

CWC WOH Sporting Advisory Committee

April 18, 2017

MINUTES

Members Present: Alan Budine, Herbert DeWitt, Michael Giuliano, Paul Lenz (NYCDEP), Joseph Liuni, Alan Martel, Steven Roff, and James Volker

Others: Alan Rosa (CWC), and Timothy Cox (CWC), Tom Davidock, Recreation Program Supervisor, NYC DEP

1. Called to Order at 6:00 PM
2. The April 12, 2016 minutes were moved as corrected by Herbert DeWitt and seconded by Alan Budine. Voice vote, approved unanimously.

3. Land Acquisition Update

Paul Lenz introduced Tom Davidock, the new Recreation Program Supervisor at the NYCDEP. He started in August of 2016. All members of the Committee introduced themselves, citing names and affiliations. David made contact information available to all members and extended an invitation for anyone to contact him with any questions or concerns. He is a hiker, hunter and fisherman.

Paul said that the land acquisition program is slowing down a bit due to focus shifting to the DEP Flood Buyout Program. A map showing the smaller properties acquired, mostly along streams where repeated flooding has occurred, and they are now opening those lands up for recreation. There may be a few properties with multiple neighbors which the Towns may not support opening for recreation, but the majority of these parcels have Town support for recreational uses. Fishing access will be the primary use of these parcels.

It was asked if DEP has any plans for habitat improvement on these parcels due to their proximity to the streams. Paul said that some of the properties purchased through the City Flood Buyout Program have had stream studies conducted and some of them will be flagged by the City's Stream Management Program, utilizing bio-engineering and bank stabilization methods.

Paul said that 133,000 acres are open for recreation at this time.

Tim provided the updated DEP recreational areas maps to Committee members.

4. Recreational Use Program Update

Paul distributed copy of several maps of parcels that DEP has received pushback from Town Supervisors/property owners for discussion regarding whether the property should be open to recreational uses.

Middletown (Delaware) - Property ID #8897 – This parcel was purchased a few years ago and was originally opened up to hunting, trapping, fishing, and public access. There is a neighbor who has spring rights on this property, which usually does not have any effect on recreational uses. The neighbor's concern is that someone will find out that he is an ENCON employee and do something to his spring. The Town is asking DEP to not open it for recreation or to change it to a closed property. Paul is inclined to not grant that request, as there are other parcels with springs on them, and to set the precedent that one neighboring property owner can determine use of an entire parcel is not something DEP wishes to establish. To date there have not been any problems on parcels with someone messing with springs. There was discussion of placing "No Trespassing" signs around the location of the spring, but he felt that would draw unwanted attention to the area. Paul would like to send a reply to the Town denying the request, citing that he has brought the matter before the CWC Sporting Advisory Committee and they had agreed that there is no need to close the parcel to recreation.

James Volker stated that, due to his previous employment he has seen a few incidences when there were issues of retaliation to a parcel being opened.

... said that due to the fact that the spring is not on the neighbor's property, and there has been a consistent record of recreational use on parcels not being determined by Towns and neighboring land owners, then it shouldn't be done in this case either. It's a legitimate concern, but not one that we can address.

The Committee made a motion and was seconded to be in support of the DEP's decision to not alter the recreational uses of the parcel. **Voice Vote, carried unanimously**

Roxbury (Delaware) – Parcel #3630 - 77 acres, purchased by DEP in 2003, and has always been closed to recreational uses. In 2016 there was a request via written letter to open the parcel. There is access to the parcel along Polli Road to the North of the parcel, and the Rail Trail system from Roxbury to Stamford borders the parcel to the South-East and turns North along the Eastern-most border (and is used by snowmobilers during the winter seasons). Paul said the biggest concern is that there is no parking area, and the fear is people would use the end of the driveway on Polli Road, which the neighboring land owner has blocked off and posted, or that they would park in the fields and block the farmer's access. Alan Rosa suggested that Paul send a letter to the Town Board and see what they say about opening this parcel up for recreational use.

... stated that the opposition to this request will come from Mr. Polli, who charges hunters a fee to hunt on his property and use his blinds, so he won't welcome the competition. This has been seen on other parcels owned by the DEP, including the parcel in Margaretville that was just discussed. The only other objection ever raised when discussed is the school

(BOCES), but there are private landowners who regularly hunt in surrounding parcels which are much smaller and closer to the school than this parcel. Polli road is Town maintained.

Paul said that his main concern is the lack of access off of a public road. He'd like to send a letter informing the Town of their interest in opening the parcel for hunting and hiking, and possibly restricting it to bow hunting and hiking with entry by permit for a trial period, eventually opening to rifle hunting also. He will double check the survey on the parcel and send a letter to the Town.

... Property ID #1028 - 56.6 acres open for bow hunting, hiking and fishing. The SAC recommended trapping and closed access, also. DEP responded via letter that in order to open for trapping, their recreation rules do not allow them to open a parcel for trapping without hunting. Because it is already open for bow hunting, SAC is requesting clarification. Paul replied that hunt, hike, fish and trap are required in order to be a public access area. In the last year, DEP has determined that bow hunting falls under the overall definition of hunting, so there have been areas opened up as public access with bow hunting in it. Paul is not certain what has happened with that parcel, but with this new definition it may well be able to be opened to trapping. He will check into it and get back to the Committee about what he finds, and thinks that it could be opened to public access and to include hiking, bow hunting, trapping, and fishing. He also noted that they are working on changing the definition of 'public access' to not require all four categories, so parcels can be designated public access and maybe only allowing hiking, or hiking and fishing, or all uses.

