

Upper Delaware Council  
**OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**  
**February 24, 2015**

Committee Present: Alan Henry, Dave Dean, Larry Richardson, Fred Peckham, Jeff Dexter, Harold Roeder, Jr., Nadia Rajsz  
Committee Absent: Debra Conway  
NPS Partner: Kris Heister, Carla Hahn  
Staff: Laurie Ramie, Travis O'Dell, Cindy Odell  
Guests: Susan Sullivan, Joe Hinkes

The UDC's Operations Committee held its monthly meeting on Tuesday, February 24, 2015 at the Council office in Narrowsburg, NY. Chairperson Henry called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

**Approval of February 5 Meeting Minutes:** A motion by Peckham seconded by Dexter to approve the February 5 meeting minutes was carried with Roeder and Rajsz abstaining as they were not in attendance at the February 5 meeting. There was no public comment on the agenda.

**Executive Director's Report and Monthly Calendar:** Ramie referred members to her written report in their packets. She reported on the federal funding, providing balances in that account as well as the UDC's bank accounts. She said that next month, the six-month mark of the fiscal year, she will perform a budget analysis to see where we stand in terms of allocations.

Ramie noted that staff met with Hahn a third time on February 20<sup>th</sup> to continue sorting through and starting a database to inventory the contents of approximately eight disorganized boxes of documents from UDC predecessor groups including the Conference of Upper Delaware Townships (COUP), Citizens Advisory Council, Intergovernmental Coordinating Council, several River Management Plan committees, Land and Water Use Guidelines committees, and various subjects from planning consultants Hoffman, Williams, Lafen, and Fletcher, dating 1981 to 1987 to date. An expenditure related to this project will be addressed under New Business, Ramie stated.

Ramie said that Kristt Company was in on February 6<sup>th</sup> to install the maintenance kit for the Kyocera copier. It is hoped that this kit will extend the life of the copier. The wax seal was replaced on the toilet in the back bathroom by Don Bellotti on February 20<sup>th</sup>. This repair was recommended to alleviate the gaseous odor that would occasionally permeate the office.

Regarding publicity, Ramie said that five news releases have been issued this month. There will be many more news releases related to the April 26<sup>th</sup> Awards Banquet forthcoming. Ramie said she has begun compiling information, setting up and conducting interviews for the Spring/Summer 2015 Upper Delaware newsletter which is due to the printer, Courier Printing, by March 18<sup>th</sup>. This edition of the newsletter is due out on April 1<sup>st</sup>.

Ramie referred members to handouts related to the Awards Banquet. The first is the timeline which lists all the tasks that need to be accomplished leading up to and immediately after the banquet. A copy of the letter inviting PA Governor Tom Wolf to serve as the keynote speaker was included, as well as the award nomination form. Ramie said a reply from Governor Wolf has been requested by March 9<sup>th</sup> at the latest in order to meet advance publicity deadlines. Ramie said nominations are being solicited from the public and encouraged members to submit any applicable nominations as well. She noted that she keeps a folder all year long of award-worthy possibilities.

Ramie reported that the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Green Tourism Conference will be held April 14 & 15 at Woodloch Pines in Hawley, PA. She said the UDC attended the conference last year which was held at the Villa Roma in Callicoon, NY. Ramie said there is an exhibitor opportunity to share a booth with the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway, Inc. for half the cost at \$197.50. This cost covers attendance, meals, and participation by two individuals in all the conference programs. Individual registration cost is \$199.00. Peckham questioned what the conference is about. Ramie read aloud, "The purpose of the conference is to unite our geographical neighbors around a common cause, to promote sustainable tourism and a pride of place." A motion to allow the UDC to share a booth with the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Green Tourism Conference at a cost of \$197.50 was made by Dean, seconded by Rajsz and carried.

Ramie said that planning for the 2015 River Clean-up Program, started in 2014 as a pilot program, is underway. The 2015 UDC River Clean-up Grants program will offer \$3,000 minimum to member municipalities to organize river and shoreline clean-up projects. Ramie told members they may opt to add to the grant total based on the applications that are received. She explained any unallocated funding such as the health insurance refund could be used to accomplish this. Richardson suggested this program be put in place by next month's Operations Committee meeting to allow plenty of lead time for municipalities to respond.

