

**WATER USE/RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMM. MEETING MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 18, 2018**

Committee Members Present:	Fred Peckham, Al Henry, Doug Case, Evan Padua
Committee Members Absent:	Pat Jeffer, Jim Greier, Debra Conway
Staff :	Laurie Ramie, Pete Golod
NPS Partner:	Don Hamilton
Guests:	Ashley Hall-Bagdonas

The UDC’s Water Use/Resource Management Committee held its monthly meeting on Tuesday September 18, 2018 at the Council office in Narrowsburg, NY. Chairperson Peckham called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. A motion by Henry, seconded by Case, to approve the August 21 minutes was carried. There was no public comment on the agenda.

Old Business

8/23 National Park Service (NPS) Water Safety Committee: Ramie reported that the committee is comprised of Kevin Reish, the Water Safety Coordinator for NPS, Ingrid Peterec, Jamie Myers, Susie Kaspar, and herself. At the Aug. 23 meeting, they discussed formulating the 2019 budget for the Water Safety Committee to be approved for Park Service funding; the outcome of hiring two water safety interns; and noted that there are a total of five life jacket loaner stations to be installed, with the final two at Skinner’s Falls. The committee also discussed the billboards promoting water safety which are now located on Routes 97, 590, and 652. Adams Outdoor Advertising has contributed to that campaign. A high-water alert has been set up on the NPS website to automatically activate to forewarn the public about river conditions as needed. Ramie shared an article that appeared in the Aug. 17 *Sullivan County Democrat* headlined “Eleven rescued in single day on Delaware River” based on an Aug. 4 joint patrol by the NPS with the DEC Forest Rangers. Forest Ranger Richard Franke from Liberty was on his first swift water rescue when they assisted 11 different people. Ramie inquired of the Water Safety Committee whether they thought this incident would qualify for the UDC’s Lifesaving Award for next spring’s banquet; they agreed it did and Reish subsequently forwarded contact information to Ramie.

8/27 Upper Delaware Scenic Byway Meeting (UDSB) Minutes: Members welcomed two new representatives to their first UDSB meeting, Tim Newman from the Town of Hancock and Jane Luchsinger from the Town of Tusten. Ed Wesely, renowned butterfly expert, gave a presentation on the life cycle of butterflies. He brought in displays of live butterflies in chrysalis form, eggs, and two monarchs that hatched the day before. He noted that the population of monarchs had almost plunged to extinction 4-5 years ago but they have been bouncing back. He shared their most interesting qualities and characteristics, especially their migration to Mexico.

A second presentation was from Narrowsburg interests who would like to locate the UDSB Visitor Center at the Narrowsburg Union rather than the Callicoon Depot. Advantages mentioned for their site included: developed parking lot; handicapped accessibility; open seven days a week; staffed; equipped with a commercial kitchen, a 500-person auditorium, WIFI, and electric car charging stations. They offered a proposal for creating a new space for the Visitor Center with a prominent entrance on the side of the building on Bridge Street, where a vestibule and lobby would be built in an existing class room space. They had a rendering of a glass box design so you could see inside and view the Union. A point was made that the Union is a privately-owned enterprise and it was asked if you could use the \$250,000 state grant to improve a private building. It was clarified that you can if there is site control through a lease with a minimum 5 year-term. The Union would offer a \$1 a year rent to the byway in exchange for improving their building and bringing traffic to it. They would provide all maintenance, electricity and landscaping services, and also proposed to cut a new driveway from the Erie Avenue parking lot to the

front door. The committee took it under consideration but ultimately decided to stick with working with Callicoon Business Association and the Depot Committee. It essentially came down to saving a historic building or operating in a structure that is already existing.

