

The River Unites Us:

Stories about the Scenic Wild Delaware River by those who know it best



Sharon Davis
Delaware River
Program Manager
NPCA

This month's column features

Laurie Ramie, Executive Director, Upper Delaware Council, Inc.

The River Unites Us: The Upper Delaware Council (UDC) was a founding partner in the Scenic Wild Delaware River (SWDR) geotourism program. What attracted UDC to SWDR?

Laurie Ramie: When the UDC first learned in late summer 2015 about the National Parks Conservation Association's interest in pursuing a geotourism program for the Upper and Middle regions of the Delaware River as only the 23rd such National Geographic MapGuide initiative worldwide, we were excited over their recognition of how special this area is, and the opportunity to join forces to showcase both its diversity and commonalities.

TRUU: Geotourism encourages travelers to experience a region's unique natural, historic and cultural assets. How does that fit with the mission of the Upper Delaware Council?

LR: The Upper Delaware Council was established 30 years ago to oversee the administration of the River Management Plan for the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River, which the U.S. Congress designated as a unit of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System 40 years ago. The legislation called for a ground-breaking cooperative management model in which federal, state, and local interests would partner to protect and conserve the outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, ecological, cultural, and geological values of the 73.4-mile-long river corridor, while enabling the vast majority of its 55,574.5 acres to remain privately-owned with stewardship provided through voluntary land use controls. Not being a traditional national park, visitors can immerse themselves in the same activities and community-based experiences that river valley residents enjoy. The River Management Plan's goals speak to maintaining the unique and rare qualities, social and economic vitality, conservation of resources, fisheries and wildlife habitat, private property rights, planned growth, valley identity, and public recreational use of the river corridor.



Laurie Ramie

TRUU: The SWDR encompasses a 150-mile area that includes portions of 9 counties in 3 states (NJ, NY & PA). The UDC is comprised of member municipalities from New York and Pennsylvania. Please speak to the importance of fostering inter-municipality and inter-state relationships.

LR: The 15 voting members of our 501(c)(3) organization are the State of New York, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, eight New York State towns, and five Pennsylvania townships located in five counties that border along the Upper Delaware River. Two eligible PA townships have opted against joining the UDC to date. The Delaware River Basin Commission is a non-voting member, while the UDC operates under the terms of a Cooperative Agreement with the National Park Service. This collaboration provides a strong, collective voice on behalf of the river corridor, with checks and balances to help assure that each partner is fulfilling their assigned responsibilities in the River Management Plan. The UDC publishes a free, twice-annual newsletter, "The Upper Delaware", which is also posted on our website, upperdelawarecouncil.org, about the environment and people of the river valley. We promote stewardship of the river through direct interaction with it during our annual UDC Family Raft Trip, which is coming up on August 5.

TRUU: What are some "must experience" places on our website, www.ScenicWildDelawareRiver.com, that you recommend for geo-travelers?

LR: With transportation playing a central theme in the history of the Upper Delaware, I suggest a day trip (or more!) traveling the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway that runs along NYS Route 97 from Hancock to Port Jervis, largely paralleling the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River through charming communities that offer many eclectic dining, shopping, art viewing, and recreational opportunities. The highway also offers crossings into PA from 10 interstate bridges and Roebling's Delaware Aqueduct, past the Hawk's Nest overlook, historic railroad stations, and along parts of the Delaware & Hudson Canal.

This column is syndicated by the **Blue Valley Times**



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About The Scenic Wild Delaware River Geotourism Project:

Scenic Wild Delaware River Geotourism is one of only 23 geotourism programs created by National Geographic worldwide. Working collaboratively in the 3 states along the middle & upper Delaware River region, the Program promotes and sustains the region's resources for long-term economic and environmental vitality. NPCA helps staff this program. Visit the interactive travel website showcasing local experiences at

www.ScenicWildDelawareRiver.com



For more information contact Sharon Davis, sdavis@npca.org or tel: 570.460.4468