

CORRECTED
Upper Delaware Council
WATER USE/RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMM. MEETING MINUTES
November 19, 2013

Committee Members Present: Tony Ritter, John McKay, Debra Conway (Highland Alternate)
Committee Members Absent: Andy Boyar, Al Henry, Pat Jeffer
NPS Partner: Don Hamilton
Staff: Laurie Ramie, Travis O'Dell, Cindy Odell
Guests: Jeff Skelding, Sherri Resti, Rebekah Creshkoff

The UDC's Water Use/Resource Management Committee held its monthly meeting on Tuesday, November 19, 2013 at the Council office in Narrowsburg, NY. Chairperson Tony Ritter called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. A motion by McKay seconded by Ritter to approve the August 20 meeting minutes was carried. There was no public comment on the agenda.

Old Business:

“Water, Water Everywhere” October 15 & 16 FUDR Conference Report: T. O'Dell referenced his written report in members' packets which summarized each presenter's presentation. He said that on Day 1, Bill Willis from Delaware County Economic Development and Tom Shepstone from Shepstone Management Company spoke about the ongoing economic impact study to the local economies from the NYC Reservoirs. Local fishing guides and club managers spoke about how fluctuations in flows and water temperatures have direct economic impacts to the businesses. Trout Unlimited's Tracy Brown and Mark Gutshal, owner of Landstudies, Inc., spoke about recent and ongoing stream restoration on the tributaries to the Delaware River. NYC DEP employees Thomas Murphy, Jr. and Anthony Fiore spoke about the updates to the Croton water supply system and the proposed hydroelectric operation. Garth Pettinger spoke of the proposed Equitable Apportionment Plan. Dr. Peter Kolesar presented on thermal stress on the Upper Delaware and the need for and feasibility of a stress relief protocol in the 2014 FFMP. Mark Hartle of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission presented a study that was conducted this summer on the temperature of the Upper Delaware between Hancock, NY and Lordville, NY. His study concluded that the temperature at Lordville is an accurate representation of the temperatures on the nine-mile stretch of river between Hancock and Lordville. Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commissioner Bob Bachman's presentation was a summary of a three-year study he conducted on a wild and stocked trout population in Pennsylvania. Beginning day two, Katy Dunlap, Esq., Trout Unlimited Eastern Water Project Director, spoke about Hydraulic Fracturing in the Upper Delaware River Watershed. Paul Rush, NYC DEP Deputy Commissioner of Water Supply, spoke to New York City's position regarding hydrofracking, the Filtration Avoidance Determination, and the comprehensive source water protection programs offered by the DEP along with their partners at the Watershed Agricultural Council. Town of Hancock Supervisor Sam Rowe and Village of Deposit Mayor John O'Connor spoke about the terrific resource that the Delaware River is and the economic opportunity it provides to the communities, while also addressing past issues regarding flooding and toward future endeavors of embracing the recreational opportunities that the river provides. Kathy Moser, the NYS DEC Assistant Commissioner, presented on the Catskill region and how an increased investment in the Catskills could result in significant benefits to the Upper Delaware River watershed. Kim Beidler, Coalition for the Delaware River Watershed Coordinator, and Rachel Dawson, Legislative Representative for the National Wildlife Federal, gave a Capitol Hill update which included an announcement of the end to the federal government shutdown. O'Dell said that he and NPS Superintendent Sean McGuinness spoke about the history and partnership between the two organizations and the events leading up to the designation of the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River, and also highlighted the importance of local land use in the protection of the river. Attorneys Jeff Zimmerman and Katy Dunlap spoke about forming an Upper Delaware Legal Defense Group to support the conservation movement on the Delaware. O'Dell said completing the two-day conference, FUDR Executive Director Jeff Skelding summarized the take-home items of creating a coalition to unite our similar efforts into one conservation goal for the watershed in order to gain more national recognition and associated funds that come with greater recognition.