UpperDelawareScenicByway.org got hacked again for the third time since February 2018. It was explained that the issue was the host does not offer any security protection and someone found a way to compromise the code that created the website. The hosting contract was up for renewal and a decision was made to transfer it to a host that the Byway entity will have more control over. They authorized spending \$500 to repair this website and transfer it. A motion was made to approve a quarter-page ad for the Sullivan Catskills 2019 Travel Guide. That decision had to be made by September 1. An updated ad was also approved. Two additional grants were approved for the Promoting Butterfly Habitat Grant Program from the Tusten Heritage Community Garden and Ed Wesley's non-profit Potomac Rivers and Trails Council. The Scenic Vistas Program had received one application from a Town of Hancock resident. At the time of submission, Hancock was not a member but since they are now they decided to revisit the application. That will be discussed at the next meeting. Sept. 30 is the deadline for non-profits to submit their online applications to Sullivan County for the 2019 Legislative Discretionary Contract Program. Treasurer Larry Richardson proposed an idea for a grant to help businesses and non-profits with signage. They would not have to go through a municipality but could get financial assistance of up to \$500 with a 50% match. The theory is that if the byway is helping to fund these projects, there would be some standardization and oversight of signage along the highway. A motion was passed to express conceptual support for the idea and set up a sub-committee to work on the application process.

Sullivan County had been approached to administer the \$250,000 Visitor Center grant but declined after a few months of consideration. The county manager expressed concern about holding the lease to the station for the required site control, and also about long-term liability and maintenance. The Callicoon Train Depot Committee has been working on this since the spring and lined up legal, business planning and architectural services, many of which are working pro bono, and there are options for private funding and other grants being pursued. UDSB requirements for a Visitor Center are: handicapped accessibility, display space for literature, space for exhibits and programs, and ADA compliant restrooms. They can also envision a café that would attract traffic, indoor/outdoor seating, museum and gallery gift shop and perhaps a workspace to showcase arts, crafts, foods, history and attractions of the Upper Delaware Valley. Architect Buck Moorhead is working with this project and calculates \$75,000 out of \$250,000 will be needed for site improvements such as leveling and storm drainage, with parking to take place in the existing municipal lot across the street. He earmarked \$175,000 for interior renovations. The Visitor Center would be 800 square feet. Moorhead assured those at the meeting that the \$250,000 would get them in the door of the Visitor Center, it would be structurally safe and accessible while the rest of the building was being developed. The Railroad has said they are amenable to a lease beyond the five-year term offered in their standard draft. A motion was made to proceed on course to develop the Callicoon Depot as a Visitor Center. It was approved with 6 yes, 1 no, 1 abstention.

The National Parks Conservation Association is coming to Hancock for a regional meeting on the weekend of October 5-6th. They are going to have a dinner at the French Woods Golf Club and have asked UDSB Chairperson Glenn Pontier to address them. On October 6th they will have a program on the cultural resources of the river valley that NPS Upper Delaware Superintendent Kris Heister plans to deliver at the Callicoon Train Depot. The next meeting of the UDSB is September 24.

8/30 Stream Maintenance and Flood Intervention Workshop: Golod reported that this workshop was hosted by Wayne Conservation District in Honesdale. Presenters were from the Bradford County Conservation District: Mike Lovegreen, District Operations Specialist, and Ian Lathrop, Stream Program Resource Specialist. Some key highlights from workshop Golod found were that Pennsylvania's climate precipitation models have observed higher rainfall totals displaying more precipitations extremes in localized storm cells. Climate change aids in increasing precipitation levels and variability. Streams are adjusting to increase flows. It is difficult to predict local severity of forecasted rain events. Streams are said to be in equilibrium when the volume of water is enough to transport the available sediment without

