

Upper Delaware Council
WATER USE/RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMM. MEETING MINUTES
October 18, 2016

Committee Members Present: Tony Ritter, Pat Jeffer, Fred Peckham, Deb Conway, Doug Case
Committee Members Absent: Al Henry, Andy Boyar
NPS Partner: Don Hamilton
Staff: Laurie Ramie, Cindy Odell, Pete Golod
Guests: None

The UDC's Water Use/Resource Management Committee held its monthly meeting on Tuesday, October 18, 2016 at the Council office in Narrowsburg, NY. Chairperson Ritter called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

A motion by Jeffer was seconded by Case to approve the September 20 meeting minutes and carried. There was no public comment on the agenda.

Old Business:

September 19 & 20 Delaware River Watershed Forum Report: Golod reported that he attended the 4th Annual Coalition for the Delaware River Watershed Forum on September 19th and 20th. A comprehensive written report was provided in members' packets. Golod said the forum was an amazing experience with well-honed presentations, panel discussions, workshops, and networking opportunities. He stated that many of the attendees may not have known of the Upper Delaware Council or himself, but he assured members that they do now. He added that pending approval, he really looks forward to attending the conference again next year.

Golod said he received an email from Madeline Urbish, director of the Coalition for the Delaware River Watershed, requesting the UDC's help with the Delaware River Basin Conservation Act (DRBCA). This Act was discussed at length at the conference and information regarding it is contained in his written report, he noted. The DRBCA was passed in the U.S. Senate as part of a larger water resources bill known as the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA). The House of Representatives passed its own version of WRDA that differed from the Senate's and did not include the DRBCA. Golod explained that after the election, the two versions of the bill will need to be reconciled through a conference committee process in which members of the House and Senate negotiate to form a single bill to seek passage by Congress. To ensure the DRBCA makes it through these negotiations and remains in the bill, we have been asked to sign on to letters informing Congress about the timeliness of including the DRBCA in its final conference report for the Water Resources Development Act. Copies of the letters to both the House and the Senate were included in members' packets. Ramie stated that this is a late file action item, noting that the sample letters were just received this afternoon. They request an answer by Friday, she added. If this committee wanted to take action, Ramie said, it would be signing on to agree with the contents of the letters which asks the House and the Senate to include the Delaware River Basin Restoration Program, as authorized by Senate-passed, S.2848 Subtitle F, Part IV, in the conference report for the Water Resources Development Act of 2016. Ramie noted that we have talked about this legislation previously. A motion for the UDC to sign on to the letters regarding the Delaware River Basin Conservation Act was made by Conway and seconded by Jeffer. Ritter shared some history of this bill. Golod said that the Delaware River Basin Conservation Act would affirm the Delaware River Watershed as a national priority, worthy of attention and resources currently given to other major watersheds across the country, and would establish a non-regulatory Delaware River Basin Restoration Program in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service along with a \$5 million grant and technical assistance program. The program would create a coordinated approach for identifying, prioritizing, and implementing restoration and protection activities throughout the river basin. Hamilton stated there are people in the room that benefit from the health of river and its resources and he feels the bill would ramp up its priority nationwide and could provide some resources to help maintain some of the qualities it has now. A vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

Upper Delaware Scenic Byway September 26 Meeting Minutes: The minutes of the September 26th meeting of the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway were provided in members' packets for their information.

Ramie reported that the New York State Department of Transportation (DOT) has informed the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway (UDSB) that funding for the proposed visitors center in Narrowsburg has been denied. She said the letter read, "While this project is meritorious and will contribute to revitalizing and transforming your community, unfortunately this project was not advanced under this particular funding opportunity." This same language was used in a letter to the Sullivan County Visitors Association (SCVA) in regards to their proposed visitors center at Route 17's Exit 106, the entrance to the coming Montreign Casino Resort. Ramie is unsure of the fate of the application for the O & W Rail Trail. Ramie said the response was disappointing but not unexpected.

