planning Team will be receiving two additional people to help. They are also interested in revisiting sections in the upper days, and hoping to stay with Northeast Wilderness Experience in 2025. She will read over the minutes from the 9/17 meeting to make sure she is on the same page before the next meeting. Ramie said the new Lackawaxen Sojourn is still scheduled to be on Columbus (Indigenous People) Day weekend on October 12th and 13th.

9/17 Upper Delaware River Watershed Re-grant Committee: Ramie said she and Kurnath are both part of this committee made up from the Steering Committee. NYS is passing through \$232,500 in grant funding. The subcommittee needs to come up with the guidelines for it. The funding is tied to the federal Delaware River Conservation Fund for which the match would come from this program. The match is one to one, and a lot of organizations and municipalities have difficulty coming up with that amount of money.

Other: Padua said he's seen work being done on the railroad. They seem to be removing old railroad ties and removing one of the two tracks. Ramie said she will contact Central New York Railroad to inquire.

Henry said he was contacted by Rick Lander of Lander's River Trips, along with Kittatinny Canoes, and Indian Head. They want to come in to talk about the CUA changes. Can something be scheduled for them? Kurnath asked what they want to talk about? Henry said he's assuming the fees. Kurnath said she doesn't feel that would be a good use of everyone's time. She can't negotiate the terms. Ramie said they can come to any of our meetings, as they are open to the public. Rodgers said the UDC is not in a position to dispute the law or formula that the NPS is using to increase the fees by 1.5% in a year and a half. Ramie said we can listen without taking any action. Kurnath said it would be helpful to get any further questions in advance so they can prepare their responses. Henry said he will tell them they are welcome to come to the next WU/RM Committee meeting.

Padua said that, after he caught a Northern Snakehead, he tried calling two hotlines to report it that didn't work before giving up. Kurnath asked him to pass along those numbers for NPS to follow up on this invasive species issue.

Public Comment: None.

Adjourn: A Motion by Henry seconded by Jeffer to adjourn the meeting at 8:22 p.m. was carried.

Meeting minutes prepared by Stephanie Driscoll, 9/26/2024