building up the channel (aggrading) or cutting down the channel (degrading). The floodplain is the area bordering the stream, constructed by the river and inundated during periods of high flow. A properly maintained floodplain will provide several functions such as: energy dissipation during flooding events; velocity and energy decrease; lower flood peaks due to storage and infiltration; water releases more slowly downstream; provide a place for debris and sediment to be deposited; and natural process of topsoil formation. Floodplains are sloped so that the water drains back into a stream channel as water levels recede and are essential, being the floodplain is part of the river during storm conditions. If large areas of the floodplain are filled, then there will be an increase in the land area needed to store flood waters. This means homes, farms, or businesses may be impacted. When the channel is disconnected from the floodplain, velocity and energy of the stream increases, erosion increases, there is more damage to infrastructure from debris, and the flood stage is higher. Channel straightening and berms are past practices that have been proven to give a stream more power by increasing its slope which increases its velocity and aids in erosion on the streambank and bed. Golod shared where to work on channel problems: actively eroding high banks; eroding bank is heading toward infrastructure or homes; high sediment load from eroding bank; circumstances where a “small flood” would “blow out” the bank; channel blocks; debris at culverts; and impaired channel capacity. The presenters also advised where not to work: the channel dimensions are good or there has been little damage; banks are stable; and the channel bottom is imbricated, the gravel is “shingled” and difficult to move. Lastly, on the topic of site mitigation, they explained that root wads can be used to stabilize the streambank. They can use debris trees located nearby and should be braced with boulders or other large logs. Hydraulic structures are submerged or partially submerged structures in any body of water which diverts, disrupts or completely stops the natural flow of water. Types of those structures are cross vane, straight vane and J-hook.

Golod noted that Hamilton was present at the workshop and asked if he had any comments. Hamilton said they presented a lot of good information and participants were each given a manual to take home. Padua said that the Town of Hancock would benefit from this work since they’ve had so much damage. Hamilton confirmed that some of these practices were implemented in Humphrey’s Brook, where they had lost their road.

2018 Delaware River Microplastics Sampling Study Update: NPS UPDE Natural Resources Chief Don Hamilton offered an update based on a request made at the last WU/RM meeting. They did sampling for microplastics in July 2018 at nine sites over the length of the Delaware River from Callicoon to Lambertville. Samples were taken in the water column, sediments, two sites for fish and two sites for fresh water mussels. The sites for fish and water mussels were co-located with the water column and sediment sample sites. They collected small mouth bass and bait suckers for the fish. They snorkeled for Eastern elliptio mussels, the most abundant and widespread mussel locally. Results will not be available until late winter 2018 or early spring 2019. The report still has to be written, which can be expected possibly by summer 2019. Hamilton stressed that although the Upper Delaware River is pristine and there’s not a lot of development or discharge from waste water treatment plants to the river, microplastics are a serious concern in many freshwater ecosystems. We are awash in plastic waste and the average person in this country discards 185 pounds of waste per year. This material is ubiquitous. It photodegrades (breaks down) and gets biomagnified up the food chain. Microplastic particles are being found in zooplankton, corals (in the ocean), and aquatic insects. Fish can’t digest it and a lot of toxic substances adhere to plastic. It is expected the study will find some microplastics in every water sampling collected. Not many rivers have been sampled but they are a conduit to other water bodies. We want to understand how prevalent microplastics are and what actions can be taken. There are biodegradable substitutes for plastics. Some waste water treatment plants are installing filters to filter out microplastics. There are some clothing companies that are looking to reengineer their synthetic fabrics. Some of the highest levels of microplastics were found at Lake Mead on the Colorado River. Hamilton pondered, “Do the river systems concentrate it and then put it into larger bodies?” He also wondered whether a lot of it is airborne. USGS crews have also sampled the St. Croix River and the Upper Mississippi; even in some pretty heavily forested parts of the St. Croix River they found microplastics in all their water

samples/sediment samples and some concentration in the bald eagles which would suggest that it is getting in fish that are consumed by the eagles. Hamilton said that he has copies of studies done in the Great Lake that he will be happy to share. He concluded by saying that plastics have made our quality of life higher but they have come back to haunt us by getting into our waste. We need to do things better. Ramie noted that Hamilton's comprehensive article about the Delaware River Microplastics Study from the Spring/Summer 2018 issue of "The Upper Delaware" was included in the packets for information.

