

Upper Delaware Council
WATER USE/RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMM. MEETING MINUTES
May 15, 2012

Committee Members Present: Tony Ritter, Andy Boyar, Pat Jeffer, Al Henry, John McKay (7:13p.m.)
Committee Members Absent: Jay Shafer
NPS Partner: Don Hamilton
Staff: Laurie Ramie, Cindy Odell, Dave Soete
Guests: Anne Willard

The UDC's Water Use/Resource Management Committee held its monthly meeting on Tuesday, May 15, 2012 at the Council office in Narrowsburg, NY. The meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m. A motion to approve the April 17 meeting minutes was made by Boyar, seconded by Ritter and carried. Anne Willard questioned what the difference was between "public comment on the agenda" and "public comment". Boyar explained that public comment on the agenda is intended to keep the committee focused on the subjects on the agenda and that anything of general interest would be appropriate to bring up during the second comment session. There was no public comment on the agenda.

Old Business:

Upper Delaware Scenic Byway 4/23/12 Meeting Update: Ramie reported that April is when the Scenic Byway holds its annual meeting which involves the election of officers. Elected were Nadia Rajasz, Town of Lumberland, as Chairperson, Ed Boyer, Town of Tusten, as Vice-Chairperson, and Larry H. Richardson, Town of Cohecton, as Secretary/Treasurer.

Ramie noted that a box of 14 irregular Scenic Byway logo signs was found in Peter Osborne's old office at the Minisink Valley Historical Society. The signs, which are the route marker signs posted along Route 97, had been drilled in the wrong places so the company re-did the order and let the Byway keep the irregular signs. It was decided that Scenic Byway member municipalities should each take a sign and incorporate it into any sort of directional or welcome signage displays.

Ramie reported there had been discussion about revising the monthly meeting schedule of the Scenic Byway, perhaps to every other month. There was no resolution on the issue at the meeting. The May meeting of the Byway would have conflicted with the Memorial Day holiday, so there will be no meeting in May.

The Pond Eddy Bridge project was discussed at the Byway meeting as it is an issue of interest to members given that Route 97 is involved. There were several handouts provided at the meeting which included a response that Penn DOT had sent to the former Scenic Byway liaison to the Design Advisory Committee (DAC) who had resigned from that position. The third DAC meeting held on March 29th was attended by the newly appointed representative. An announcement of a "Save the Pond Eddy Bridge" meeting that was to take place on April 28th at the Lumberland Town Hall was made.

Ramie noted that four grants are being actively administered by the Scenic Byway, including one for which the contract expires on June 1st of this year. She has been trying to get a ruling on this grant from the Federal Highway Administration via the New York State DOT which administers that on what should be done because they are over almost a year behind in meeting the U.D.S.B's last interim payment request. Another request is not supposed to be submitted until the other is satisfied. Time is running out on the grant which created customized signage for each of the eight Byway communities.

The next meeting of the Scenic Byway is scheduled for Monday, June 25th.

Ritter asked if there is any update on the funding for the Visitor Center. Ramie noted that the last action the Byway took was to write a letter to the chairperson of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. No reply has been received yet, Ramie added.

Pond Eddy Bridge Update: Ramie noted that the letter dated May 1st from the Friends of the Pond Eddy Bridge had been copied to the UDC and was provided in members' packets for their review. Also in the packets was a news article just released by *Mid-Hudson News* on May 15th stating that New York State was pulling the \$5 million it had earmarked to raze the historic Pond Eddy Bridge and build a new one. A copy of a letter from Assemblywoman Aileen Gunther to NYS Governor Cuomo expressing her concern and

opposition to the project was also handed out. Henry asked if anyone had confirmed the news report. Ramie said no. Anne Willard of *The River Reporter* said that Aileen Gunther's office had called the newspaper. She said the issue is not as open and shut as the news article makes it sound. She added a formal announcement is to be made on Thursday, May 16th in Binghamton at a meeting with Penn DOT. Officials plan to review what to do with the Pond Eddy Bridge along with a state-wide evaluation of all kinds of infrastructure projects, Willard added. Ramie said she will be attending the NY-PA Joint Interstate Bridge Commission meeting being held in Binghamton at the NYS DOT headquarters.

Ramie said a press release had been received from Friends of the Pond Eddy Bridge referencing a rally to be held on Saturday, May 19th at the bridge itself. Assemblywoman Gunther is scheduled to speak along with a number of other individuals.