Ramie referred members to the March calendar of UDC Meetings, Activities and Deadlines in their packets. A preview of April dates was also included.

### **New Business**

**Review of NPS FY 2015 Work Plan:** Heister referred members to the Upper Delaware Scenic & Recreational River FY 2015 Work Plan in their packets. She noted that each division submits a work plan. The work plan outlines the primary objectives and work tasks that support achieving the overarching management goal for UPDE in FY 2015. Richardson asked for clarification of the numbers listed under the Call to Action (C2A) column. Heister said that the regional office has a service-wide program called Call to Action in place. The parks and park units link their activities to a particular Call to Action goal. Heister stated the goals are not listed in priority order. Henry referred to page 6 of the work plan where it read, "Increase law enforcement patrol coverage on the northern end of the river by working with our partners to establish a greater presence.." He asked for elaboration on this goal. Chief Ranger Joe Hinkes spoke of a meeting that took place in the Fall of 2014 facilitated by the Friends of the Upper Delaware River. He said it was attended by the Park Service and New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. Both agencies spoke about patrol coverage on the northern end of the river, identifying some of the issues they would like to better address. The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission was also consulted to come up with some strategies where there can be more of a presence on that section of the river between the three agencies. Hinkes spoke of a joint patrol that took place last summer with the Park Service, NYS DEC and the PA Fish and Boat Commission.

Peckham noted his concern that private property rights were not a big focus of the plan. Heister referred to Goal 5 which states "A diverse array of high quality recreational experiences contribute to a transformative visitor experience at UPDE. The recreational experience at UPDE is developed in partnership with others, is respectful of private property, and promotes safety as fundamental to a quality visitor experience." Dean suggested that the words "while protecting private property rights" could be added to the end of Goal 2. Heister said she could think about that. She noted that much of the Park Service educational material and displays state that visitors should "respect private property." She said this message needs to be emphasized to the river users themselves and that it why it is included in Goal 5. She noted their message to those users is to "stay on the water." Dean recommended more emphasis needs to be put on getting the message out about respecting private property rights. Sullivan suggested that helping people know where they are when they are on the river may help with the respecting private property issue.

Heister referred members to a handout provided by her listing the activities chosen to highlight the National Park Service Centennial. The goal of the National Park Service Centennial is to connect with and create the next generation of park visitors, supporters, and advocates. Activities include creating a virtual visitor experience for the park; holding a photo contest which focuses on the Outstandingly Remarkable Values of the Upper Delaware; partnership with the Delaware Riverkeeper and DEWA to hold a virtual canoe race from the confluence to the terminus; have canoes on the river join to form the number 100 and take a photograph from the Narrowsburg Bridge; increase volunteerism and youth involvement through river clean-ups; submit projects by partners for National Endowment of Arts funds; UPDE Superintendent contribute a quarterly or monthly article to *The River Reporter*; hold a life vest trade-in; attend and have NPS 100<sup>th</sup> birthday announced at a Scranton/ Wilkes-Barre Railriders game. Her handout included other activities that she encouraged members to look over on their own. She asked members to think about ways the Council can contribute to the celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the National Park Service. Richardson asked if the National Park Service might consider setting aside some days throughout the summer to pick up trash that is picked up by volunteers. Heister said she would do that. Trash collecting ideas were discussed. Heister spoke of the "Adopt an Access" program that exists, but is not well known. She would like to highlight this program. O'Dell spoke of the "gray area" that exists when conducting these river clean ups as much trash often ends up in the high water area on private property. Heister suggested

that the Park Service could work with the towns and townships that participate in the UDC River Clean-up Program.

