



Upper Delaware Council

PO Box 192, 211 Bridge Street, Narrowsburg, New York 12764-0192 • (Tel.) 845-252-3022 • (Fax) 845-252-3359

William E. Douglass, Executive Director • David B. Soete, Senior Resource Specialist
Laurie Ramie, Public Relations/Fund Raising Specialist • Carol Coney, Office Manager

Issued June 23, 2010 with photos

Contact: Laurie Ramie, (845) 252-3022 or laurie@upperdelawarecouncil.org

Delaware River Sojourn Names 'Admirals' for Upper Delaware

NARROWSBURG – The 2010 Delaware River Sojourn saluted Sullivan County Commissioner of Planning and Environmental Management Luiz C. Aragon and Catskill Mountainkeeper Program Director Wes Gillingham as “Lord High Admirals” to recognize their respective contributions to the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River Valley.

The Upper Delaware region hosted the first three days of the week-long paddling excursion on June 20-22. The 16th annual event attracted 78 Sojourners on Day 1 (Ten Mile River Landing to Barryville, NY), 80 on Day 2 (Barryville to Staircase Rapids Access, NY), and 74 on Day 3 (Staircase Rapids Access to Matamoras, PA).

A total of 24 “thru-trippers” signed up to paddle 60-plus miles of the Delaware River’s main stem in New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey from June 20-26.

The Delaware River Sojourn is organized by a consortium of agencies, non-profit organizations, and volunteers working and/or residing in the Delaware River Watershed. Its 2010 theme was “Bridging the Delaware Valley – Connecting Communities”.

Coordinators for the Upper Delaware section were Laurie Ramie from the Upper Delaware Council (UDC), Dick Rhodes from the National Canoe Safety Patrol (NCSP), and Rich Egan from the National Park Service (NPS) Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River’s Volunteers-in-Parks Program.

Each year, the Delaware River Sojourn Steering Committee pays tribute to individuals and organizations that have promoted stewardship of the river and its natural, cultural, recreational, and scenic resources.

Working together to conserve the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River

*Town of Hancock • Town of Fremont • Town of Delaware • Town of Cohecton • Town of Tusten • Town of Highland • Town of Lumberland
Town of Deerpark • Damascus Township • Berlin Township • Lackawaxen Township • Shohola Township • Westfall Township
State of New York • Commonwealth of Pennsylvania • Delaware River Basin Commission • In partnership with the National Park Service*

The title of Lord or Lady High Admiral harkens back to Daniel Skinner, who made history as the first man to navigate a raft of logs in 1767 from his Pennsylvania home south of present-day Callicoon to downriver ship-building markets.

Fellow pioneers of the log rafting industry thereafter hailed Skinner as “Admiral of the Delaware” for his entrepreneurial ingenuity and success.

On June 21, Wes Gillingham joined the ranks of Sojourn admirals.

Gillingham co-founded Catskill Mountainkeeper in 2007 as a non-profit advocacy organization dedicated to preserving and protecting the long-term ecological health of the six counties of New York State’s Catskill Region.

Catskill Mountainkeeper’s mission is to promote sustainable economic growth and protect natural resources essential to healthy communities. Its members keep an eye on regional development issues to assess potential threats and opportunities, spread the word, and provide advice and tools to mobilize citizens to act.

The organization recently announced a grant-funded project to develop an interdisciplinary educational curriculum for Sullivan County youth on the county’s historic, cultural, and natural resources.

Gillingham, who received a degree in Environmental Education from the University of Maine, formerly served as Acting Director of Field Programs and instructor with the National Audubon Society Expedition Institute and worked for 10 years as a Park Ranger at the NPS Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River.

Wes and his wife Amy operate the organic Wild Roots Farm in Livingston Manor and adhere to an “off-the-grid” lifestyle as much as possible. Their children, Iris, 10, and Roan, 8, paddled along in their father’s canoe on Sojourn Day 2.

On June 22, the Sojourn Lord High Admiral title was conferred upon Luiz C. Aragon.

Aragon was appointed in August of 2009 to his position as Commissioner of the Sullivan County Division of Planning and Environmental Management. His office is responsible for developing and implementing effective projects and programs created to improve the county’s economy, environment, and infrastructure.