D&H THC April 25th Meeting Update: Ramie reported that the Transportation Heritage Council meets quarterly and the April 25th meeting took place in Carbondale, PA. Those attending took a tour of the Gravity Park and had lunch at the Ben-Mar Restaurant which is itself a former D&H Company building. A business meeting followed at Carbondale City Hall. One of the topics of discussion was membership. There are currently just eight organizations that are part of the D&H THC. There had been some interest expressed by individuals in getting involved, but previously the bylaws did not allow for that category. At the April 25th meeting the bylaws were amended to allow a non-voting "friend" category. The definition for that is an individual or entity with interest or goals in agreement with the mission of the organization. The dues for the non-voting members will be \$20 annually and \$40 for the voting members. There will be a solicitation by press release and posting on www.dhthc.org.

Ramie said there was discussion about what higher authority the Council could appeal to in order to be able to move forward with obtaining access to the historic hand-drawn maps of the D & H Canal and the Gravity Railroad that are in storage by Canadian Pacific Railroad in Montreal. The New York State Library is willing to accept the maps in their archives, but needs to receive an inventory that the railroad company has not yet provided.

T-shirts for D & H promotional purposes were also discussed. On Saturday, May 19th a new section of the canal trail in Huguenot, which is in the Town of Deerpark, is being opened. The new trail extends three miles to Cuddebackville. At 9:00 a.m. in Huguenot at the trail head, which is across from the firehouse, there will be a ribbon cutting celebration.

The next quarterly meeting for the D&H THC will be on July 25th in Waymart.

McKay questioned how Canadian Pacific Railroad came to be in possession of the historic maps. A brief discussion took place, but it was not decided how they came into possession. Ramie said the maps can be viewed if one goes to the Canadian Pacific office, but they will not let them go from there. Ramie added it is the D&H THC's intention to digitize the maps when and if they obtain access to them.

Other: Ritter reported that a month ago there was a lot of didymo in the water column, but he has not noticed as much the past few days he has been on the river. Boyar agreed that he had not seen as much recently either. Hamilton had a jar with a sample of didymo he had collected on April 22nd in Callicoon that he passed around for members to see. He said it is not well understood why so many blooms are being seen up and down the river. Hamilton noted a project has been funded to do some aerial photography with hyperspectral remote sensing to map aquatic plant beds in the river. He is hoping to get a hyperspectral signature for didymo so the extent of it could be mapped as well. He noted that it may not be as prevalent, but he did see some a week ago. In some places it is more extensive than others, Hamilton added. Didymo has been on the Park Service's radar for years, but the bloom this spring is pretty unprecedented. Over 150 miles of river are affected, Hamilton said. Ritter asked Hamilton if it was possible that the winter releases from the reservoirs has prevented anchor ice from forming and cleaning the river bottom, hence the increase in didymo. Hamilton does not know if there is any evidence to support that. Hamilton hopes that the didymo will die off as soon as the river warms up as has been seen other years. Henry asked Hamilton what didymo is. Hamilton told him it is a diatom (single-cell) algae that is thought to be native to colder, nutrient poor waters in the northern hemisphere, but it is being seen in places it hasn't been seen before. He added it is microscopic, but when it grows the extracellular vegetative stalk material, that is when it becomes visible on the bottom of the river, covers rocks and becomes a problem. It can alter the substrate and crowd out aquatic insects that are part of fish food. Why it is exhibiting these blooms in places it has not been seen before and lasting as long as it is, is not well understood, Hamilton stated. He noted Park Service did get a project funded with the USGS to do some genomic sequencing (a laboratory process that

determines the complete DNA sequence of an organism's genome at a single time) of didymo which is seen as a needed area of research. That project will start up this year. Boyar asked if there are any records of didymo being a problem in non-moving waters. Hamilton said it has been found in standing water, but does not seem to be problematic. It is in flowing water systems that it exhibits the bloom formations and can cover the substrate in places. Boyar wondered if aquatic insects can penetrate the didymo. Hamilton said it is much like a thick carpeting and he does not think it is great habitat for aquatic insects. Hamilton said the biggest concern right now is that there is no known way to eradicate didymo or control it in a stream. He said the Park Service is focusing on getting information out to the public so it doesn't get spread to other rivers or body of waters. One way didymo is thought to be moved around is on felt-soled waders. The best thing to do is to stop using them or be sure to treat them with a bleach solution after use and make sure they totally dry out. Henry questioned if NYC has ever checked to determine if didymo is growing in the reservoirs. Hamilton said it is not in the reservoirs that he knows of, but it is below the reservoirs. Hamilton noted that Park Service has issued a press release and has tried to get information out to the guides and liveries cautioning people to clean and decontaminate their gear. If you don't want to go through that, limit your use to one waterway, he added.

