

UPPER DELAWARE COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES July 3, 2008

The Upper Delaware Council held its monthly meeting on Thursday, July 3, 2008 at the Council office on Bridge Street in Narrowsburg, NY. Chairperson Alan Bowers called the meeting to order at 7:34 p.m. A motion by Wieland seconded by Niflot to approve the June 5 meeting minutes was carried. There was no public comment on the agenda.

In attendance: Town of Hancock-Jim Serio, Town of Fremont-Jack Niflot, Town of Delaware-Harold Roeder Jr., Town of Cohecton-Larry Richardson, Town of Tusten-Charles Wieland, Town of Highland-John C. Sundholm, Town of Lumberland-Jay Shafer, Town of Deerpark-Phil Chase, Lackawaxen Township-John McKay, Shohola Township-George J. Fluhr, Westfall Township-Alan Bowers, and National Park Service-Sandra Schultz. Also in attendance: Town of Hancock Alternate-Fred Peckham, Town of Fremont Alternate-Jim Rodgers. Absent: State of New York, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Delaware River Basin Commission.

Committee Reports: The committee reports were provided by the committee chairpersons based on the meeting minutes; they included: June 17 Water Use/Resource Management by Wieland; June 24 Operations by Bowers; and June 24 Project Review by Roeder.

Status Reports

Delaware River Basin Commission: Douglass referenced the “Delaware River Flow and Storage Data” handout. The reservoirs are down about 7%, a little below the mean average for this time of year. Combined reservoir storage is at 89.3%.

The next DRBC meeting is scheduled for July 16 with a conference among the Commissioners and staff at 10:30 a.m. and the business meeting at 1:30 p.m. An agenda item on the conference session includes a briefing on the Commission’s role in regulating oil and gas drilling activity in the Delaware Basin.

The DRBC notified the Council the U.S. House subcommittee on Water and Energy has included a line item in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers budget to fund the river basin commissions (Delaware, Susquehanna, Potomac). The U.S. Senate will be considering the COE budget next week. Support for the river commissions funding would be appreciated.

Richardson commented that at the DEC seminar in Liberty last Tuesday the DEC mentioned that they were in discussions with the DRBC that day regarding gas drilling regulations. Douglass noted that PA DEP is working with the Susquehanna River Basin Commission also.

NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation: Douglass referenced the handouts provided by Bill Rudge. They included two news releases. The first was “Public Invited to Information Session on Potential Marcellus Shale Drilling”. With the potential surge of natural gas drilling on the horizon, the NYS DEC will host a public forum to provide landowners and other interested parties information about state drilling laws and oversight; natural gas leasing and the possible impacts of exploration activities. The forum is scheduled for 6:30 p.m., Thursday, July 17, at Greene High School, 40 South Canal Street, Greene, NY. Staff from DEC’s Mineral Resources Division will be on hand to provide an overview, followed by a question-and-answer session.

Douglass added that on July 28, Penn State Extension will hold a public information session at the Wallenpaupack High School in Hawley, PA from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. entitled “Fundamentals of Natural Gas Exploration and Leasing”. Learn more at the website at www.naturalgas.psu.edu.

The second news release “Northern Snakehead Fish Found in Catlin Creek in the Town of Waywayanda, Orange County”. While the Northern Snakehead is not a threat to human health or safety, it is an aggressive predator that has the potential to prey on and compete with native fishes throughout New York State. Left unchecked this predatory invasive is likely to rapidly expand its population and territory with real and negative economic impacts to the Hudson River watershed fisheries while causing potentially irreversible harm to rare and endangered species and natural communities. The DEC has taken immediate action to attempt to contain its spread by erecting temporary fish barriers in Catlin Creek. Further action is planned by DEC.

PA Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources: No Report

National Park Service-Upper Delaware: Assistant Superintendent Schultz reported that the Delaware River Sojourn is completed. The theme this year was celebrating the 40th anniversary of the National Wild & Scenic Rivers Act. The honorary Lord High Admiral for day one on the Upper Delaware was NYS Senator John Bonacic, and for day two Sandra Gerry of Sullivan Renaissance.

The Federal Highway Administration has conducted its annual inspection of the historic Roebling Bridge. Suggestions were made and NPS will address them.

