

Upper Delaware Council
WATER USE/RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMM. MEETING MINUTES
March 15, 2011

Committee Members Present: Ritter, Chase, Conway, McKay, Keesler, Rando
Committee Members Absent: Shafer
NPS Partner: Hahn
Advisory Council: None
Staff: Douglass, Soete, Coney, Ramie
Guests: None

The UDC's Water Use/Resource Management Committee held its monthly meeting on Tuesday, March 15, 2011 at the Council office in Narrowsburg, NY. Committee chairperson Tony Ritter called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m. Coney amended the Feb. 15 meeting minutes: Page 3 - under Byway, `1st graph: deadline for projects should be March 21; under D & H graph: name spelling, should be Kristin, Robinson. A motion by Rando seconded by Conway to approve the meeting minutes as amended was carried. There was no public comment on the agenda.

Old Business

Upper Delaware Scenic Byway Update: Ramie reported the last meeting of the Byway group was Feb. 28. They approved a resolution to NYS and DRBC on natural gas exploration in the Upper Delaware River Valley addressing viewshed protection and truck traffic impact issues on NYS Route 97; accepted bids for the Japanese knotweed brochure printing and graphic work for the interpretive sign project; the Byway made a donation to the UDC toward use of its facilities and staff support; tax filings being done; are accepting municipal landscape proposals for competitive funding; advertised for a marketing salesperson; and approved a nominating committee. There were presentations at the meeting from Sullivan County Planning on its Local Waterfront Revitalization Program and the Town of Highland Way Finding Program. The next meeting of the Byway will be March 28.

UDC Draft Letter to DRBC – support for NY/PA white paper relative to FFMP: Soete provided the committee with a draft letter to the DRBC's Secretary concerning the Delaware River Water Release Plan. This letter would be a follow-up to a similar letter sent in December. Soete used that letter and a model letter supplied by Boyar to come up with the draft letter. The FFMP (Flexible Flow Management Plan) would be up for renewal May 2011 and Boyar felt the draft letter should be sent to the UDC for action at its April meeting. The letter supports several elements in the NY-PA white paper as presented to the RFAC. After committee review, a motion by McKay seconded by Rando to recommend full Council approval was carried.

New Business

Sullivan Co. Planning Local Waterfront Revitalization Program meeting March 15: Douglass and Hahn from NPS attended the second meeting in a series of the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program, river corridor project, facilitated through the Sullivan County Planning office and held at the Eldred town hall. A copy of the agenda was provided to the committee. Hahn reported the potential boundaries of the project were discussed. Each municipality was to discuss and bring back to the next meeting a precise idea of what boundaries constitute the river corridor in their town so that the catchment area for the overall project could be determined. The local communities are the focus of this project along with the economy. The information gathered will guide the steering committee in the next steps of determining the scope of work and hiring a consultant. The next meeting was scheduled for May 4 at 5 p.m. in Hortonville (Town of Delaware).

Delaware River Basin Drinking Water Forum webcast March 10: Soete reported that he watched the webcast from the Sullivan County Community College and then switched to the Philadelphia forum regarding the first-ever Basin forum concerning clean and plentiful drinking water with a local level focus to develop a collaborative approach to protecting drinking water. The agenda included regional and local

topics such as: water use and water supply; regional impacts of climate change; strategies for water resource protection; and tools and tactics for local protection. Soete mentioned that Carol Collier of DRBC and Steve Gould of EPA Region 2 were two speakers among many. Some issues mentioned by the attendees were global warming; land development; water conservation; and runoff use as water source. The group wanted more meetings in the future to compare issues. Soete noted that the forum proceedings should be posted at some point on the www.DelawareBasinDrinkingWater.org site

DRBC Hydrologic Conditions Report March 1, 2011: Ritter mentioned that the Delaware River Basin Commission's March 1 Hydrologic Report was handed out to the committee. This report is produced by the DRBC and presented at its meetings. It can also be accessed at www.drbc.net. The report includes information on precipitation, streamflow, reservoirs, groundwater, and chlorides. As of March 1, Cannonsville Reservoir was at 83.7% of capacity, and Pepacton at 83.2%. Currently the reservoirs are full. During the heavy rain event just passed, the Callicoon river gauge showed 1.5 feet below flood stage. The reservoirs before the rain event were in the 90 percentile capacity. Hahn mentioned that the D & H trail by the Roebing Bridge was hit again with water damage this past rain event.

