

Upper Delaware Council
WATER USE/RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMM. MEETING MINUTES
August 20, 2013

Committee Members Present: Tony Ritter, Al Henry, Pat Jeffer, John McKay (7:09 p.m.)
Committee Members Absent: Andy Boyar
NPS Partner: Jamie Myers
Staff: Laurie Ramie, Travis O'Dell, Cindy Odell
Guests: Jeff Skelding, Sherri Resti

The UDC's Water Use/Resource Management Committee held its monthly meeting on Tuesday, August 20, 2013 at the Council office in Narrowsburg, NY. Chairperson Tony Ritter called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. A motion by Henry seconded by Jeffer to approve the July 16 meeting minutes was carried. There was no public comment on the agenda.

Old Business:

NYS DEC Response Letter: Emergency Thermal Mitigation Releases: Ritter referenced a copy of the letter in members' packets. He noted the letter is from Philip Hulbert, Chief, Bureau of Fisheries, NYS DEC and it explains the emergency thermal mitigation release from Cannonsville Reservoir back in July. Henry questioned if anyone monitored the water temperatures during that release. Jeff Skelding of Friends of the Upper Delaware River (FUDR) said he believes the Delaware Rivermaster will be providing an analysis of the event and he thinks Dr. Peter Kolesar is working on something also. T. O'Dell said the letter stated, "The extended schedule proved effective in keeping maximum water temperatures at Lordville below 75 degrees F for the remainder of the heat wave."

Upper Delaware Scenic Byway 7/22 Meeting Update: Ramie said the Byway committee discussed having a section on their website devoted to historical publications related to attractions or historic sites along the Byway route. She noted a suggestion was made to compile a booklet of historic markers along the byway from Hancock to Port Jervis.

Ramie reported that a recommendation from the Secretarial Search Committee was made to hire Susan Wade as the recording and corresponding secretary for the Byway. Wade will begin her duties in August.

In terms of the proposed Upper Delaware Scenic Byway Visitor's Center, Ramie said the Byway still has a \$250,000 grant from Senator Bonacic for capital construction, but does not have a location for the facility at this time. They are in the process of exploring possibilities. A decision was made to hold a brainstorming session with all of the involved parties to come up with the next steps for the development of a visitor center. Ramie said that Senator Bonacic is eager to see some progress on this project or there is the potential that the funding could get re-allocated to a group that may have a "shovel-ready" project. Ramie noted that discussion also took place about commissioning an economic impact study for the river valley to have some solid visitation numbers in place.

Ramie noted it was decided to write a letter to the NYS DEC concerning the river access at Mongaup. It was noted the access has become difficult for visitors to traverse due to erosion on the rocky path leading to the river. The committee asked Ramie to send a copy of the letter to the National Park Service as co-manager, advising them of the situation. Ramie said the Byway did receive a response back from the NYS DEC saying that they will look into it with the Park Service. The Park Service thinks the access is fine as it is meant to be a primitive walkway and is located along a Wild and Scenic River, adding that anything too developed would be out of character for the area. Ramie noted that neither agency has money to address making improvements. It was pointed out that the sign on Route 97 that says "Mongaup Access" is in very poor condition. Jamie Myers of the NPS stated that NYS DEC will be in the area to address signs in the area that are in need of repair.

Ramie said that the Byway's website home page has been re-designed for easier navigation.

A discussion had taken place about obtaining quotes for the promotional placemats that the Byway had at one time. The thought was the placemats could be ordered in conjunction the window decals, which is still an active project for which the Byway has received some funding from the Sullivan County Heritage and Cultural Assistance Program.

Ramie reported the next meeting of the Byway will take place on Monday, August 26th.

Ritter asked Myers what signs the NYS DEC will be working on. Myers said the NYS DEC access signs. She said they will be working on the signs starting at Sparrowbush and working north to Narrowsburg.

D&H Transportation Heritage Council 7/24 Meeting Update: Ramie said the minutes from that meeting were provided in members' packets and told members to contact her if they had any questions. The next quarterly meeting of the Council is scheduled for Wednesday, October 23 and will be hosted by the D&H Canal Historical Society and Museum in High Falls, New York. Ramie noted that the Council is now accepting individual members. This is a new category of membership in the D&H Transportation Heritage Council. The fee is \$20 for the year and anyone interested can contact Ramie for further information.

Upper DeLAWARE River Roundtable 8/1 Meeting Update: Ramie noted this meeting was originally going to be a river trip, but needed to be changed due to bad weather. The meeting was moved to the Tusten Pavilion at the Minisink Battleground Park. The main topic of the meeting was discussion with the Park Service about their September 30th closure of the Narrowsburg Information Center. NPS Superintendent Sean McGuinness said this action had to be submitted to Washington, DC as part of the sequester plan of an 8% cut. Ramie shared other NPS areas of cuts including reducing law enforcement. It was reported that the Narrowsburg center costs about \$10,000 a year to keep open. The center, which is staffed by volunteers, has been open three days a week seasonally. McGuinness had stated that he has not received any formal community feedback concerning the closure. Discussion about starting a friends group for this Upper Delaware park unit took place. Having grassroots support would be helpful for issues such as this and for other projects as well.

