

Upper Delaware Council
WATER USE/RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMM. MEETING MINUTES
October 21, 2014

Committee Members Present: Tony Ritter, Al Henry, Pat Jeffer, Andy Boyar
Committee Members Absent: John McKay
NPS Partner: None
Staff: Laurie Ramie, Travis O'Dell, Cindy Odell
Guests: None

The UDC's Water Use/Resource Management Committee held its monthly meeting on Tuesday, October 21, 2014 at the Council office in Narrowsburg, NY. Chairperson Ritter called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. A motion by Boyar seconded by Henry to approve the September 16 meeting minutes was carried. There was no public comment on the agenda.

Old Business:

Unique Land Resources Discussion: Ramie noted that in May 2014, the committee approved accepting the National Park Service's Geologic Report to satisfy the task of "Coordinate the development of a program to identify, protect, and interpret the unique landforms of the Upper Delaware River corridor in conjunction with the National Park Service, if funding becomes available" from the WU/RM FY 2014 Work Plan. The next step in the FY 2015 Work Plan is to formulate a plan to address the educational and interpretive opportunities cited for the unusual, unique, and outstanding landforms identified. Ramie referred to the list of Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River Geologic Features she prepared as a summary of the NPS report that was provided in members' packets. Ramie noted it needs to be determined which of these features warrant education and interpretation and how to go about accomplishing this. She reported that Shohola Township, as their Technical Assistance Grant project in 1996, completed their own survey within their township of unique landforms. Parts of that completed report, including step-by-step procedures to produce the inventory, were also included in members' packets. Ramie stated that this type of project could be encouraged for the upcoming round of TAGs. T. O'Dell suggested that interpretive panels could be placed at such places as Point Mountain in the Town of Hancock and the Narrows in the Town of Tusten. Ramie noted it would be great to accomplish the Unique Land Resources project since this project was derived from the 1986 River Management Plan. Henry recommended seeing if a Unique Land Resources tab could be added to the National Park Service website. Boyar said this is an interesting topic and that it is important to publicize that such information would be available. Ramie suggested that the NPS staff person Duane Braun, who prepared the report could be contacted and asked if he could provide a presentation on the sites identified. Henry said that a unique land resource article could be placed weekly in a local newspaper. Sites all along the Delaware could be covered. Members discussed some of the unique geologic features. Ramie said she will start the process of this task by writing a letter to the NPS Superintendent summarizing the committee's ideas and go from there.

Upper Delaware Scenic Byway 9/22 Meeting Update: Ramie said a presentation of the study by Peter Fairweather of the estimate of tourism visitation to the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway was given on this night at the Tusten Town Hall in place of the normal business meeting. Ramie said that while there were only 18 people in attendance, there has been interest expressed in the study from the publicity on it. She has had various inquiries from people about how they can obtain a copy of it and what information it contains. The next meeting of the UDSB is scheduled for October 27th at 7 p.m.

Upper Delaware River Roundtable October 2 Meeting Minutes: Ramie referred to the handout "Enjoy The View: A Scenic View Inventory for the Upper Delaware" provided in members' packets. This handout by UDSRR Superintendent Kris Heister was given at the Roundtable meeting. Ramie said the handout provides information on a scenic inventory and addresses such issues as project goals; why conduct a scenic view inventory; who might get involved; and a potential strategy. T. O'Dell noted that he attended and presented at Sullivan Renaissance's "Preserving Scenic Views" program on September 3rd. He said the program was well attended, but there seemed to be little interest in following up on this issue at the grassroots level.

Catskill Regional Invasive Species Partnership (CRISP) October 3 Meeting Update: O'Dell said this meeting was held at the Catskill Center in Arkville, New York. A presentation on the Mile-A-Minute vine was given by Jamie Myers of the NPS. This invasive plant is not yet established in the area, however it was found locally in a couple of places where it was effectively eradicated.

O'Dell said a Eurasian Boar update was provided. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has killed ten hogs this summer. Two of these tested positive for Leptospirosis, a bacterial disease that affects humans and animals.

O'Dell said Chris Zimmerman from the Nature Conservancy gave a presentation on "Facilitating Management of Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA) in the Catskill Mountains". Zimmerman's study comprised of approximately 40,000 acres of hemlock forest in the Catskill Park focusing on the presence and absence of HWA and the health of the forest. The study found that while many areas of the Catskills had HWA, the forests are holding strong. The four conservation strategies that were identified include bio control through the Laricobius beetle which is native to the Pacific Northwest and feeds exclusively in HWA; restoration efforts such as plantings in highly sensitive areas; continuous monitoring; and the expansion of the survey to determine what type of environment the HWA prefers and whether they exist in river corridors. Henry questioned if the Emerald Ash Borer was discussed. O'Dell told him this invasive is very rampant in the Catskills and Hudson Valley regions and spoke briefly about ash trees being cut down and their seeds saved for replanting.