D&H THC 10/23 Quarterly Meeting Update: Ramie said this meeting took place at the D&H Historical Society and Museum in High Falls, New York following a morning walking tour of local canal remnants guided by Bill Merchant and a lunch gathering at The Egg's Nest. She reported the organization currently has ten full voting members and five affiliated or individual members and is still soliciting for more members in each category. Dues for membership in the D&H THC are \$40 for full voting members and \$20 for affiliated or individual members. The election of officers for terms beginning January 1, 2014 took place. The slate of officers approved was Chairperson Cliff Robinson, Jr.; Vice-Chairperson Bill Merchant; Secretary Laurie Ramie; and Treasurer Jane Varcoe. Discussion about setting up a Facebook page for the D&H THC took place. Ramie said the Council learned that the Park Service is producing some historic videos which were filmed at the Roebling Bridge and Zane Grey Museum. The videos will be used for cultural interpretive purposes. They will eventually be posted to the nps.gov/upde website. The Council has decided to update their rack card. It was suggested the card feature a map of the D&H Canal and Gravity Railroad route, a historic photo, the group's logo, and a Quick Response code. Ramie said that the group's Chairperson Cliff Robinson, Jr. has a newly published book, "Coalboat", which is a fictional mystery based on historical facts of the D&H Canal. The book is available for \$16.95 through Amazon. Announcements of member accomplishments, concerns, and upcoming events were shared by those present. The next quarterly meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 22, 2014, likely in Westfall Township, PA.

Upper Delaware Scenic Byway 10/28 Meeting Update: Ramie referenced a copy of the letter sent to Joan McDonald, Commissioner of the NYS DOT, provided in members' packets expressing the Byway's dissatisfaction with the decision by NYS DOT to designate the entire length of NYS Route 97, among other state highways within Sullivan County, as a truck access route allowing special dimension vehicles. The letter also points out their concern that the UDSB, Inc. was never notified about the proposal despite the organization's role in locally managing the resource in partnership with NYS DOT. Conway asked Ramie if she was aware of any objections from anyone else. Ramie said the Upper Delaware Council sent a letter, but she was not aware of any others. Hamilton asked if any other Scenic Byways in New York have been given this designation. Ramie was unsure. The motivation for this designation was discussed.

Ramie said a discussion of vegetation overgrowth along Route 97 took place with James W. Buck of NYS DOT. Buck is the point person for maintenance and environmental coordination in Delaware and Sullivan Counties. Buck explained to Byway members that the DOT faces the conflicting desires of people on the river not wanting to see the roadway while people on the roadway want to see the river. Byway members shared specific areas of overgrowth concern along Route 97 with Buck. He told members that over-the-rail mowing is scheduled for winter work, and that this has already been performed from the Delaware County line to Callicoon. Discussion about addressing the need for a bike lane along Route 97 took place. It was decided that the Byway will send a letter to address this need. Buck spoke about the rock scaling work in Lumberland and noted Cocheton will be the next area to be addressed once funding is available.

UDSB Chairperson Nadia Rajsiz had reported that there is no change in the status of the UDSB Visitor Center. They will find out in December if a grant application through the NYS Consolidated Funding Application process is successful.

Ramie reviewed the results of a UDSB visitation survey set up on the UDSB Website by Dorene Warner. It was noted that the Byway successfully applied for a Technical Assistance Grant through the UDC that will provide more comprehensive visitation numbers.

Ramie summarized the contents of the press release announcing the addition of Peter Osborne's book among other items to the UDSB website's expanded bookstore.

The next Byway meeting is scheduled for November 25. There will be no meeting in December.

Hamilton wondered if there is an opportunity to work with other designated Byways to convince NYS DOT that these routes are not the best for the "blanket" permits for special dimension vehicles and ask them to reconsider that.

NYS Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM) 10/30 Call Report: T. O'Dell provided highlights from the October 30 conference call. A presentation by Doug Tallamy of the University of Delaware on "The Case Against Novel Ecosystems" took place. The full video of the presentation can be viewed at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8DEflqIrYpY>.

Zane Grey Catch-and-Release Fishing Derby 11/6 Meeting Update: Ramie noted the handout in members' packets regarding this event is the most up-to-date outline as some of the details have changed. There will be another meeting of the planning committee behind this derby on December 11 in Milford, PA.

