

Upper Delaware Council
WATER USE/RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMM. MEETING MINUTES
Aug. 17, 2010

Committee Members Present: Serio, Chase, Boyar, Rando, Ritter
Committee Members Absent: McKay, Shafer, Keesler
NPS Partner: D. Hamilton
Advisory Members: None
Staff: Douglass, Soete, Coney
Guests: None

The UDC's Water Use/Resource Management Committee held its monthly meeting on Tuesday, Aug. 17, 2010 at the Council office in Narrowsburg, NY. Committee chairperson Jim Serio called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m. A motion by Boyar seconded by Rando to approve the July 20 meeting minutes was carried. There was no public comment on the agenda.

Old Business

Upper Delaware Scenic Byway, Inc. Update: Douglass reported the monthly Byway meeting would be held Aug. 18. At that time, the group will discuss resolutions approving the relocation of the visitors center project from the Cochetton Train Station property to the county-owned Fort Delaware property in Narrowsburg, NY, as well as approval of Studio d'ARC architects for the visitors center concept design and feasibility study.

Pond Eddy Bridge Update: The committee was provided with copy of the Aug. 3 letter from the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation to the Pennsylvania Division of the Federal Highway Administration regarding the Pond Eddy Bridge project and requesting clarification of some issues. These issues included design standards or alternative treatments that would allow PennDOT to accept a lower load capacity for this crossing so that the historic bridge might be preserved and rehabilitated; vehicle weight limitations on the bridge; and reduction in rehab costs by rehabilitating the bridge to the alternative standard in the Smart Growth Policy and use of any other new technologies to reduce the dead load of the existing structure.

D & H Transportation Heritage Council Update: Douglass noted that Ramie has been attending the D & H quarterly meetings. She reported at the meetings that the UDC recognized at its awards ceremony in April the work of two individuals in advancing the preservation of D & H Canal remnants.

Flow & Release Presentation and Discussion for Delaware River, Part 3: Serio provided the committee with further information relative to the flow and release regime being used for the Upper Delaware River and possible improvements that could be recommended in time for the upcoming review of the FFMP.

He thought it would be useful to review how PPL operates Lake Wallenpaupack and the duties of the River Master and possibly touch on the NY-PA white paper again. Then the committee could decide in which direction to go regarding any prepared comments to DRBC. He referenced the PPL Lake Wallenpaupack Water Elevation Information and Expected Generation Schedule handed out. Under the FERC license, PPL has very specific Lake elevation targets they must meet. They cannot release too much water so the Lake is too dry for the summer recreation season. PPL has it set up so they can pretty much guarantee certain levels. By June 1, the lake level is to be 1,187 feet, which is basically a full reservoir. The parallel is that NYC also wants full reservoirs by June 1. Both operate their facilities with this date in mind.

However their use of the water is different. PPL produces power typically during the summer peak power needs, Monday through Friday. They tend not to produce power or as much power on weekends. The expected generation schedule for August 2010 is showing very little water being released for power generation. The reason is that their lake elevation is 1180.9 (59.2% full) as of August 14, and the September elevation target is 1181, so they are already below the target level. Therefore, they don't have

water to release right now to produce power. They also have a temperature target for the Lackawaxen River based on the FERC license requirements.

NYC releases to meet the 1750 cfs flow target at Montague, for conservation releases, and for diversions to the City. They want to keep as much water in the reservoirs as they can at all times. PPL wants to release water to make as much money as they can with power generation, through the summer particularly, but still have a full reservoir by June 1

Serio mentioned that as you go through the season, it's interesting to watch both NYC's and PPL's reservoir percentages. Lake Wallenpaupack might be down to 45-50% whereas the Delaware reservoirs are still in the 68-75% range, but PPL manages to have a full reservoir by June 1. He said that indicates there is a surplus of 10-20% in the Delaware reservoirs that might be used for conservation and still make sure there's a full reservoir by June 1 of the following year. Hamilton noted that it seems NYC is managing its reservoirs ultra-conservatively in order to maximize the chances of a full reservoir by June 1.