Ramie provided highlights of the September 26 UDSB meeting. She reported that there are two new non-voting member representatives. They are Helen Budrock, Community Planner for Sullivan Renaissance and Diane Rosencrance, the new Executive Director for Delaware Highlands Conservancy.

An update on the Monarch Butterfly Brochure and activities centered around it was provided. Ramie passed around a photo by John Conway of participants crossing the Roebling Bridge on October 15th for the "Barryville Butterfly Bike Ride – Seeding the Scenic Byway". The ride was hosted by the Greater Barryville Chamber of Commerce with various business partners. Debra Conway provided details of that event and others. Ramie reported that the UDSB provided a \$100 donation to the bike ride and helped to publicize it.

Ramie stated that the Byway voted to reserve an ad in the 2017 Sullivan County Catskills Travel Guide and renewed a brochure distribution contract with Catskill-Delaware Publication.

UDSB, Inc. 2017 Budget requests to the counties and local governments were discussed, Ramie noted. The Byway will be seeking additional funding from Sullivan County. If approved, that money would be used for more marketing promotions, study which areas would benefit from vista enhancements, pay for that work, do a survey of trails, and similar initiatives. Ramie said a motion was made and passed to write a letter to the Orange County Legislature requesting assistance to the Byway for a vista enhancement project at the Hawk's Nest. Ramie spoke of a recent graffiti issue at the Hawk's Nest. She reported that the vandalism perpetrators were caught.

Ramie shared details of the discussion that took place regarding signage at a proposed gas station at the Pete's Market property on Kirk Road in Narrowsburg that would be visible from the byway as proposed. A brief discussion about this project took place.

Ramie said the UDSB, Inc. voted to send a letter to the Sullivan County Legislature urging them to keep the Western Sullivan Transfer Station located in the Town of Cocheton in operation. She noted there has been some discussion at the County level about closing this site or reducing its operation for budgetary reasons.

The next meeting of the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway is scheduled for Monday, October 24.

September 28 Partnerships for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISMs) Call Update: Golod said he participated in this call. He reported that Megan Phillips, Invasive Species Education & Outreach Coordinator of the NYS DEC, spoke about the need to promote knowledge and understanding of invasive species. She focused on the Water Chestnut. The Water Chestnut is an invasive impacting the waters of New York State. As part of Invasive Species Awareness Week, participants were asked to search for Water Chestnut and enter any findings into the state invasive species database.

Also discussed briefly during this call was iMapInvasives. iMapInvasives is an on-line, GIS-based data management system used to assist citizen scientists and natural resource professionals working to protect our natural resources from the threat of invasive species, Golod explained.

Hamilton reported that they've seen Water Chestnut on the river before and have removed it on a couple of occasions. It tends to grow in still water, he added. Case asked him what it looks like. Hamilton said he will send out information, including pictures, about this invasive. He said that Water Chestnut is a real problem in some areas, covering the surface of lakes and outcompeting lots of other plants.

October 4 Catskill Regional Invasive Species Partnership (CRISP) Meeting Update: Golod said this meeting was held in Arkville, N.Y. He reported that CRISP Coordinator John Thompson started things off by mentioning the Hemlock Initiative. It is an initiative to coordinate research, management, and volunteers to conserve New York State's hemlock resources in the face of multiple threats, particularly posed by the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid.

The NYC DEP spokesperson reported on Oak Wilt throughout the state. Oak Wilt is a fungal disease affecting oak trees caused by a fungus spread from diseased to healthy trees from insects or by

connections between tree roots. Symptoms vary by tree species, but generally consist of leaf discoloration, wilt, defoliation, and death.

