

Upper Delaware Council  
**WATER USE/RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMM. MEETING MINUTES**  
July 21, 2015

Committee Members Present: Tony Ritter, John McKay, Al Henry, Pat Jeffer  
Committee Members Absent: Andy Boyar  
NPS Partner: Don Hamilton  
Staff: Laurie Ramie, Cindy Odell, Travis O'Dell  
Guests: Rebekah Creshkoff

The UDC's Water Use/Resource Management Committee held its monthly meeting on Tuesday, July 21, 2015 at the Council office in Narrowsburg, NY. Chairperson Ritter called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

A motion by Jeffer seconded by Henry to approve the June 16 meeting minutes was carried. There was no public comment on the agenda.

**Presentation on Cannonsville Reservoir Issue:** Ritter noted that NYC DEP Bureau of Water Supply Deputy Commissioner Paul Rush hosted a public outreach meeting at the UDC office Monday evening, July 20, at 6 p.m. which included a Power Point presentation and question and answer session regarding the issue at the Cannonsville Reservoir. The issue is turbid water, which is entering the lower West Branch of the Delaware River, believed to be coming from an artesian aquifer that was pierced by contractors who had initiated soil boring just below the dam in connection with the construction of a new hydroelectric generating facility. The proposed 14 Megawatt Cannonsville Hydroelectric Plant was to capture the minimum outflow from the dam and generate power. O'Dell shared the same Power Point presentation with committee members that Rush presented to the public. O'Dell showed a map of and explained the New York City Water Supply system. He noted the Cannonsville Dam is an earthen embankment that is 175' in height, by 2,800' in length, and 1,100' in width. At maximum capacity, the reservoir holds 95.6 billion gallons of water. They are currently releasing 1,500 cfs which is the maximum release and diverting 475 million gallons per day to the Rondout Reservoir. O'Dell provided an overview of how the Cannonsville dam was constructed and a review of the dam analyses. The current dam regulator is the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) and they conducted dam safety inspections in September 2014 and June 2015. O'Dell explained that the old river bed still runs under the existing dam. This artesian condition actually has an outflow about 200 yards downstream. O'Dell said that he and Hamilton visited the site on Thursday, July 16, where he observed this outflow. He reported that the contractors were down approximately 61' when the hole bored through the confining layer into the artesian aquifer. The casing was pulled and they attempted to fill the hole with a Bentonite grout mixture. This was unsuccessful and the hole partially collapsed carrying bore hole material and Bentonite through the rock embankment to the West Branch of the Delaware. Actions are being taken to remedy the situation. In addition to reducing storage at Cannonsville, DEP is taking several risk-reduction steps that include 24-hour monitoring, regular analysis of dam-safety instrumentation, and testing of the turbid water to identify and understand the origin of the sediment. DEP has procured Moretrench as the repair contractor. O'Dell explained the corrective actions that may be taken. Moretrench is able to perform all contemplated work and was scheduled to mobilize July 21 with a preliminary timeline for completion of September 2015. Impacts will include higher flows in the West Branch, lower elevation in the reservoir and increased turbidity of release as the reservoir elevation decreases. DEP plans to continue releasing water from the Cannonsville until it is completely drained or the problem is fixed. O'Dell showed a slide representing the reservoir's temperature profile. It is estimated that there is 50.8 billion gallons of cold water and 41 billion gallons of warm water. The cold water pool at present rate of release will be depleted by approximately August 18<sup>th</sup>. O'Dell said there emergency action plans in place. The emergency action plans are with the offices of Emergency Management, local municipalities, law enforcement, and other state and federal agencies. McKay commented that the river water is cold right now. Ramie noted that the temperature of the discharge from the reservoir is currently in the high 40's. While there is not an imminent threat to the safety of the Cannonsville Dam, DEP is encouraging local officials, emergency responders and downstream residents to familiarize themselves with the inundation maps that are found in the dam's emergency action plan. O'Dell showed one of these maps and shared some of the times it would take for the water to reach various towns if the reservoir was at full capacity. Ritter commented that it would be five and a half to six hours for the

