

Upper Delaware Council
WATER USE/RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
Jan. 20, 2009

Committee Members Present: Wieland, Bowers, Chase, McKay, Shafer, Fluhr, Keesler
Committee Members Absent: Serio, Sundholm, Flaherty
Partner: D. Hamilton
Advisory Members: None
Staff: Douglass, Soete, Coney, Ramie
Guests: None

The committee Chairperson Charles Wieland called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. There was no public comment on the agenda. A motion by Fluhr seconded by Shafer to approve the Dec. 16, 2008 meeting minutes was carried.

Election of 2009 Committee Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson: A motion by Bowers seconded by Fluhr nominating Wieland as Chairperson was carried. Vote held; Wieland elected 2009 Committee Chairperson.

A motion by Wieland seconded by Chase nominating Alan Bowers as Vice-Chairperson was carried. Vote held; Bowers elected 2009 Committee Vice-Chairperson.

New York Regional Interconnect Proposed Power Line, activities update:

♦CARI: Communities Against Regional Interconnect have issued numerous news releases regarding its testimony and issues of concern relative to the power line proposal. They've submitted information to the NYS PSC as well. Douglass noted that at the current time three areas are being discussed for the power line route – Upper Delaware River Watershed (in addition to counties north and south); the existing Marcy-South transmission line property; and the NYS Thruway south side for a buried line from Albany south once the line comes through from the Utica area. Another transmission company, Conjunction LLC, had also looked at the Thruway route a few years ago but that project was never realized. If the power line is approved using the Thruway route, the State of New York would most likely benefit monetarily. CARI held a teleconference today and a face-to-face meeting with its members is scheduled for Jan. 23 in Binghamton.

♦NYS PSC staffers' comments: The committee received copy of a *Times Herald-Record* article of Jan. 15 reporting that "the state should deny the application of the huge power line proposed for our region, say staff members of the agency that will decide if that project, New York Regional Interconnect, gets built. In strong language, those high-level staffers just told the Public Service Commission that the line that would cut through Sullivan and Orange counties is 'not needed at this time'." The comments were included in a 61-page transcript signed by the utility supervisor of the PSC. The news article goes on to say, "The opinion – one of hundreds from government organizations, politicians, municipalities, private companies and residents – comes just weeks after another PSC staff opinion saying that 'if' the state approved NYRI, it should be built along the existing Marcy-South line, not NYRI's original route." However, staffers now say it should run underground along the NYS Thruway. A PSC spokesman stressed that the testimony was the position of staffers, and not the PSC itself, but their opinion carries weight. Other groups against the power line proposal are the NYS Independent System Operator, Con Ed, and the NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation, among others.

Old Business

Upper Delaware Scenic Byway, update: Ramie reported the Byway group met Dec. 22. They've received five book orders and two new memberships via the new website program. The group is looking at using an independent contractor to sell memberships on a percentage basis. The group is reviewing the two proposals left for the viewshed project and hopes to select a contractor at the January meeting.

The visitor center project is alive and well. Sullivan County, who will act as the lead agency, has deferred visitor center funding to its 2010 budget as a result of the NYS DOT's hold on all non-infrastructure projects until November 2009. Sullivan County will be providing a 20% match of the project

grant. The Byway group is working on eight grant projects currently that are in various stages. The next meeting of the Byway group will be Jan. 26 at the UDC office.

New Business

DRBC press release: The committee was provided with copy of a Delaware River Basin Commission press release “DRBC Announces Delay in Delivery of Flood Analysis Model”, as well as a fact sheet on the Delaware River Basin Flood Analysis Model Project. The press release stated in part, “DRBC...today announced that the flood analysis model being developed by an interagency team led by the U.S. Geological Survey will not be delivered to the DRBC this month as originally planned.” The model is expected to be available around April 30. The delay is necessary to ensure that a product of the highest quality is developed. The additional time is needed to calibrate the rainfall-runoff component of the model with more-detailed radar precipitation data, which are expected to provide more accurate results.