**Collaboration of NPS UPDE Law Enforcement Operations with Delaware Water Gap:** Heister referred members to the list of Frequently Asked Questions provided in their packets. Richardson noted the word “park” was used numerous times throughout the document. Heister said the word “park” was used as a generic term often because spelling out “Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River” is cumbersome. Heister said the goal of a collaborative approach to law enforcement between the two parks is to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of law enforcement and emergency services at both parks. She noted that the overall number of law enforcement rangers at UPDE has dropped from 17 in 1981 to six today which includes three full-time permanent, two permanent, subject-to-furlough rangers, and one seasonal law enforcement ranger. Heister said this collaborative approach is considered a necessary step to address issues associated with stagnant or declining long-term budget scenarios, significant reductions in the number of law enforcement personnel at UPDE, an expanding and more diverse American public, and the need to find new and innovative ways to address the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. She said the time is right to take this step due to the fact that Chief Ranger Hinkes of UPDE will transfer to the position of Operations Supervisor at DEWA. Hinkes has worked at both parks and is trusted and respected by staff at both of the parks, she added. Heister said that having Hinkes in that position gives a sense of comfort that the collaborative effort will be successful. She said that Hinkes will be replaced at UPDE with a lower graded supervisory law enforcement ranger resulting in maintaining the same number of law enforcement staff that is in place now. Heister covered what she believes to be the key benefits that UPDE will gain from this collaboration. Those benefits include: costs savings; administrative redundancies will be reduced allowing UPDE rangers to focus more of their time on river patrols; sharing staff across parks will provide additional opportunities for targeted enforcement efforts and increased coverage across the entire length of the river; UPDE rangers will gain more experience, making them more competitive for other jobs and/or advancement, and the opportunity exists to share expertise between the divisions to gain further efficiencies and develop emergency and other types of plans that cover both parks (such as a flood emergency plan). Hinkes explained that every time something happens in the field, there is a significant amount of time spent on administrative issues. He noted that up to an hour and a half can be spent following up on one ticket. Heister said DEWA has staff dedicated to taking care of the administrative issues. Hinkes added that administrative issues include emergency response planning that would be common for both parks, such as a high water event. Richardson questioned if this collaboration is the beginning of a “creep” to merge the Upper and Middle and make it one entity. He said the UDC has been strongly against such a merger, insisting that the Upper Delaware must retain its own identity. Heister said she anticipated this question and acknowledged that would be a fear of the Council. She said there are no current plans to merge the two parks but they will continue to look for meaningful ways to collaborate. She added that both parks have been directed by the Regional Office to find ways to accomplish this. Heister stated that she will provide the administrative supervision over the GS-11 supervisory park ranger that will be hired for the Upper Delaware. The UPDE supervisory park ranger will report directly to the UPDE superintendent and provide direct supervision of the UPDE law enforcement rangers. The DEWA operations supervisor and UPDE supervisory park ranger will work together closely to plan, provide oversight, and ensure coordination of the schedules and activities of their staff to achieve the goal of working as one team to meet the needs of both parks. Heister spoke about how this collaboration would work to cover more shifts in the Upper Delaware. Roeder questioned how DEWA law enforcement rangers will differentiate their role in the Upper Delaware. Hinkes said it will be his job to ensure they are aware of the different structure. He said the rangers would be trained and oriented to the area here so they know what they can and can’t do and where they can and can’t act. Henry questioned when this collaboration would go into effect. Hinkes said he has been offered the position down at the Delaware Water Gap and the plan of collaboration is moving forward. Henry expressed his concern of how enduring this collaboration would be should Hinkes only be in his new position for a short time. Heister said they are relying on Hinkes to put into place what needs to be done in order for this collaboration to be enduring. Henry asked if an effort will be made to keep in place the numbers of law enforcement that UPDE currently has to maintain the protection of the river that has been in place. Heister said absolutely, she does not know how they could go lower. Henry questioned if the collaboration is truly about funding, why not look at the other divisions. Why not share other resources with Delaware Water Gap. Heister said law enforcement is the one that makes the most sense to her and this is the area where UPDE has experienced the most severe declines in staffing. Heister said DEWA is