water to inundate Narrowsburg. O'Dell noted that the maps he is showing represent the scenario if the reservoir was at full capacity and there was full dam failure. Henry noted there are other scenarios when there is just a breach. Ramie noted it is estimated that the dam will be empty by September 26 at the current rate of release. McKay questioned what the effects of draining the dam will have on aquatic life. Ramie said it was stated that the reservoir got down to 3% in the fall of 2001 so they have some knowledge of what may happen. Ritter commended O'Dell for a good presentation. Ramie asked members if they thought it would be useful for O'Dell to give this presentation again at the August full Council meeting. Members agreed and said that any updates could be given at that time. FERC's level of involvement with this issue was discussed. Henry shared his concern that the information regarding the reservoir issue has not been well distributed. Ritter noted it was in today's edition of the *Times Herald Record* and shared other resources where he has seen it reported. Ramie added that NYC DEP has been issuing news releases. The question was asked when this issue started. Ramie reported that the drilling mishap occurred on July 8<sup>th</sup>. Henry questioned the delay in releasing the information. Ritter noted the maximum releases began on July 15<sup>th</sup>. Henry said a lot of people use the river and many of them may not read any of the local papers. Ritter commented on the low water temperatures and shared his fishing experience. A brief discussion took place regarding the reservoir water temperatures. Ritter noted that water below 62 degrees Fahrenheit is considered to be cold water. He added that when the reservoir was drawn down to 3 percent in the fall of 2001 due to lack of precipitation, it refilled by 2002.

### **Old Business:**

**Upper Delaware Scenic Byway 6/22 Meeting Update:** Ramie noted that the new Corresponding and Recording Secretary Victoria Winchester was introduced to the committee.

Ramie reported that discussion took place about the proposed video project to promote the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway. She added this project is grant-dependent. Two different videographers were approached in order to develop a concept for the writing of the grant application.

A letter of support for the Skinner's Falls Access improvement was approved at the meeting.

NYS DOT notices were provided. Paving of the Beaver Brook Bridge in the Town of Highland will go to bid in February 2016 and paving will begin in the spring and end in the fall. One way traffic patterns will be in place during the construction. Due to the harsh winter, a 17 mile stretch of road will be patched in Region 9. The work has not been scheduled as DOT is waiting for the Sullivan Residency receipt of funding.

The PennDOT Narrowsburg Bridge public meeting is scheduled for July 29<sup>th</sup> at the Tusten Town Hall at 6 p.m.

In regards to the experimental bus service, The Eagle Express, Ramie said she learned that on the July 4<sup>th</sup> weekend 13 tickets were sold and approximately four tickets each for some of the other scheduled weekends were sold. Of the four stops offered, riders only wanted to be dropped off or picked up in Barryville or Narrowsburg. It is currently unknown if this service will continue in the future.

The next Byway meeting is scheduled for Monday, July 27<sup>th</sup> at 7 p.m.

**Common Waters July 8 Meeting Update:** O'Dell reported that one of the main topics for this meeting was the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) funding through the National Resources Conservation Services (NRCS). Updates were provided on how much money was allocated to both New York and Pennsylvania. O'Dell believes that New York State received \$450,000 and Pennsylvania received \$60,000 and the funding is to be spread throughout each entire state. The funding is intended for landowners to implement conservation practices on their property. NRCS is holding a meeting later this month in Walton, NY to discuss the New York initiatives and how the money will be allocated.

Steve Schwartz, Pocono Kittatinny Cluster Coordinator, provided information on cluster collaboration initiatives and evaluations. O'Dell said their intended deliverables over the next three years are to protect 10,000 acres through fee simple acquisition and easements in that cluster and continue water quality monitoring.

O'Dell reported that much discussed at this meeting applied to down basin.

O'Dell noted that the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources is to propose using chemicals to combat the Emerald Ash Borer. It will be open for public comment. O'Dell said he will provide more information when it becomes available.

**Eastern Shale July 13 Teleconference Update:** O'Dell noted that Pennsylvania recently came out with statistics showing that conventional natural gas wells had three times the violations as unconventional ones. This information was provided by Mary Kreuger, National Park Service Energy Specialist for the Northeast Region.