Ritter noted that the report from the field is that the trout fishing this year has been superb. He feels, however, that the shad run is down. Hamilton feels that the high water may bring more shad up. He had heard reports that the shad run has been good on various parts of the river. Boyar commented that last year was a "bust" as far as fishing was concerned because of the unsettled weather and that the fish being caught this year are bigger. Discussion about fish being caught with lampreys on them took place. Hamilton asked Ritter if he has noticed in the areas where there was extensive cover of didymo on the substrate any difference in aquatic insects. Ritter said he has not. He added he has been on the water the past week and has not seen didymo as he did three weeks ago.

New Business:

Review FY 2013 Work Plan: Ramie noted the work plan went out in advance for members' review. She said the Park Service requires the UDC to submit annual work plans as part of the federal funding package each year. They will need to be approved by the June 7th full UDC meeting in order to meet the Park Service's deadline of June 11th. Ramie said that of the 44 tasks outlined in the plan, many are ongoing and don't require a specific action everyday. The responsibilities listed on the first page of the plan cover everything that this committee is tasked with. She asked members if they had any comments or suggestions. Henry recommended organizing the plan a little better. After some discussion it was decided to assign each of the 44 tasks to one of the eight responsibilities. Ramie said she will do a second draft for members' review prior to the June 7th meeting. A motion to do a second draft assigning each task to a responsibility and having it available to committee members for review before the June 7th full Council meeting was made by Henry, seconded by Boyar and carried.

WU/RM Advisory Members – Guidelines: Ramie reported that the press release soliciting advisory members for the WU/RM Committee went out on May 2nd with a deadline of June 12th for any interested individuals to respond. She noted we have received some inquiries. She suggested staff continue to gather any that we receive and then present them to the committee in one package after the June 12th deadline passes. Ramie noted she came across the WU/RM Committee Advisory Members list from 1995. She read the list of those active at that time. Ramie suggested having a rotating series of presentations by advisory members, once they are established, about their field of expertise at the top of the agenda. Ritter would like to see more participation from the people who are business users of the river and from conservation groups. Ramie suggested seeing what kind of response we receive by June 12th and then look to fill gaps by seeking specific people and groups. Boyar agreed with this approach and added he hoped that certain individuals would "throw their name in" and if they don't, he feels they should be reached out to. Boyar noted he likes the idea of having presentations periodically to learn new things. An example he noted is that the Friends of the Upper Delaware are working on a project on the East Branch of the Delaware adding structural elements into the river with logs and rocks to create habitat to see if better holding water can be created that will be stable during flood and ice events. He feels it is a wonderful project and would love to learn more about it.

2012 Delaware River Sojourn: Ramie said that every year when staff receives the day plans for the Upper Delaware section of the Sojourn, they are shared with members. She noted the UDC does not actively participate on the steering committee anymore. The dates for the Upper Delaware section this year are June 24th and June 25th. The schedules for those days were provided in members' packets. Ramie said that if anyone is interested in participating, the press release provided includes registration information and prices. More information is available at www.delawareriversojourn.org.

NPS Report: Hamilton stated he was asked to follow up on a couple of items from the last meeting. One was to check into the status of NPS discussions with the Town of Delaware to establish a new river access in Callicoon. He noted he talked with Carla Hahn of NPS who has been attending meetings in the Town of Delaware and reported that this issue had been put on the back burner while discussing other pressing issues, but the town is prepared to take it up again soon.

The second issue was to report on the progress of a new flexible flows management plan based on the 4/17 RFAC meeting. Hamilton reported he was not able to attend that meeting himself due to a scheduling conflict, but he did receive an update from Bob Tudor, who is the Deputy Executive Director of the Delaware River Basin Commission. Tudor reported that a revised/extended FFMP is scheduled to be approved at the annual River Master meeting early next week. A joint press release will be executed at that time. Tudor added not to expect any sweeping changes from the current FFMP. Ramie noted she thought the FFMP acronym was not being used, but had been replaced with Delaware River Water Releases Plan. She said that is the phrase that the UDC has been using in our correspondence.

Hamilton reported that Park Service has started their Scenic Rivers Monitoring Program bi-weekly water sampling. Continuous water quality monitors (sondes) have been placed out in a number of tributaries. Several other studies will be getting underway this summer. A submerged aquatic vegetation study is planned to map the extent of some of the aquatic plant beds in the river. An aerial photography overflight with hyperspectral imagery would take place to obtain a spectral signature for different types of aquatic plants and then they would map them over the extent of the river. Hamilton feels the Delaware River is a good system to implement this on because it is shallow and has clear water. Henry asked if the flyover will include the whole corridor or just the river. Hamilton said just the river. He said they will do the East and West Branches and the main stem down through Delaware Water Gap.