Times Herald-Record article “Wawarsing water-tunnel study goes on, Some findings released”: The committee was provided with copy of a *Times Herald-Record* article regarding the Delaware Aqueduct Tunnel leaks. The USGS has been studying ways the water tunnel might be affecting this Ulster County community. The NYC DEP hopes to better understand its role in Wawarsing’s water troubles. The article goes on to state, “Results are preliminary and the project is ongoing, but in some cases, readings did indicate ‘a potential tunnel imprint’...The two-year study is still in its infancy, and the DEP has not divulged when it will ‘de-water’ the tunnel again, but the USGS plans to continue a variety of high-tech testing.”

Times Herald-Record article “Green organizations team up in Sullivan”: The committee was provided with copy of a *Times Herald-Record* article of Jan. 13 announcing the coming together of various environmental organizations in Sullivan County to pool their expertise, establish goals for environmental protection and sustainable economic development, and doing educational outreach to the public. The groups held their first meeting in Monticello recently, and those attending included Special Protection of the Environment for the County of Sullivan (SPECS), Sullivan Alliance for Sustainable Development, Catskill Mountainkeeper, Delaware Highlands Conservancy and the Basha Kill Area Association. Representatives from the Gerry Foundation and Sullivan County Planning Department also attended.

Catskill Shopper display ad, Independent Oil & Gas Assn. of NY public meeting: The committee was provided with copy of an ad from the Jan. 16 *Catskill Shopper* announcing a public information meeting of the Independent Oil and Gas Association of New York regarding the potential natural gas exploration of the Marcellus Shale. The meeting will be held on Feb. 3 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at Monticello Central High School Auditorium in Monticello, NY. Industry professionals will be on hand to provide details on the history of natural gas production in New York State, land leasing, and the drilling process. A question and answer session will follow the presentation. Douglass noted the information was being provided to the committee in case anyone decided to attend the meeting.

Wieland inquired as to the status of the UDC position paper on the gas issues, and Douglass responded staff was still working on the document.

Narrowsburg EagleFest Jan. 17, UDC participated: Ramie provided the committee with a brief report on the Narrowsburg EagleFest that took place on Jan. 17. The UDC had an informational booth in the Town Hall along with about nine other organizations. It was a successful event despite the frigid weather.

NPS Report: Hamilton noted that NPS also participated in the Narrowsburg EagleFest and felt it was a worthwhile and successful event. This was the 8th year for this popular event. Hamilton announced that NPS-Upper Delaware had submitted a grant proposal with USGS to do a genetic study of didymo. This proposal was approved by the Rating Committee and it will now advance up the list of grant applications.

Towne Crier article, “Phil Chase – Hero of Conservation”: The committee was provided with copy of a *Towne Crier* article of Jan. 14 by Streamside columnist Judy Van Put congratulating Phil Chase (the Town of Deerpark UDC Representative) for being honored by “Field & Stream” magazine as a 2009 Hero of Conservation. In the February 2009 edition of the magazine, Phil’s story is featured prominently at the top

of the article. Honorees are recognized for making a significant contribution to the preservation of wild fish and their habitat through the protection of their waters, catch and release and/or educational programs for youngsters. The committee heartily congratulated Phil on his well-deserved recognition.

***Times Herald-Record* article, “Army Corps to begin Sullivan flood study this year”:** Douglass read aloud a short article in the Jan. 9 *Times Herald-Record* that stated: “County officials said they’re finalizing a contract with the Army Corps of Engineers to begin a study of the East Branch of Callicoon Creek, which has flooded many communities in northern and western Sullivan County over the past six years. Planning Commissioner Bill Pammer said the study is scheduled to begin later this year and finish in 2010. It will develop a list of projects to curb flooding in such places as Youngsville and Jeffersonville.”

Public Comment None

Adjourn A motion by Bowers seconded by McKay to adjourn the meeting at 7:36 p.m. was carried.

Carol Coney, Office Manager