Chase said he had a message from Elaine Reichart. Bob Tudor of DRBC has said he will continue to work with the parties to enhance the flood mitigation component of the FFMP. He believed all three reservoirs were between 80-85% full last Friday. In this back to back storms situation, inflow into the reservoirs greatly exceeded release capacity and the reservoirs filled. That coupled with extremely saturated soil conditions and no leaf out transpiration at this time of year puts the River basin in a particularly vulnerable situation. Elaine relayed that snowpack capacity was only considered at 50%. When the NYC DEP website says 80-85% full then the three reservoirs have about 240 bg of storage. The three reservoirs can hold 270 bg before spillage if snow pack holds 150 bg equivalent; counting 50% until two days before any rain storm is insane.

PA Fish & Boat Commission – Executive Summary “Delaware River Management Plan” Draft: The committee was provided with the executive summary of the PA Fish and Boat Commissions' February 2011 draft Delaware River Management Plan. The Delaware River Management Plan is designed to guide future actions by PFBC and assist other stakeholders by providing information and information needs about the river's invaluable aquatic resources. Ultimately, it is the goal of this plan to protect, conserve and enhance the aquatic resources of and provide fishing and boating opportunities on the West Branch Delaware and Delaware River. The management plan encompasses the mainstem reaches of the West Branch Delaware River on the Pennsylvania-New York border and the non-tidal waters of the Delaware River to the head of tide at Trenton, NJ.

Ritter mentioned that the Plan does include the Flexible Flow Management Plan as the current framework for managing diversions and releases from the NYC's Delaware River Basin reservoirs. Rando pointed out that Priority 3 in the document notes “coordinate with partner agencies to determine the feasibility of installation of water quality monitoring stations in the upper Delaware River Basin above Callicoon, New York to assess the extent of the coldwater tailrace in the upper Delaware River.”

Hahn brought up that there is no mention of the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River, the River Management Plan, and the NPS cooperative fishery management process. Coney offered that given the border water situation and the stakeholders involved, that the UDC should comment on this document as provided for under a comment deadline of April 20. PFBC should be reminded of the management situation on the River and the Plan that governs it that's already in place. Rando noted that sometimes there is a dividing line of communication when state boundaries are involved even though the river corridor region involves two states and five counties and all the municipalities in between.

Hahn mentioned that NPS would be providing comment on the document and that its natural resource manager is reviewing the document now. Rando said that Don at NPS could do the technical aspects of the comments. Soete noted he'd like to review the Plan but was behind in reviewing things as is. Ritter felt the UDC should mention the River Management Plan and the partnership between NPS and UDC relative to river conservation. Rando commented the entire river is mentioned in the document. Ritter felt a one paragraph comment letter regarding the existing River Management Plan and the cooperative efforts of the NPS fishery management and the water quality monitoring should be pointed out. Soete noted he'd draft a letter and send it to the committee for UDC action at its April meeting.

Informational Handouts: The committee was provided with copies of documents of interest that included: ~The Delaware River Master's March 7-13 Reservoir Operations Data showing that Cannonsville Reservoir was at 105.7% of capacity and the combined capacity of the three reservoirs was at 102.8% as a result of the recent rain events. ~An EPA Fact Sheet "Improving Our Regulations Through Periodic Retrospective Review" announcing comment deadline and public hearing to help assist the EPA design the plan they will use to periodically review their regulations, as called for by President Obama in Executive Order 13563. ~The Pinchot Institute for Conservation's newly issued booklet, "The Marcellus Shale: Resources for Stakeholders in the Upper Delaware Watershed Region", also handed out at the UDC meeting. The booklet presents researched-based information on best management practices that address concerns raised by stakeholders; provides an objective review of the current status of regulations affecting gas drilling in the region; and reports on resources identified as important to stakeholders. This product was the result of stakeholder discussions held through the Common Waters Partnership and the Upper Delaware River Roundtable. ~A NYS DEC bio of newly confirmed DEC Commissioner Joe Martens.

DRBC's Regulated Flow Advisory Committee (RFAC) Meeting March 8: Douglass reported that he and Chase attended the March 8 RFAC meeting in West Trenton, NJ. He noted it was a good meeting and there seems to be more cooperative discussions. There were no particular conclusions. About 50 were in attendance and everyone worked together on the flows issue. There were five presentations provided. The WU/RM Committee received an email with links to these presentations.

Public Comment None

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

Carol Coney, Office Manager