Boyar added that each reservoir refreshes itself at different rates because of the different sizes in watershed, location, and the different geographic features. Serio agreed, and offered that if you look at the Cannonsville drainage area compared to Pepacton and the Neversink, Cannonsville clearly refills more quickly. That's why most of the time NYC uses Cannonsville for river releases. NYC will try and balance its reservoirs so they all refill at the same target time. Ritter wondered how far down NYC would let Cannonsville go before it released from the other reservoirs. Serio responded basically 30%. The last time that happened was in 2001 when they let Cannonsville go down to 3-4% and Pepacton was still at about 30-35%. At that time NYC said when Cannonsville gets to 10% they should shut that reservoir off and take another look at the system operation. Serio wasn't sure if that percentage was included in NYC's reservoir operation plans.

When FERC re-licensed PPL, there was a change in PPL operation. The change does not effect Cannonsville Summer Releases in wet years. However, this year there was an effect on July releases from Cannonsville. PPL changed lake level targets in July and August. It used to be the August lake level was 1183, which meant that during the month of August they could drop the releases by 2 feet. By shifting August to 1182, they've now allowed 2.5-3 feet of water to be released in July. So when you release more water in July from Lake Wallenpaupack, there will be less directed release required from Cannonsville to meet the Montague Target. In August, the reverse should be the case. Now you're only releasing one foot instead of two, so you'd be releasing less water in August, which should require more water to be released from Cannonsville to meet the Montague target. Serio said in his opinion, the change did make a difference this year, because in July PPL was releasing lots of water and they never got down to their target level. We had the hottest July on record, and because PPL was releasing so much water, there were less directed releases called for from Cannonsville. In August, when it turns out to be not so hot, we have lots of water being released because PPL is not producing because the lake elevation had already been met. During FERC relicensing there was concern that this change in PPL operation could adversely impact the upper reaches of the Delaware. An "amelioration bank" of 3000-cfs-days was established. This bank was established to prevent any negative influences to the Delaware caused by the change in PPL operation.. That bank went away when the new FFMP (Flexible Flow Management Plan) was put into place. The bank was seldom used anyway. Chase commented we could have used the bank this summer. Serio said the original thought was that August is usually hotter than July so the shift should benefit August by allowing more releases from Cannonsville to meet the Montague flow target. Of course, Mother Nature has a way of messing up plans.

Serio said two points to take from his remarks are the change in operation and how it affects the river, and it's useful to look at the percentage of fill and compare that to other reservoirs. It's a good point about drainage area, he said, but he didn't have the size of the drainage area for Lake Wallenpaupack. Serio mentioned that the PA Fish and Boat Commission is becoming much more involved with the Upper Delaware River and are more involved with its flow and temperature than ever before.

Serio moved on to the River Master. The River Master was hired by the DRBC to maintain the rules in the Supreme Court Decree. The most important one from the River Master's perspective under general duties (handout provided), "conserve the waters in the Delaware River, its tributaries, and in the New York City reservoirs in the Delaware River Basin." The River Master is not there to make the river ecology better. One of his duties is to meet the Montague flow target. There are four components to the Montague target, target calculations are done two days in advance of need since this is the travel time from Cannonsville and Pepacton Reservoirs, and the four components are: natural flow in the rivers, conservation releases, expected rainfall, and power generation releases. These components are added

together and if the total is less than the 1750 cfs Montague Target, New York City is “directed” to release the balance from their reservoirs

Chase said that a letter to Carol Collier at DRBC will be written to get an explanation of the loss of the 100 cfs excess release credit. Serio said most of the time when the 1850 target is invoked it’s in dry summers. According to the habitat model, that extra 100 cfs in target from 1750 to 1850 cfs doesn’t help river habitat. . It does make more of a difference when the release is 300 cfs and it would have been 400 cfs. Chase said we asked Bill Harkness, the River Master, about the 1850. He said in the early 1970s, NYC was not using anywhere near the amount of water they use today so the excess credits were 1000 cfs. Instead of 1750, we were getting 2750 and that’s when the Rainbow trout went crazy in the Delaware during that decade. Then it seemed NYC wasted water intentionally and that 1000 cfs went down to 100 cfs by 1980. That 100 cfs excess credits has been going along up to the last two years.