Common Waters October 9 Meeting Update: Ramie referenced her written report included in members' packets. The first presentation of the meeting was by Laura Moran of Beautiful Traditions, LLC on the Confluence Project. Their "reveal" event was held on October 5th in Hawley PA. The project is a web-based one to collect stories. It is envisioned as an economic development tool and was initially supported by a grant from the Appalachian Gateway Communities Initiative. Ten stories have been done to date and are included on an interactive map. The maps can be accessed at www.confluencevoices.com. Beautiful Traditions, LLC hopes to expand the program to the whole river valley when funding is available. Ramie said she inquired if the company is a for-profit one and was told that they are.

A presentation by Steve Schwartz of the Pinchot Institute for Conservation (PIC) was offered. The William Penn Foundation is investing \$35 million over three years in the Delaware Watershed for strategies to protect water quality. Schwartz was hired on August 1st to coordinate activities for the Pocono-Kittatinny Cluster (PKC). The PKC includes 1,200 square miles in parts of seven counties within New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. Decisions on the first round of funding are expected soon. Each cluster must manage a water quality monitoring program. Schwartz would like to make the Academy of Natural Sciences (ANS) the repository of all water quality data in the Delaware watershed and is attempting to set up that system. PKC has a 13-member steering committee and six working groups focused on: 1) Landowner Outreach; 2) Land Use Planning & Regulations; 3) Bonds/Financing; 4) Community Outreach and Economic Benefits; 5) Monitoring; and 6) Energy. Commons Waters is compiling all plans pertaining to the watershed and then will determine what is missing.

Jeff Skelding and Dan Plummer of Friends of the Upper Delaware River discussed the agenda for their "Water, Water Everywhere" conference scheduled for October 14 and 15 and described the objectives of the Upper Delaware River Tailwaters Coalition.

A report on the Climate Adaptation Plan was given. Over the next 6 – 12 months, PIC plans to develop a Forest Management Guide related to climate change and will hold a workshop for forest owners.

The Long Eddy River Access was discussed. Delaware Highlands Conservancy (DHC) will close at the end of October on the purchase of the Ferry Street residential property in Long Eddy. The property will then be conveyed to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation to improve the boat launch. DHC has started an online campaign to raise funds and seeks premiums to offer to contributors for certain levels of donations. See www.indiegogo.com and find "Improve the Long Eddy River Access" under Projects or contact the DHC Land Protection Coordinator at (570) 226-3164, ext. 3 or protect@delawarehighlands.org.

Ramie said her written report contains a list of roundtable sharing topics that were offered at the meeting. She and T. O'Dell spoke of the UDC's River Management Plan Technical Review Report and the Design Handbook update.

The next quarterly meeting of Common Waters is a virtual webinar scheduled for January 8, 2015.

Henry asked if it is known how many different groups are conducting water quality monitoring programs on the Delaware. Ramie said she is not sure, but knows that the Delaware River Basin Commission, National Park Service, and Delaware Riverkeeper are among the groups that regularly sample water. O'Dell added that the U.S. Geologic Service also does water quality monitoring. Henry said that studying the water by several different groups does not make it any more remarkable and he feels it is a wasted effort. Ramie said that common standards would need to be adopted if this information were to be centralized, which the committee agreed would be a good goal.

Long Eddy River Access Discussion: The Delaware Highlands Conservancy (DHC) is expected to close on the Ferry Street residential property in Long Eddy at the end of October. The property listed for \$69,000, the seller agreed to take \$60,000, and there is a gap of approximately \$20,000 in the loan that DHC was able to secure from the Open Space Institute to complete the acquisition. The property will then be transferred to the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation. This transaction should take place in approximately 12 – 24 months. Henry suggested seeking funding from the William Penn Foundation for the Long Eddy Access. He was informed that the property lies outside of the Pocono-Kittatinny Cluster. The on-line campaign to raise funds for this purchase was discussed. Ramie noted the amount they are looking to gain from the public is \$5,000 and the campaign runs through December 3rd. After much discussion, it was decided that NYS Representative Bill Rudge be contacted and asked for more information on the DEC's plan and schedule to eventually acquire the Ferry Road, Long Eddy property from the Delaware Highlands Conservancy to undertake improvements to the Long Eddy River Access. This update could be provided at the November 6th UDC meeting if feasible.