Hamilton said the Park Service held their Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORV) workshop. The purpose was to try and better define what the values are we want to protect in the future here on the river. A draft report will be reviewed and commented on. Eventually the report will go out to groups like the Upper Delaware Council for input also. Henry asked Hamilton if the Park Service monitors during real high water when it is "chocolatey" like it is this particular day. Hamilton said staff was out sampling today off of bridges. Henry asked if in the past when they were monitoring in the high water if they detected higher levels of "funky stuff" in the water. Hamilton noted that the bacteria counts are usually higher, the nutrient counts are higher, other values fluctuate, and turbidity is higher. Henry asked if the water is tested for pollutants. Hamilton said not any volatile, organic compounds. Boyar asked if there is any single sample test that checks for everything including volatile, organic compounds. He noted he realizes that such a test would be complicated and expensive, but feels it would be a good idea to have a picture of what the river looks like over the years. Hamilton said they are primarily obtaining core water quality parameters. Boyar said that he feels when you have something as valuable as the Delaware River, you really need to know its true profile. Hamilton said that periodically the USGS does more extensive sampling. He believes the most recent sampling done by them was in 2006 and that report would be available. Henry feels the Park Service should test the water, from a point at the southern portion of the river, once a year during high water to try and determine what is in the water during those events. Soete asked Hamilton, when the water samples are taken, if they are correlated with the stream heights or if they simply make an observation of whether it was raining or not. Hamilton said they get cfs discharge from the USGS gauges on the main stem and on the tributaries they sample water on, they measure water height off a bridge and have done a number of stream flow measurements so they can estimate the discharge from that tributary. Discussion about the condition of the river after the May 15th rain took place. Ritter attributed it to the fact that the Beaverkill went over flood stage. It went to 12' and flood stage is 10'. Hamilton noted that a lot of streams got torn up during the 2006 flooding and they have not fully revegetated. There are a lot of bare slopes still, he added.

Millennium Pipeline Hancock Compressor Station: Ramie noted that representatives from the Millennium Pipeline will be coming to the Council office on Thursday, May 17th at 11:00 to offer a briefing on their proposed Hancock Compressor Station project. An open house meeting for the public will be held on May 29th from 4:00 – 7:00 p.m. at the Hancock Central School. She said all interested UDC representatives or alternates are welcome to attend Thursday's meeting. Soete reported that the proposed site is two miles north of Long Eddy, NY just about 4,000' outside of the river corridor.

Other: Ritter commented that he found an article Soete sent him very interesting. The article is about a Lafayette College student's honors thesis. Ritter asked Soete if he could elaborate on it. Soete said this student has developed a computer program to predict impacts of shale drilling on the Delaware River Basin. The student, Jacob Dein of Honesdale, PA, plans to launch the site May 19. Users can search for their properties, choose how many wells to place on the terrain, and run several analyses showing how the wells would impact the habitat, noise level, drinking water, aesthetics, and more. A copy of the article with the website address was provided to members.

Henry suggested to Ramie, in reference to task #5 of the Water Use/Resource Management Committee Work Plan, that Pennsylvania be included. Ramie questioned which Pennsylvania agency deals with eagles. Soete thought it would be the Pennsylvania Game Commission.

Soete asked if the Mile-a-minute Vine, an invasive species that the Park Service issued a press release about, is very prevalent. Hamilton said it had been found in the river corridor in one location. The press release has been issued for the public to help document places that it shows up for early detection when it can still be dealt with effectively. This plant grows very aggressively and can take over other plant life. Hamilton stated. The plant was found and dealt with last year in Lackawaxen near the Zane Grey House. He said they are keeping an eye on the area this year and he suspects it will show up in other places. Ramie said the press release could be forwarded via e-mail to members if they liked as it did include a couple of color pictures. Hamilton said the Mile-a-minute Vine has very distinctive blue berries.

Public Comment: Anne Willard of *The River Reporter* reported that the DEP announced a new agreement with the National Weather Service to provide up to \$1 million to develop state-of-the-art streamflow forecasts. She recalled the end of the summer last year when there was a conveyor belt of storms coming up the East Coast aiming at our area. The reservoirs were already at capacity and many wondered why water was not being released in anticipation of these storms. Willard said she spoke to NYC Environmental Protection Deputy Commissioner Paul Rush about releases last September. She asked him if there is a way to incorporate more common sense into the releases. This new modeling will take into account a range of probabilities and hopefully lead to releasing water in a more sensible way in the future. Willard said this will not be happening for a while, but she wanted to let members know so they are aware and can follow up on it. Hamilton commented that the reservoirs' release capacity is pretty limited. They are not able to "dump" a lot of water.

Adjournment: A motion by Jeffer, seconded by Ritter to adjourn the meeting at 8:40 p.m. was carried.

Minutes prepared by Cindy Odell, 5/22/12