Brendan Murphy, Watershed Forester at the Watershed Agricultural Council, was the guest speaker and he spoke about the “My Woodlot.com Website.” MyWoodlot is a community of folks who love the outdoors and want to help each other. They provide outdoor activity ideas, advice on land ownership, and ways to connect with other landowners through their forums. They’ve gathered some of the best resources on woodlands from both landowners and professionals, and given them context through projects landowners can actually do. MyWoodlot is a project of the Watershed Agricultural Council’s Forestry Program, based in Delaware County, New York and was launched in 2015. Based on user feedback, a new section on invasive plants was added this year. Golod said it is a very interesting website and encouraged members to check it out. The website is <http://www.mywoodlot.com/>.

September 26 & October 17 Geotourism Stewardship Council Calls Update: Ramie reported that the Geotourism Stewardship Council (GSC) is in the process of compiling a three-year strategic plan. A Sustainable Foods page has been added to the MapGuide, Ramie noted. New nominations to the MapGuide from the three state, nine county region are still welcome. A template has been created to promote the Scenic Wild Delaware River through county travel guides, either through print or on-line format. The Council has started issuing monthly newsletters to the 650 site contributors trying to encourage them to have cross-links between websites to generate more traffic mutually. A survey from the Council will be released in the near future to find out from contributors what can be done to support them. The GSC is in the process of having 2,000 more rack cards produced and they are to be available soon. The rack cards contain the Scenic Wild Delaware River website information, Ramie said, noting that is valuable for getting traffic to the website. The Council is working on a profile for group bus tours. The motor coach industry is a very popular one and if they develop itineraries going through all nine counties, they hope that would increase visitation. People are being encouraged to use the hashtag #scenicwilddelawareriver on Instagram. A live Instagram feed for the website is being considered, Ramie added.

One project coming out of the Sustainability Committee is to develop a regional trails map for the nine county region. This project is in the beginning stages.

An in-person Fall meeting of the Geotourism Stewardship Council is scheduled for October 27th at the Sussex County Community College in Newton, New Jersey.

Schoharie Valley’s Early Warning System for Gilboa Dam Update: Golod said he spoke with the Schoharie County Office of Emergency Management Coordinator Colleen Flynn to follow up on some questions about their Early Warning System posed by members at last month’s committee meeting. He asked how far the sirens extend. She answered that they extend from Blenheim to Esperance, which spans the County. The 20 sirens are approximately 40-miles apart; however, the distance varies dependent upon the population density along Schoharie County. He asked how they got the NYC DEP to agree to fund them. She told him the funding was directly related to the inspection of Gilboa Dam. Potential dam failure was high and DEP knew that. The sirens were implemented as a “just in case” measure until or if failure occurred prior to the repair. The next question was regarding costs. Flynn said the monthly electric costs are a few dollars per siren and approximately \$40 a month in total. Flynn, in response to the question about maintenance, said she is not sure the level of maintenance, but believes the Sheriff’s Department is responsible for that task.

Ramie said she spoke with Howard R. Bartholomew, president of the group Dam Concerned Citizens, which is the advocacy group which worked on this effort. Bartholomew advised her that the sirens are tested bi-monthly and are capable of emitting verbal instructions, which accompany the siren warning. Bartholomew said he thinks this is a great project for the UDC to pursue for the Delaware River and anything below the Cannonsville Dam. He provided Ramie with some suggestions for building justification of having such a system installed. He recommended showing the science of the potential of more flooding as a convincing argument for getting New York City to invest in the project. Peckham asked if New York City is done with their seminars regarding the Emergency Action Plan. Ramie believes that they are. He asked Ramie to start drafting a letter to New York City Dept. of Environmental Protection asking for a timeframe on their consideration of ideas to improve the public notification process for emergencies involving the reservoirs and summarizing the UDC’s findings about the Gilboa Dam siren alert system in the Schoharie Valley. Ramie said that Bartholomew told her that the DEP moves slowly, but that you get a good product in the end. Peckham asked how many support letters have been received. Ramie said we’ve

received seven. Peckham said that maybe some towns sent their letters, but did not copy the UDC. Ramie agreed that is possible.