Other: Golod reported that he reached out to Heather Leach, who was hired by Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences as the Spotted Lanternfly Extension Associate. Golod has secured her to present at the February 7, 2019 full Council meeting. Golod also purchased via a 25-minute DVD on the Spotted Lanternfly based on a recommendation from Henry after seeing it air on the Pennsylvania Cable Network during Ag Progress Days. Golod will review the DVD when he receives it.

New Business

Train Derailment and Diesel Fuel Spill: Ramie shared a preview of her Fall/Winter 2018 UDC newsletter article on the Aug. 9 train derailment and diesel fuel spill that occurred in Deposit. She said that this subject is ripe for follow-up from both the UDC and the NPS in terms of emergency response improvements and what can be done to help prevent future accidents like this from happening. Central New York Railroad (CNYR) is interested in participating in tabletop exercises and on-site drills. CNYR spokesperson Melanie Boyer told Ramie that they normally work through county emergency management agencies for that but Ramie said she imagines they would be open to a request from our organization as well. In 1997 the UDC, NPS, Delaware Riverkeeper Network and Conrail had collaborated to produce an Emergency Response Guide specifically for the railroad line from Port Jervis to Deposit. Since then we have not been successful in getting traction to fund an update. The guide provides all procedures and communications necessary in an emergency, and details the locations of mile markers, overpass clearances, signals and control points along the route. Past incidents verged on catastrophes if they had been worse. Peckham said the railroad should at least have patrols of the line going on during flooding situations. Case said that a lot of the tracks can't be seen. Henry said it has been asked why the railroad was running trains when there was a State of Emergency in Broome County due to heavy rains. Henry said that a State of Emergency doesn't automatically mean you can't run vehicles. If vehicular traffic is allowed on the roads, why would trains be precluded from running on the tracks? He would like to see if somebody from the NPS can investigate whether there was a prohibition on vehicular traffic on this date. He doesn't think there was. Hamilton said if Broome County had notified CNYR about the State of Emergency, maybe they would have patrolled it but apparently that never got communicated to the railroad. Henry added they didn't notify the National Park Service either. Hamilton said he is aware that it was a very localized, heavy thunderstorm that day because he was in Hancock doing a young-of-year shad study.

Ramie referenced a second handout of an op-ed article by Narrowsburg resident Jim Powell that appeared in a recent issue of *The River Reporter* headlined "Growing threat to our river valley ignored." Powell states that this is the third derailment he has seen in the river valley, but the cargo "may now be toxic and radioactive". He continues that extreme weather is likely to become more severe and common, but he sees no evidence that the railroad has updated their rights-of-way to accommodate improved drainage to help prevent wash-outs. He stated, "I have no idea which agency is the primary one responsible for enforcement of laws relating to public safety in this case. Is it a state or federal agency? National Transportation Safety Board? Does anyone know or care? Where does the buck stop? ... Who is responsible for sending a train carrying toxic waste into a previously declared flooding state of emergency?" Peckham said he strongly disagreed with Powell's final statement, "We need to ask the railroad to cease operations in our valley." Peckham noted that this is a wider gauge track than a lot of the country has in order to accommodate freight cargo which is why, in his opinion, this line will never close.

Hamilton said that NPS agrees that better communication is needed and efforts are being made to work with the railroad to hold exercises. Peckham said that he could still smell diesel this morning and a week ago, there was a sheen visible around Equinunk. Padua noted that even with the 4,000 gallons of diesel fuel that spilled, the river running at 13,000 cubic feet per second meant that it went away pretty quickly. Hamilton said we were lucky that it was high water that flushed through the system. The quick action of the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation to boom off side channels of Hungry Hollow Creek also prevented more diesel from going into the river.

