

Upper Delaware Council
WATER USE/RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMM. MEETING MINUTES
Oct. 20, 2009

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

The committee chairperson Charles Wieland called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m. A motion by Fluhr seconded by Sundholm to approve the Sept. 15 meeting minutes was carried. There was no public comment on the agenda.

Old Business

Upper Delaware Scenic Byway Update: Ramie reported briefly on the Scenic Byway activities. Sullivan County's new Planning Commissioner Luiz Aragon attended and was introduced to the Byway group at its September meeting. The Byway is losing a member Peter Osborne since he's leaving the Port Jervis area. Also leaving the area is NPS-Upper Delaware Superintendent Vidal Martinez.

The Rt. 97 Landscape Survey grant contract was received from NYS. They revised the contract with the consultant for this project. The Byway Marketing Subcommittee has received 125,000 placemats and they are being distributed to various organizations and businesses. As to the business membership program, the Byway is still looking for someone to do commission work in securing business listings for the website.

The group has received assurances from Sullivan County Legislature that they are still supportive of the visitors center project in the Town of Cochetton. Funding is an issue. Aragon suggested possibly downsizing the visitor center project. One of the state grants for Byway members expired August and project completion documentation was received from the towns for reimbursement from the state. The Byway group is supporting another historical book on the Byway to be published by Norma Schadt for fundraising purposes. The group is still supporting looking into a way to preserve the Sparrowbush public river access even though the land is included in a private property for sale process. It may be possible that state Open Space Funds could be used to secure this property.

Upper Delaware River Roundtable Update: Hamilton provided an update on the Roundtable activities. He mentioned that a SEQRA workshop was sponsored on Oct. 1 and held at the UDC office relative to how best to review the draft supplemental GEIS being prepared by NYS DEC on gas drilling oversight and preparing substantive comments. The workshop was well attended. Following the workshop, the Roundtable held a regular meeting at the Tusten Town Hall. A communications committee was established to review the 809-page draft SGEIS. That committee will meet Nov. 5.

Delaware River Sojourn Update: A Delaware River Sojourn is being planned for 2010 commencing June 20 as there were surplus funds from this year's sojourn. The Upper Delaware section of the Sojourn may run three to four days since the middle Delaware organizations are not participating in 2010. A Sojourn newsletter is being prepared. A theme for the 2010 event has not been established as yet. The next teleconference of the Sojourn Steering Committee will be Nov. 10.

New Business

NYS DEC schedules public hearings on dSGEIS natural gas drilling: The committee was provided with copy of DEC news release announcing details of upcoming public comment sessions on the draft Supplemental Generic Environmental Impact Statement governing potential natural gas drilling activities in the Marcellus Shale formation in NYS. In Sullivan County, the session will be Oct. 28 at the Sullivan County Community College in Loch Sheldrake, NY. Doors open at 6 p.m. for individual questions and speaker sign up. The public comment session will start at 7 p.m. The draft SGEIS was released on Sept.

30 and the comment deadline is Nov. 30, 2009. The committee provided input for a UDC comment letter to DEC that will be prepared by staff.

Common Waters Community Land Use and Conservation Forum Oct. 29: The committee was provided with copy of the agenda for a forum being sponsored by Common Waters on Oct. 29 at Matamoras, PA. Topics to be covered include: The Resource; Brainstorming the Resource: Facilitated Breakout Session Addressing Threats and Opportunities; Keynote address; Regional Collaboration; Creating Collaborative Opportunities: Facilitated Breakout Sessions on Cross-Border Collaboration; Small Group Report-out; Dinner/Evening Keynote Address; Closing Remarks. Douglass and Ramie from the Council staff will attend.

Lackawaxen Township letter to DRBC-Impacts of PPL Lake Wallenpaupack Releases: The committee was provided with copy of letter issued by Lackawaxen Township to the Delaware River Basin Commission offering its concerns with dam releases from PPL Lake Wallenpaupack that are resulting in odor and discoloration to its point of discharge at Kimbles and to the Upper Delaware River. This situation has been ongoing since 2004 and even though some techniques have been established to address the problem it is still continuing. The Township notes a solution needs to be found even if it is not economically favorable to PPL.

Environmental Organizations' attorney letter to FERC-NYC West of Hudson Hydroelectric Project: The committee was provided with copy of a Sept. 18 letter from Zimmerman & Associates to the Secretary of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) in Washington, DC on behalf of Friends of the Upper Delaware, North Delaware River Watershed Conservancy, and Aquatic Conservation Unlimited. The letter laid out the organizations concerns and requested that the FERC deny the City of New York's request to use the Traditional Licensing Process rather than the Integrated Licensing Process for review of the City's application for licensing of the West of Hudson Hydroelectric Project on City-owned Delaware River Basin reservoirs. The ILP should be used in this case because it provides earlier and more frequent public participation opportunities. Wieland remarked that the UDC will keep an eye on this situation.

NPS Report: Hamilton reported that an orientation visit was held Oct. 6 for NPS Deputy Regional Director Mike Reynolds to view the Upper Delaware River Corridor and discuss concerns, challenges and opportunities. Reynolds stopped at the UDC office to listen to the Council's issues and concerns. Schultz noted the NPS regional office is also looking into departing NPS-Upper Delaware Superintendent Martinez's replacement.

PA Fish & Boat Commission stream survey: The committee was provided with copy of an Oct. 18 news article from the *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*. The article highlights the work done by the PA Fish and Boat Commission in conducting stream surveys in the Commonwealth waters to document conditions and species. That work needs to be completed in light of development pressures and natural gas drilling. The Commission hopes to sample 200 un-inventoried streams over the next five years with a focus on wild trout.

BBC News article Eel Migration: The committee was provided with copy of a Sept. 25 *BBC News* article on Sept. 25. The article notes that European eel's migration to the Sargasso Sea to spawn is one of nature's great unsolved mysteries. Now scientists using satellite tags have tracked 22 eels, revealing what they do in the first 1,300 km of an epic 5,000 km migration. Using this method, biologists hope the whole journey to the Sargasso Sea will soon be revealed. The results of the tracking study are published in the journal "Science". American eels are a popular species in the Upper Delaware River.

Public Comment None

Adjournment A motion by McKay seconded by Fluhr to adjourn the meeting at 8:49 p.m. was carried.