Serio said he thought the committee would agree that a 300 to 400 bump-up should be more beneficial than 1100 to 1200 in the River. Boyar said one is 10% increase and the other a 25% increase. Serio continued that a bump from 260 to 325 would probably be more beneficial than 1100 to 1200. That’s where the water went. The downbasin states said you can use the ERQ bank of water to increase habitat under FFMP. That water was used to increase the normal summer continuous release from 260 to 325 cfs. 3000 cfs-days of the ERQ were reserved for an extraordinary needs bank in case something happens we didn’t anticipate. Therefore, most of that bank of water was used to increase the minimum releases from Cannonsville under FFMP from 260 to 325. They only used the extraordinary needs bank once. Serio said that is why I personally argued you don’t need the extraordinary needs bank, because you’re not going to use it, so instead of bumping from 260 to 325, bump it from 260 to 360 or whatever that 360 range was. So we didn’t lose the 100 cfs. Chase said we never should have lost that 100. Serio explained we didn’t lose the 100. Instead of releasing it at this time of year when it’s not beneficial to the River, it’s released starting June 1 to increase the release from 260 to 325. Chase said that’s what it’s been; it’s always released over a three-month period. Serio commented but if it’s a wet year, the bank of water isn’t used much at all. Last year was a wet year and the ERQ bank was not needed to help maintain the 1850 target. Whereas, under the current plan, FFMP would have used that water to increase the minimum release up to 325, and did.

Ritter said he didn’t understand why we go from one extreme in July and now another extreme and it seems it’s predicated on the fact that the releases from the Lackawaxen are so low and they have to meet that number at Montague, that that is why we go from 325 cfs in July, average, to now 1100 to 1200 cfs as opposed to releasing more water in July, like 600-800. Boyar said that wouldn’t have solved the problem if PPL turned the spigot off you’d still have to do the 1100. Ritter was wondering why there wasn’t more water released to the main stem in July. Serio explained the releases are due to the Montague target, not because of more or less water for conservation. Chase said we should point out that the PPL Relicensing is adversely affecting the trout habitat in the Upper Delaware River. Serio explained the relicensing may have had an effect but it was not a significant one. We can include our concerns and suggestions in our comment letter. Serio noted that the NY-PA white paper has a minimum release of 500 cfs out of Cannonsville. If you have higher minimums, the River Master has to calculate that in when he calls for releases. Serio said he hoped to have a draft comment letter for the committee to review in October.

New Business

EPA’s Hydraulic Fracturing Research Study-Opportunity for Stakeholder Input: Serio noted that the EPA is to reschedule its Aug. 12 public meeting. Soete noted that he received an email from UDC member Sue Sullivan inquiring if and requesting that the Council would be sending a comment letter to the EPA. The committee reviewed this issue and felt the EPA should be aware of the River Management Plan and the Upper Delaware Wild and Scenic River designation as the EPA gathers comments for its hydraulic fracturing research study scope of work. Boyar made a motion to have the committee draft a comment letter for UDC consideration and distribute it to the committee members for edits prior to presenting to UDC, then send final draft to UDC members prior to the UDC meeting. The motion was seconded by Rando and carried unanimously.

NPS-UDC 20-year review of the River Management Plan: The committee felt since the 20-year mark has passed for reviewing the River Management Plan, the document should be reviewed for any minor

adjustments. A motion by Boyar seconded by Ritter that the WU/RM Committee supports NPS obtaining funding for the 20-year review of the RMP and asks NPS to continue to seek funding for this mandated review was carried unanimously.

Request from Aquatic Conservation Unlimited: The committee reviewed a request from Aquatic Conservation Unlimited to give an alternate presentation on the issues concerning management of the NYC reservoirs and the Delaware River. Following discussion, a motion by Chase seconded by Rando to allow Aquatic a 20-minute presentation with a 10-minute question and answer session following the presentation was carried. Coney will notify Elaine Reichart of Aquatic of the committee's decision.

Cortese Landfill EPA public meeting: The committee was informed by staff that notice has been received that the US EPA will be holding a public meeting on options for the Cortese Landfill super-fund site continued monitoring on Aug. 23 at the Tusten Town Hall in Narrowsburg, NY.

Public Comment None

Adjournment A motion by Rando seconded by Ritter to adjourn the meeting at 9:57 p.m. was carried.

Carol Coney, Office Manager