A training session was conducted by NPS-Upper Delaware for its staff and personnel from other Park Units on tree felling and chainsaw operation. The hands-on portion of the training enabled work on the D & H trail. The trail was wiped out during the last floods and NPS is trying to effect a recovery to the area.

The landscape architect office provided NPS with contracting materials for the Zane Grey House historic landscaping makeover as well as providing concept sketches for the Mongaup Visitors Center proposal.

NPS has put aside holding a NYS side of the River natural gas drilling and leasing informational forum since many other organizations and agencies are holding numerous sessions currently.

UDC Executive Director's Report: Bill Douglass reported that the launch of the Council's website is due to take place July 4 and can be accessed at www.upperdelawarecouncil.org. Staff and the design firm are still tweaking the site. Staff felt that the site was very professional looking as well as user friendly and will provide much information. Soete's photo gallery should be enjoyed by all.

The IRS has increased the optional standard mileage rates for the final six months of 2008 (July 1 through Dec. 31) to 58.5 cents a mile. The Council will start using the new rate.

The NYS Assembly passed a bill to fund the power line opposition groups. It next goes to the NYS Senate. If it becomes law, a pool of \$450,000 would be available to pay for citizens' consultants' fees and engineering studies.

Douglass reminded that three Technical Assistance Grants Program grantees have to have their projects completed by Sept. 30. They included: Pike County Commissioners – map and brochure; Town of Fremont – comprehensive plan; and Town of Lumberland – tributaries baseline data study.

Old Business None**New Business**

UDC draft letter opposing Susquehanna-Roseland Power Line (PPL) Alternate Route A: The Council reviewed a draft comment letter that came out of committee that is to be issued to PPL Electric Utilities in Allentown, PA. The letter stated in part: "While none of the three proposed routes are located within the Congressionally-designated Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River corridor boundaries, Route A and Route B are located partially within the watershed of the river corridor and pass directly through the UDC-member townships of Lackawaxen, Shohola, and Westfall. Through a resolution approved on June 12, 2008 by the Board of Supervisors, Shohola Township has officially opposed Route A, and has requested that the UDC support that position. We understand that Lackawaxen Township is preparing a similar resolution to also oppose Route A. The Upper Delaware Council agrees with the opposition to Route A." The letter goes on to state other facts. The members reviewed and amended the draft letter. Following discussion, a motion by Wieland seconded by Shafer approving the letter as amended was carried.

UDC FY 2009 standing committees' work plans (for review): Staff provided to the Council members a packet containing the draft fiscal year 2009 committee work plans. The draft plans will be reviewed by each committee at its July meeting. Final drafts will be presented to the Council in August for action.

UDC 20th annual family raft trip, Aug. 3: The members received the reservation form for the Council's annual family raft trip that will take place on Aug. 3. A scenic 8-mile raft trip on the Upper Delaware from

Minisink Ford to Pond Eddy is planned for this year. Check in will be at 9 a.m. For information and costs contact udcramie@hvc.rr.com. Reservation deadline is July 28.

Additional funding for the Upper Delaware flood mitigation and flood warning system: Congressman Maurice Hinchey has notified the Council that he and Congressman John Hall have secured the House Appropriations Committee's approval of \$835,000 for the continuation of a flood mitigation study in the Upper Delaware River Watershed and for the development of a flood alert system for the region. These officials have worked diligently to assist with flooding issues affecting residents of the watershed.

NYS PSC and NYRI watershed power line project application status: The Council has received copy of the NYS Public Service Commission's letter to New York Regional Interconnect indicating a "number of deficiencies were found" with NYRI's most recent documents (dated June 5) received by the PSC to meet their Article VII Application process. The letter to NYRI goes on to state deficiencies found and mitigation required. A "complete" Article VII application submission to begin the State review process has still not been received by the PSC for over a year.

Public Comment

Fred Peckham mentioned to NPS that their dumpster by his island is still in the water. He said he called NPS to have it removed awhile ago as it could have posed a navigation problem to boaters. While it has moved to a lesser impact location downstream, it still needs to be taken out of the River. Schultz took the information and will follow-up to address the matter.

Adjourn A motion by McKay seconded by Roeder to adjourn the meeting at 8:19 p.m. was carried.

Carol Coney, Office Manager