Eastern Shale 11/18 Webinar Update: T. O'Dell said this webinar contained a presentation by Bill Kappel of the USGS Water Science Center in Ithaca, NY. He discussed some baseline studies for the Northeast regarding Dissolved Methane, Conductivity, and Radioactive Material (or a/k/a NORM for Naturally Occurring Radioactive Material) in surface and ground water relating to hydrofracking. Specific to the Delaware River Basin, the studies showed extremely low conductivity levels and very little dissolved methane levels. However, the underlying Marcellus Shale is off the charts with radium 226 and 228 levels. O'Dell shared some statistics. Kappel stressed the importance of more baseline studies. Updates on the PA Chapter 78 Oil and Gas Regulations and NY Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) regulation comment periods were briefly discussed. O'Dell said he can circulate the links to Kappel's references to anyone interested.

Sullivan County LWRP River Access 11/19 Meeting Update: Ritter noted this "kick-off" meeting was still going on at the Tusten Town Hall as this committee met. Ramie said an update will have to be given at a later date.

Skinnners Falls/Milanville Bridge Report: Ramie noted that the UDC is a consulting party on the rehab that is being planned for this bridge. The exact scope of work is yet to be determined. Penn DOT is in its first phase of the cultural inventory that has to be conducted. The 1904 bridge itself is on the National Register of Historic Places, along with the Milanville Historic District. An archeology study is also being done, Ramie reported. Comments on the recently released Area of Potential Effects report are due by December 5. Ramie said she was in touch with Kristina Thompson, the cultural resources professional for this project. She told her the next step is they will schedule a consulting party meeting to discuss the project scope. That meeting will most likely take place in December or January.

Other: None

New Business:

Discussion of the Equitable Apportionment Plan: Ramie said a draft letter supporting an evaluation of the Equitable Apportionment Plan for the Delaware Water System addressed to Michele Siekerka, chairperson of the Delaware River Basin Commission, was sent out earlier in the day via e-mail and was also provided in members' packets. Ramie noted the letter also reiterates support of the "Lordville Thermal Stress Protocol". After a brief discussion, a motion to forward this letter to the full Council for approval at its December meeting was made by Conway, seconded by McKay and carried.

Delaware River Flow and Storage Data Report: Ritter reported that Cannonsville is at 65% and Pepacton is at 73.1%. Total storage is about 7% higher than normal for this time of year despite the fact that precipitation has been below normal for the last three months.

Other: Deb Conway expressed her concern about the lack of attention to cultural resources in the river valley since NPS Historian Mary Curtis left the area. She named many specific sites of historic importance that she is afraid will eventually fall through the cracks. Conway said that the River Management Plan says these responsibilities fall on the Upper Delaware Council and the National Park Service. A lengthy discussion took place with many ideas offered. Ritter stated that if we don't have another generation of people to volunteer, then we won't have historical societies like those that currently exist in the river valley. Conway noted that the National Trust for Historic Preservation has conducted many studies and "heritage tourism" is big business in New York right now. Lack of funding was noted many times as a reason for the decrease in attention to this issue. Conway said it is important to keep "the story that tells who we are" alive. Ritter commented that he hopes the oral history tapes that are currently being digitized by NPS will be made available to the public. Conway asked that the Water Use/Resource Management Committee start to "shine a little light" on raising some awareness on this issue. Ramie agreed Conway's concerns are legitimate and noted that she is pointing out a gap that exists in the reassignment of many responsibilities

outlined in the River Management Plan. Ritter spoke of Park Service programs that existed in the past. Hamilton said he knows that there has been a team here from the Park Service Regional office to look at the resources and a report has been written and recommendations have been made regarding this issue. He suggested reaching out to Ingrid Peterec to discuss interpretive issues. Hamilton added that the River Management Plan lists many things that are supposed to be dealt with and there is minimal staff to accomplish them. Ramie said the meeting that has taken place with the NPS Regional office to discuss cultural resource issues is a hopeful sign. Conway said it was her objective to simply get this conversation about the lack of attention to cultural resources started. The committee agreed that it was an important topic to address.

McKay noted that much work is being done on the railroad trestle over the Lackawaxen River and wondered if anyone had any information regarding it. No one knew, but said the matter would be looked into.

Public Comment: Jeff Skelding of the Friends of the Upper Delaware River requested some time on the January full Council meeting agenda to provide an update on the Equitable Apportionment Plan among other issues. Ramie said that may be possible.

Adjournment: A motion by Conway seconded by McKay to adjourn the meeting at 8:17 p.m. was carried.

Minutes prepared by Cindy Odell, 11/22/13