Ramie reported that the next Roundtable meeting is scheduled for October 3rd. Susan Beecher may be present to talk about the Climate Solutions University as well as Heather Jacksy to talk about the status of the Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan River Accesses Project. This has not yet been confirmed. The convener of the Roundtable, Laurie Stuart, is embarking on a 10-month sabbatical. The meetings in the interim will be convened by Buck Moorhead and Shirley Masuo with help from the other members.

Ritter questioned what will happen to the inventory in the NPS bookstore. Myers said items are being sold at a discount. The bookstore will be open through Labor Day. Ritter added the topic of the bookstore closing came up at the Town of Tusten's Town Board meeting. He said the discussion can be read in the minutes on the Tusten website. Ritter noted he is sorry to see the bookstore go, he is sorry to see their presence go, and he thinks it is important to have informational brochures and books available. Henry asked Myers if the Park Service will still have the Zane Grey Museum open. She said yes and provided their hours.

William Penn Foundation Watershed Protection Program 8/6 Meeting Report: Ramie said she learned of this August 6th meeting at our August 1st full Council meeting from Dennis DeMara of the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. Notes from the meeting along with a map of "Watershed Protection Strategy Target Sub-Watersheds" were provided in members' packets. Ramie explained that the watershed has been divided into eight sub-watershed clusters and the Upper Delaware River corridor and its tributaries are part of the Pocono Kittatinny Cluster. The map was also projected on a screen for members to view. Ramie said the William Penn Foundation (WPF) has decided to redirect all its environmental grants to conservation efforts within the Delaware River Watershed for watershed protection and conservation. The entire program will divide \$10 million among the eight sub-watersheds. Various clusters have different conservation goals, including land protection, agricultural restoration, urban restoration, or hybrids of those. The Pocono Kittatinny Cluster is exclusively targeted for land protection to protect high quality streams. Preliminary watershed protection strategies for this cluster include land acquisition and conservation easements (without eminent domain); support for improved municipal ordinances and policies; increased conservation funding at all government levels; targeted landowner outreach; and increased public awareness of the importance of land and water conservation. WPF began developing this initiative about one year ago. A planning group for the Pocono Kittatinny Cluster has been strategizing for several months to develop a draft 3-year implementation plan that is due in September 2013. The August 6th meeting was to receive feedback from additional potential partners. Applications for project funding requests will be due in January of 2014. The Open Space Institute will oversee the grant program. Local matches will be required but the rate and method has not yet been determined. It was noted

that no funding is available through this specific program for water quality monitoring on the Delaware main stem but could be for tributaries. WPF has already made a 10-year commitment to monitoring water quality in every cluster of the Delaware River Basin to obtain baseline measurements. Henry asked Myers if she was aware that the WPF was monitoring water quality. She said she was. Henry questioned how many agencies need to monitor the water quality before they realize it is good water. Henry stated he hopes that one of these agencies will sample some of the water during a high water event. Ramie said the Delaware River Basin Regional Trail Study, which the cancelled presentation for tonight was to have been about, is a separate initiative implemented prior to this watershed protection program. She added there are also separate WPF funding sources available for capacity building, community engagement, and coordination; and for projects related to energy development impacts and policies. Ramie commented that one interesting thing that came up at the August 6th meeting during discussion of potential project ideas was that a suggestion was made that the UDC and NPS could apply for funding to update the *River Management Plan for the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River*. It was thought this would be an applicable project for this funding pool.

Henry asked if it could be found out how a conservation easement placed on a piece of property affects the tax base, noting there are limited taxpayers. T. O'Dell said that after Town of Deerpark Representative Dave Dean brought this issue up at the last full Council meeting, he did some research and found an interesting study by Boston College on that subject. He said he could share the study by e-mail with the committee. Henry said he would like to find out locally. A brief discussion as to how to go about finding this answer out took place. Jeff Skelding suggested contacting The Catskill Center to pose this question. Henry reiterated that he would like clarification on the issue. Ramie said a planning group has been working to identify key properties in the cluster that would have the most impact for watershed protection to acquire or seek conservation easements. The criteria is still being determined but could include floodplains, wetlands, riparian corridors, impervious covers, erosion and stormwater issues, and assessment of build-out and development threat. They are also looking at connectivity by tag-teaming with parcels that are already conserved in key headwater areas.

Ramie noted that after the August 6th meeting, follow up tasks to answer questions posed by Ralph "Bud" Cook, director for The Nature Conservancy, Northeastern Pennsylvania were sent out. They were listed in the handout. Ramie said they are also asking if groups would consider endorsing the efforts to secure funding from the William Penn Foundation for watershed protection in the upstream section of the Basin. Interested parties were asked to reply by August 23rd. Ramie said she intends to share her written report with the rest of the Council members and is seeking the recommendation of this committee as to what should be done next. Henry made a motion to bring the William Penn Foundation Watershed Protection Program up for discussion at the September 5th full Council meeting. The motion was seconded by Ritter and carried. Discussion took place about inviting someone in for the meeting to talk about the program. Ramie said she would reach out to Bud Cook of the Nature Conservancy to see about his availability or if he could recommend someone.