Its professional staff offers technical assistance to local municipalities in land use, economic development, housing, farm land protection, and environmental protection; while providing the Sullivan County Legislature and management with research for policy decisions.

Having earned degrees in Architecture and a Master’s in Business & Administration, Aragon came to this job following more than 20 years of experience in New York City government. He served under the administrations of four mayors, lastly as a deputy commissioner with the 1,500-employee Department of Housing Preservation and Development.

During his city career, Aragon was no stranger to the rural Delaware River Valley. His family owned a seasonal home near Shohola, PA for a decade. His love for the river was a compelling motivation for him to apply for the Sullivan County position. Aragon now resides in the river-side community of Barryville.

Aragon immediately faced a slew of challenging issues facing the county – economic revitalization, flood hazards, and natural gas drilling among them. His energetic approach has been to gather input from grassroots sources, analyze problems, and develop collaborative, creative solutions.

Aragon was lauded as a firm believer in strategic visioning while staying oriented toward achieving results for the county, its communities, and non-profit organizations on which he serves such as the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway.

Gillingham and Aragon received Delaware River Sojourn hats with special insignia and certificates before they each blessed their day's boating excursions with official salutes.

This year's Sojourn also introduced a new recognition concept.

At the June 20 Sojourn kick-off ceremony in Barryville, Sandra S. Schultz was surprised to be designated as "The Duchess of the Delaware" for the entire 2010 event.

Schultz was a co-founder of the Sojourn Steering Committee in 1995 and has remained a dedicated supporter, even beyond her March 31, 2010 retirement as NPS Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River Assistant Superintendent. She was recognized for her superior organizational and planning skills that have contributed to the Sojourn's longevity.

Sandy and her "duke", husband Ken Schultz, drove up from their new home in Accomac, VA to kayak and camp all week with the Sojourn.

Educational programs offered on Sojourn Days 1-3 included presentations on "Roebbling's Delaware Aqueduct" by National Park Service (NPS) Ranger Nathan Powell and "Marcellus Shale Natural Gas Exploration" by Wes Gillingham; a visit to the Zane Grey Museum in Lackawaxen, PA to see the NPS site's new exhibits; and hands-on water quality sampling of the Delaware River near the Mongaup Access led by Rich Egan.

Kittatinny Canoes provided livery services and camping. Meals were catered by Kittatinny and Il Castello Pizzeria of Barryville. The Upper Delaware Preservation Coalition served as registrar and fiduciary for the 2010 Sojourn.

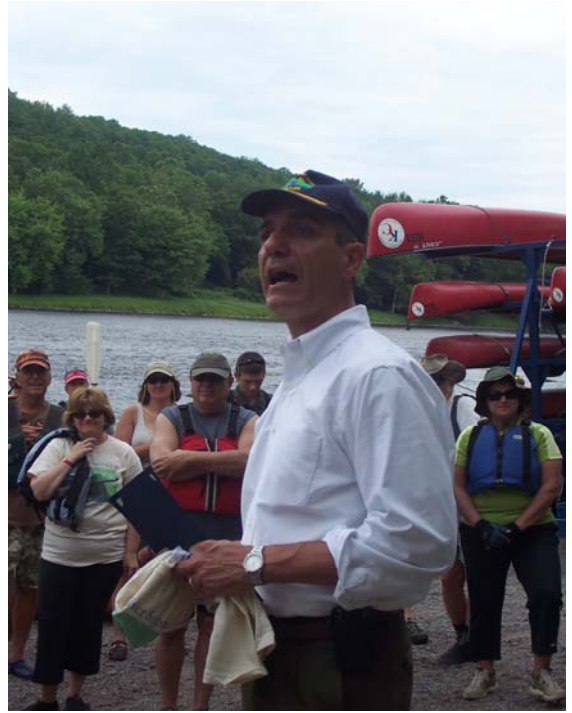
Some financial support was provided by the Pennsylvania Organization of Watersheds and Rivers (POWR) and the Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission.

For more information on the 16th Annual Delaware River Sojourn, please visit www.delawareriversojourn.org.

###



Wes Gillingham



Luiz C. Aragon