looking to UPDE for their expertise on river patrol. Peckham asked what the definition of river patrol is. Hinkes said it is rangers on the river in a boat on patrol. He said he has placed an emphasis on river patrol in the time that he has been here. Hinkes said he wants to see the relationships and programs he has established maintained once he begins his new position as public safety on the river is what his job is and he wants to ensure that continues to be the main focus. A greater pool of people with skills and abilities and an interest in working in different areas will be built resulting in an overall better law enforcement and emergency services group for DEWA and UPDE as a result of the collaboration, Hinkes said. Peckham questioned the allocation of resources noting the spring months are when it is particularly busy on the northern end of the river. Hinkes noted that river use does shift throughout the year and by using targeted enforcement, they can focus their resources where they are needed at a particular point in time. Hinkes said that during his tenure, he has been able to build relationships and coordination with the 911 centers and local emergency services. The Park Service now has radio communications with Delaware County 911, Wayne County 911, Sullivan County 911, and Pike County 911. He continues to work on coordination to ensure that the right people get to the right place to address whatever emergencies arise. Roeder spoke of the retirement of Lt. Luis Alvarez from the Sullivan County Sheriff's Office. He suggested that the relationship Alvarez had with the community is one that could be used as an example for the Park Service law enforcement rangers. Henry asked if the current law enforcement staff have any concerns over this collaborative effort. Hinkes said no concerns have been expressed to him. The main concern of the staff has been, and continues to be, the subject to furlough positions and the length of those furloughs. He said there is some potential that the furloughs could be reduced through the collaboration with Delaware Water Gap. Dean asked if the land in Delaware Water Gap is all federally owned. Heister told him yes. He asked if the Upper Delaware is the only "park" where the land is privately owned. Heister said not in the Wild and Scenic Rivers system. Roeder said we were the first to have the arrangement that is in place. Dexter shared his personal experience working in collaborative situations noting that the larger parks were often too busy to respond to the needs of the smaller parks. Sullivan said she feels many residents value the fact that the Park Service brought order and safety to the river during a chaotic time. They appreciate that and don't want to lose that service. Heister noted that if this effort does not work out the way it is envisioned, the Upper Delaware will have lost nothing, but the Upper Delaware does potentially have much to gain from this collaboration. Hinkes stated that "one of the threads" that will be maintained is that he will continue to interact with law enforcement and emergency services in the Upper Delaware along with the supervisor working here. A high priority for him is to continue to build on the relationships with emergency services that have been established both in the Upper Delaware and Middle Delaware. Hinkes said that he is currently waiting for his "entrance on duty" date to begin his new position at the Delaware Water Gap. Heister said she would like to have a revised list of Frequently Asked Questions in place for the March full Council Meeting. Richardson recommended sharing the current document with all the Council members for their feedback. Henry asked staff to send the current document out to all Council members and ask that any comments and concerns be sent to Heister by Friday, February 27. Heister said she would like to incorporate any comments into a revised document before it is shared beyond the Council. She intends to have that revised document ready by March 2<sup>nd</sup> to be shared before the March 5<sup>th</sup> full Council meeting.

**Records Management Project Proposed Expenditure:** Odell said Hahn has recommended shelving to store boxes of records in the UDC attic. Odell said that Sam's Club has 5-tier large chrome shelving units measuring 60"x24"x72" for \$149.98 each plus shipping. Each unit could hold 20 boxes and comes with casters so they can be easily moved if necessary. A motion to approve the purchase of four shelving units was made by Rajs, seconded by Peckham and carried.

**Summary of Pending Bills/Financial Statements as of 1-31-15:** The committee was provided with an abstract of bills dated February 24 to review. A motion by Peckham, seconded by Rajs to pay the bills listed on the abstract was carried unanimously. Financial Statements as of January 31, 2015 were provided for individual review. Peckham noted the \$377 reduction in the utility line compared to last year. It was discussed that was due to the lower cost of oil and the energy efficiency improvements that were accomplished.

**Other:** None

**Old Business:** None

**Public Comment:** None

**Adjournment:** A motion by Roeder, seconded by Rajszyk to adjourn the meeting at 8:02 p.m. was carried unanimously.

*Minutes submitted by Cindy Odell, 3/3/15*