NYC DEP Correspondence with Rep. Faso: Reservoir Capacity Pending Hurricane Florence:

Ramie stated that Congressman Faso sent a letter on Sept. 13 to New York City Department of Environmental Protection Deputy Commissioner Paul Rush inquiring about the status of the storage of the reservoirs in advance of Hurricane Florence. That correspondence and the DEP reply to Faso from Sept. 14 were included in the packets. Ramie said the response was basically that they are on top of it. Rush's reply states, "As you might know, last month was the wettest August on record for our Catskill-Delaware watershed. Several parts of the watershed received more than 300 percent of the typical rainfall for the month, causing reservoirs to refill during a time when they usually draw down." He added that operational adjustments have been made to create free space in the reservoirs to enhance the flood-attenuation benefits that their dams already provide, with the help of an advanced modeling system and instrumentation "the City invested in to balance the need for clean, safe drinking water and the commitment we have made to our neighbors in the watershed and downstream." Padua commented that 1,300 cfs is being pumped out of Cannonsville to try to draw down that reservoir.

Bipartisan Letter Advocating for \$6 Million to Fund the Delaware River Basin Restoration Program in the FY 2019 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriation Act:

Ramie shared a Sept. 4 letter signed by 25 members of the U.S. Senate and Congress advocating for a larger pool of funding in 2019 budget for Delaware River Basin Restoration Program. They had \$5 million available for 2018 which was the first year the appropriation was made. The House bill calls for \$6 million while the Senate bill calls for \$4 million in 2019. The letter states, "We strongly support keeping at least \$6 million in the final conference agreement." Ramie noted that applications for the first round of Conservation Action Grants that will be funded through the 2018 appropriation were due by September 27. She noted that Congressman Faso had brought this letter to the Council's attention.

Japanese Angelica Tree Invasive Plant Found along NYS Route 97: Ramie shared a color flyer from Catskill Regional Invasive Species Partnership (CRISP) that Kris Gilbert, the regional landscape architect for NYSDOT Region 9, had provided to the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway. Gilbert reported the discovery of an infestation of *Aralia elata*, also known as Japanese angelica tree, along NYS Route 97. Asked by Henry whether it had been removed, Ramie said that CRISP had declared this an early detection/rapid response invasive plant in its boundary and is coordinating the removal effort.

Delaware River Flow and Storage Report: Padua shared that normal storage capacity for the reservoir system for this time of year is 76.5% and it is at 91.1% as of Sept. 17. The Cannonsville Reservoir is at 87.7% capacity, according to the chart.

Other: Henry said he had asked NPS to find out who the lead agency was for the train derailment. Chief Ranger Larry Neal subsequently reported that the Broome County Emergency Management Agency was in charge. Henry said now that the NPS has its Upper Delaware dispatch number in Broome County's Computer Aided Dispatch system, he is wondering how many other downstream communities or agencies were neglected by not getting notified of this fuel spill incident. Hamilton asked how far downstream. Henry said to the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area. He said the premise is, if we are looking to update the Emergency Response Guide, it's time to find out what went wrong in this case.

Hamilton said that the superintendent has assigned Neal to follow up on this topic but he will be happy to ask the committee's questions.

Padua said when he was on the river two days ago, he noticed a strong chlorine-like odor at the next creek down from the Masthope Community launch which he had never smelled before. It was noted that Masthope's waste water treatment plant is located there. Hamilton said there has been a lot of water testing there. Padua said they still caught fish. Padua asked if there is a protocol for the draining of pools; Hamilton said you cannot drain them into the river. Henry and Ramie mentioned hearing a report on WDNR radio coincidentally that day about how to safely dispose of pool water.

Public Comment: None

Adjournment: A motion by Henry, seconded by Case, to adjourn the meeting at 8:04 p.m. was carried.

Minutes prepared by Laurie Ramie based on notes by Ashley Hall-Bagdonas, 10/01/18