Ritter spoke of the Time & the Valleys Museum located at 332 Main Street in Grahamsville (State Route 55). The Time and the Valleys Museum is a living, interactive resource that preserves the past, educates the present and ensures the uniqueness of the Delaware watershed and surrounding geographical areas for all generations. Ritter and Ramie said that members would enjoy this museum very much. Ritter shared details of the museum and the list of benefactors. Ramie noted that Grahamsville is also home of the "Little World's Fair".

Upper Delaware Bridges Update: Ramie reported, in regards to the Skinners Falls, NY-Milanville, PA Bridge, that she received word from Gary A. Borgacci, Penn DOT Civil Engineer Manager today that stated, "The plan is for the bridge to be opened by the 31st. If anything changes I will let you know."

Ramie noted that a meeting has been scheduled by NYS Department of Transportation to provide information on the upcoming Callicoon, NY-Damascus, PA bridge work. The meeting will take place on November 2nd at 6:30 p.m. at the Delaware Youth Center in Callicoon, NY. Peckham questioned if the bridge is slated for replacement or rehabilitation. Ramie said it is supposed to be a very major rehabilitation project.

Ramie said the response from Heather Jacksy of Sullivan County Planning about the signage concern of the Narrowsburg, NY-Beach Lake, PA Bridge was sent around to members. It ultimately states that, "The signs were paid for by a now closed out grant. While the terms of the grant require that a sign remain, I would be happy to provide the specifications to anyone who could replace it in kind, changing 'Beach Lake' to 'Darbytown'".

Other: Conway provided an update on The Delaware Company's goal to raise funds for a memorial at the Minisink Battleground Park at Minisink Ford, NY. They applied for and received a \$5,000.00 matching grant. They are currently more than half way to the match and will sending out "ask" letters in hopes of raising the rest of the funding.

New Business

Delaware River Flow and Storage Report: A copy of the October 17th New York City DEP Current Reservoir Levels report was provided in members' packets. Total storage as of that date was 65.6% with Cannonsville at 38.3%. Normal total storage for this date is 74.0%. A brief discussion about releases and the Office of the Delaware River Master's requirement to meet a flow target of 1,750 cubic feet per second at the gauge in Montague, N.J. took place. When that flow target is not met by rainfall and natural runoff into the river, the River Master requires New York City to release additional water to ensure the target is met. That additional water is generally released from Cannonsville. Peckham commented that the roads that were submerged to build the reservoir are most likely visible at the Cannonsville now. Case questioned if there is a way to find out when water is going to be released from the reservoirs. Hamilton said he will provide Case with contact information for the River Master in Milford. A discussion about the lack of precipitation took place. Ritter said not much precipitation is in the 10-day forecast.

Other: Ritter reported that the Friends of the Upper Delaware River's Annual Water, Water Everywhere conference is scheduled for October 19th at West Branch Angler in Hancock, NY. Ramie said that she and Golod will be attending and will offer a report at next month's WU/RM meeting.

Ramie referred to a handout from the Friends of the Upper Delaware River which provides information on upcoming meetings regarding the work being done to develop a first of its kind Stream Corridor Management Plan in Delaware County below the NYC Delaware River basin reservoirs. The second series of meetings – The Basics of Stream Dynamics – will address the basic components of stream protection and how they impact people, communities and wildlife.

Ramie referred to a second handout from The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, Medicine. They are reviewing the New York City Department of Environmental Protection Operations Support Tool for Water Supply. The committee will be constituted in late 2016, meet five times in 2017, and issue its report by June 1, 2018. Peckham said he believes that New York City is looking to update their Filtration Avoidance Determination (FAD) agreement.

Ramie asked Case, who was attending his first WU/RM meeting as Lackawaxen Township's UDC representative, if he wanted to join this committee. Case said that he would become a member. Ritter said it is great to "have a man of the river" join the committee.

Public Comment: None

Adjournment: A motion by Conway seconded by Peckham to adjourn the meeting at 8:13 p.m. was carried.

Minutes prepared by Cindy Odell, 10/25/16