Water, Water Everywhere October 14 & 15 Conference Report: O'Dell referred to the agenda in members' packets. He said there was a lot of information provided in the two days. Implementation of Stream Corridor Management Plans (SCMP) by the Upper Delaware River Tailwaters Coalition for tributaries below the New York City Reservoirs was a topic covered at the conference. These plans have been completed above the reservoir and have worked fairly well. O'Dell said New York Congressman Chris Gibson spoke of the need to revisit the Flexible Flow Management Plan (FFMP) and the 1954 Decree. Gibson spoke of incorporating additional storage at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' F.E. Walter Dam into the next FFMP as a means of meeting the targets at Trenton and Montague to take some pressure off the NYC Reservoirs. Ramie said Gibson has a Watershed Advisory Group and has been listening to people. She noted that Gibson agrees that stretching the FFMP by one year extensions is not adequate and something should be done. O'Dell said that three of the five Decree Party Principles were represented and they agree this issue needs to be addressed. Boyar asked staff what their overall impression was of the 5th annual conference. O'Dell stated it is good to have that many people from different interests in a room to discuss certain issues. Ramie felt the structure of the conference was helpful. She said the first panel concerned stream restoration and flooding followed by resource management for water, and concluded with presenters' discussion of existing programs that fund Upper Delaware River protection and restoration, the need for additional investment in the region, and funding opportunities on the horizon. A discussion about gravel build-ups, flooding and stream restoration took place. Members spoke of pre-reservoir conditions of the main stem of the Delaware River.

Other: Henry said he had recently read a reference to closing the Narrowsburg Bridge at times during the rehabilitation process. Ritter asked if anyone had attended the September 18th meeting hosted by Penn DOT regarding the Narrowsburg Bridge Rehabilitation Project. Ramie said she attended and had provided a written report to the Project Review Committee that is available to anyone interested. O'Dell said he has heard that the bridge could be closed for brief periods on occasional nights and weekends. Ritter shared the Town of Tusten's concerns should this happen. Henry remarked that closing the Narrowsburg Bridge for even short durations will be a major controversy as it is a major artery.

New Business:

New York State Draft Open Space Conservation Plan Discussion: T. O'Dell said this Draft Plan is an update and revision of the 2009 Plan. It was sent out in advance to members of this and the Project Review Committee, he added. Public comments will be accepted until December 17, 2014. He hopes that a draft

letter can be ready to send out by either the November or December full Council meeting. The pages of the Plan that pertain to our area were provided in members' packets. He referred members to the top of page 102 which reads, "Land protection priority should be given to parcels that protect riparian buffer land, preserve or restore flood plain areas, protect scenic areas and vistas along principle road corridors and on visible ridgelines, protect flood-prone areas and enhance public access and recreational opportunities." It is his opinion that this specifically addresses the Long Eddy access. O'Dell shared some of the discrepancies that staff identified in this draft. He asked members to look the draft plan over and send comments by November 3rd so that a draft letter can be worked on. A public hearing on this draft plan took place earlier in the day out of our area, O'Dell noted.

PA HB 1565 – Stream Buffer Bill: O'Dell reported that a bill to remove a state regulation requiring forest buffers for specially protected streams won final approval October 15 from state lawmakers. It awaits the governor's signature. The measure would eliminate a 150-foot buffer requirement for new development affecting a category of exceptional value and high-quality streams. In its place, the bill would allow a developer to combine use of a buffer and other environmental practices to protect a nearby stream. Copies of *Times-Tribune* and *River Reporter* articles were provided in members' packets for their information.

Delaware River Flow and Storage Data Report: Ritter reported that actual precipitation measured for August, September, and October totals 5.5" whereas historically, 11.45" is received during the same time frame. NYC Water Supply System total storage as of October 20 is at 71.2% and normal for this date is 72.9%. Boyar commented that the creeks are extremely dry. Fishing conditions were discussed. Ritter said he would like to see if New York City has statistics on the 50-year mean averages for the individual Delaware River Basin reservoirs.

Other: Ramie reported that on Monday, October 27, 2014, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission is meeting and we should have a decision on the eel fishery. That decision will be reported on at the November full Council meeting.

Ramie said that the combined UDC and Park Service Gas Summit presentation will take place at next month's committee meeting.

A discussion about the eel fishery on the Delaware River took place.

Public Comment: None

Adjournment: A motion by Boyar seconded by Henry to adjourn the meeting at 8:37 p.m. was carried.

Minutes prepared by Cindy Odell, 10/28/14