O'Dell reported that Chapter 78 of the Pennsylvania Code, the section of the state's rulebook that guides the construction and operation of oil and gas wells, is being revisited. Mary Kreuger is to send more information when it becomes available and O'Dell will share that information when he receives it. O'Dell added that Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf formed a Pipeline Infrastructure Task Force to help state agencies, natural gas producers, and communities closely work together as thousands of miles of pipelines are proposed to move gas and related products from wellheads to markets. The pipeline Northeast Energy Direct was discussed. O'Dell noted this pipeline does not affect the Upper Delaware region, but was a big part of the conversation for this teleconference.

**Other:** None

**New Business:**

**Draft Letter to the Town of Tusten: Support for Town of Tusten Water District Improvement**

**Project:** Ramie noted that this letter was sent out in advance to members and the deadline for the Empire State Development Grant Program is July 31<sup>st</sup>. A motion to approve the letter was made by McKay and seconded by Jeffer. Ramie noted this letter will be sent from the WU/RM Committee. A vote was taken and the motion carried.

**Draft Letter to the Town of Lumberland: Support for Upper Delaware Heritage Walking Trail:**

Ramie reported that the request for this letter came in just earlier in the day so she was not able to send it out in advance. She added that the same grant program deadline of July 31<sup>st</sup> applies to this letter. After a brief discussion about the location for this proposed trail and the property ownership, a motion to approve the letter was made by Henry and seconded by McKay. Henry recommended that future requests contain more specific information regarding project locations. Ritter agreed. A vote was taken and the motion carried.

**Draft Letter to NYS DOT: Reber's Livery:** O'Dell noted that a motion to send a letter to the NYS DOT inquiring whether any authority was given by DOT to operate a commercial livery business on the assumed state property located under the interstate bridge in Barryville was carried at the July 2<sup>nd</sup> full Council meeting. UDC Chairman had requested that the approved letter be vetted again by the WU/RM Committee. A signed copy of the "Cooperative Management Agreement Basket Creek, Cochection, Highland, and Barryville Bridge Fishing Access Sites Towns of Fremont, Cochection and Highland, Sullivan County" between the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), the New York State Department of Transportation (DOT) and the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River (NPS) was included in members' packets. Also included were two copies of "Shohola Bridge Replacement Project Environmental Mitigation Plan" maps. Henry suggested requesting a copy of the survey map of the area. He noted the area is owned by the state, but there appears to be a discrepancy as to who currently manages it. Members reviewed the cooperative management agreement. Henry reiterated that the premise when the bridge was built was that the area in question was to be used as a public access. Discussion took place regarding an article in the July 18<sup>th</sup> edition of *The News Eagle* titled, "Where's the Barryville public access?". Henry suggested that the letter should request clarification as to the ownership of the property and that a certified survey of the site be sent with their response. Ritter questioned who will enforce the issue if it is determined that a private livery is operating on state land. Henry noted that Carla Medura from Penn DOT was a project manager on the bridge project and may have valuable information. Ramie shared some quotes from the July 18<sup>th</sup> *News Eagle* article. After a lengthy discussion, a motion to send the letter with Henry's suggested edits and include Penn DOT on the cc list was made by Henry, seconded by Jeffer and carried.

**Delaware River Flow and Storage Report:** Ritter referred to the NYC DEP Current Reservoir Levels handout provided in members' packets. He reported that Pepacton is a 96.6% capacity with total storage at 95.9%. Normal total storage for this date is 89.7%, Ritter added. He noted that precipitation for June was

above eight inches while July is currently at 2.28 inches. He stated releases have been around 1640 cfs since July 15<sup>th</sup>. He provided current river temperatures which include 52 degrees at Hancock and 68 degrees at Callicoon. Ritter stated that river levels are about one foot above normal for this time of year.

**Other:** Henry suggested that for the sake of time, the committee reports not be given at the August full Council in lieu of the presentation on the Cannonsville Reservoir. Members agreed. Henry said an email should go out in advance notifying members of this change.

Ramie referenced the UDC press release in members' packets titled "Narrowsburg Bridge Rehabilitation Subject of July 29 Public Meeting." She stated that Penn DOT will brief the public about rehabilitation plans for the bridge at 6 p.m. at the Tusten Town Hall community room.

**Public Comment:** None

**Adjournment:** A motion by Jeffer seconded by Henry to adjourn the meeting at 8:44 p.m. was carried.

*Minutes prepared by Cindy Odell, 7/28/15*