Eastern Shale 8/12 Teleconference Report: O'Dell noted this is a monthly call. He said that some of the topics discussed included agency lack of funding, water quality baseline data issues, frack hits (O'Dell explained that a frack hit is when two wells meet underground, the pressure is often directed to the surface in the form of a geyser. These frack hits have been recorded in OK, AR, MT, WV, NM, and PA), and shale gas financing.

Henry commented that there is a lot of drilling going on in the Susquehanna River water basin and wonders what is going on with the water as a result. Myers said that the starting baseline water quality of the Susquehanna River is not comparable to that of the Delaware River. Henry said there were water quality tests done on the Susquehanna long before gas drilling started in the area. He wonders what the degradation of the water can be attributed to. He said it is the next drainage over and he thinks it would be enlightening to see what is going on with their water. T. O'Dell said he could look into that.

LWRP Sullivan County River Access Site Design Update: Ramie reported she attended a meeting of the advisory committee on July 24th to review the ten applications from potential consultants who are interested in working on this project. On August 15th, interviews were conducted of three of the consultants. At the end of that meeting, it was decided to pose a question to two of the three firms. That question was, "Please tell us how information from the Upper Delaware River Management Plan, specifically information provided about scenic and recreational areas discussed on pages 61 and 62, facilities starting on page 85,

and water use principles and objectives described on pages 91 to 104 would influence your approach to this project.” Responses were required by 3 p.m. on August 21st. A decision will be made based on the responses to that question by the committee. Henry questioned if the Park Service is represented on this committee. Ramie told him yes. Ramie reported that there is also \$25,000 that Sullivan County was successful in securing for a signage plan for the bridges. There will be six signs designed, produced and installed with this funding. Henry said he would like to know what kind of signs will be placed on the bridges. Ramie said she will follow up on this.

Other: Ritter referred to two handouts in members’ packets, one by Andy Boyar and the other by Mike Bachosky. They are both in reference to the cold water fishery of the Delaware River. Jeff Skelding commented on the letter by Bachosky.

Henry asked if there was an update on the sewage issue at Masthope. O’Dell said the issue is being worked on. Myers said it is an active investigation. McKay clarified that the issue is occurring at the Masthope Mountain Community development. Myers said it was after the 4th of July holiday that the levels were off the charts when the community was at its maximum occupancy. Recent sampling was done on July 23rd and those results were within normal limits, she added. Henry asked if an update can be given at the September full Council meeting.

New Business:

Draft Letter of Support for Shohola Township Grant Application: Ramie said the Council was contacted by Shohola Township Secretary Diana Blume to ask for the Council’s support in applying for grant funding from the PA Department of Community & Economic Development to replace its deteriorating road salt storage facility. A motion to send the letter was made by Henry, seconded by McKay and carried.

Pond Eddy Bridge Design Advisory Committee to Meet 8/29: Ramie reported a meeting of the Pond Eddy Bridge Design Advisory Committee will take place at the Shohola Township Building on August 29th at 6 p.m. to review the findings of Penn DOT and NYS DOT. Henry asked Ramie if she could find out about the proposed coffer dam that was talked about. Ramie said she will bring that up.

Delaware River Flow and Storage Data Report: Ritter reported that Cannonsville is at 84.8%, Pepacton is at 89.2%. Total storage is about 6% higher than normal for this time of year.

Other: McKay asked what the temperature of the water is currently. Ritter said he did a float earlier in the day from Narrowsburg to Ten Mile River and the temperature ranged between 68 and 71 degrees. A brief discussion about temperature and river height took place.

Public Comment: Jeff Skelding of the Friends of the Upper Delaware River noted the current Flexible Flow Management Plan (FFMP) will be in effect through May 31, 2014. He requested some time at a full Council meeting in late fall or early winter to have someone come in and speak about the issue.

Skelding reported that his organization will be hosting the 4th Annual “Water, Water Everywhere-Future of the Upper Delaware River” Conference on October 15th and 16th at the West Branch Angler Resort in Hancock, N.Y. He noted that a wide range of constituent groups participate in the conference. He said that T. O’Dell will present on the operation of the Upper Delaware Council. Skelding said they are working on the agenda and that a snapshot of the agenda is now available on the FUDR website.

Henry asked if the presentation that Skelding has requested time for will take place at a full Council meeting. He was told yes and after a brief discussion, it was decided to try for the November meeting for the presentation.

Ramie asked Myers if she would be willing to present on Japanese Knotweed at the WU/RM meeting in September. Henry suggested that Myers may be able to touch on some of the other invasives in the area. Myers agreed to give a presentation at the September 17th meeting.

Adjournment: A motion by Henry seconded by Jeffer to adjourn the meeting at 8:27 p.m. was carried.