... also asked about the handicapped access at Trout Brook on the Rondout, off 55A. A fisher has complained that there is nowhere to fish at that area. There had previously been discussion of installing a floating dock at that site in particular.

Tom stated that the DEP is going out for design of a universal access fishing pier. One of the challenges they face is the level change in the reservoirs, and they want to be sure that whatever is built will be accessible despite water levels, hold up to ice and be maintainable.

DEP is also looking to improve universal access to parcels. ATV and vehicle access on some parcels for those who cannot walk in is being considered. There would be special permits granted for these, and is asking members to suggest parcels they may be aware of. These would be for those with ambulatory hardships, and modeled after the State program.

Rail Trail is still being worked on with the County. There haven't been changes to the kiosks, and DEP continues to make it known that hunting and access has to be continued in those areas.

5. D-Map Program

Around 300 tags were given out in 2016 and a little over 60 deer were harvested under the D-Map program this year, and numbers of permits have been the same for the past several years. Ashokan 13, Neversink 32, and Cannonsville 16, nothing anywhere else. The DEP is applying to the State for the D-Map Program again this year and are hoping to expand the program to several more sites or to revisit some of the areas that they are already in. It's not widely advertised because there is always an abundance of people wishing to participate. This past year DEP tried a new online registration system for the lottery, as well as provided the paper registrations. Paul said that the take on the Neversink went down by a few, and the Ashokan has leveled out. Many hunters only use one deer a year, others get many and only fill one. Forestry staff on the Ashokan feel that this program is helping with forest regeneration. One of the things that the manager of the program has done the past couple of years is to automatically enter someone who submits a tag into the next year's program. ... asked if anything was done with the Veterans and grouse hunting last year, to which Paul responded that there was not, though it would be great if that could be done through the local Sportsman clubs.

Alan noted that the Delaware Inn in Stamford will become a Veterans Center, and once the center is established, the manager is interested in doing a Wounded Warrior hunting and fishing program.

... said that the Ruffed Grouse group has stepped away from the Wounded Warrior hunting program. Paul said they are more focused on habitat improvement, and that as an organization the deer hunting Wounded Warrior program was out of their realm. He said to let him know of interest in coordinating Wounded Warrior programs for hunting, fishing, or even kayaking and canoeing, which the Wounded Warrior programs focus on frequently.

6. Boating Program Update

CWC provided Boat Rack Rental and Recreational Boating Statistics printouts for 2016. Tom Davidock noted that there has been growth in the rental side of the program, and issuance of boat tags for single day use and seasonal storage of individual boats has remained fairly steady, with a slight drop. CWC manages contracts with all of the steam cleaning vendors. DEP will be purchasing 3 more boat racks for some of the launch areas on the Pepacton. DEP would like to see more advertising on the rental side to help with the economic growth of the program, and at the same time limit the number of boats being stored on the reservoirs. Last year is the first year that the rentals exceeded the tags, which shows new interest in the program and growth in the economy from the program.

Trolling motors will not be expanded this year, as the DEP revisits their recreational use rules. A survey sent out last year received mixed reviews on the expansion of the trolling motor program, with no definitive outcome. It will be part of the discussion for future years.

7. Esopus and Schoharie Reservoir

Jim asked about the status of the Schoharie Reservoir, saying that the dam project had been completed but the last time he was out there the water levels were still very low. ... responded that as of last week it was spilling over. Alan said that there is a new valve system that was installed last year where they will be dumping water into the Schoharie Creek, and they had to build a tunnel. That work is now complete and the reservoir is at 91% capacity currently.

On the Espous there is a floating intake chamber to be installed in order to control the turbidity of the creek. Replacement of the gates is not completed to date, and there is a by-pass tunnel being built to fix leaks in the system.

Alan mentioned that John Vickers could answer a lot of the questions about the status of the reservoirs and repairs being done.

8. Recreation Rules are being worked on, with quite a few changes being looked at, including:
 - a. Change in definition of 'Public Access' so not all four recreational uses are mandatory for each parcel to be public access areas.
 - b. Adding recreational uses to East of Hudson, where currently all parcels are entry by permit.
 - c. Boat regulation and storage issues in the East of Hudson. Some owners have 20-30 boats, some reservoirs are closed to new boats, so those who want to get boats can't get them. People in East of Hudson are selling boats in closed areas, creating a black market of boats. DEP is considering limitations on transfers and on how many boats one person may have on the reservoir. To get a sense of what people will want, DEP sent out a survey to 5,000 people DEP had email addresses for, 1,400 people completed the survey, and the results showed where these people were from, how long they've had their boats on the reservoirs, are they active users, where there are waiting lists, overcrowded/overwhelmed storage areas, and the largest issues in these areas. Trash, parking and access to the water due to congestion of storage and users in launch areas. Next, the survey allowed participants to suggest ways that DEP can address these issues. Responses included additional parking, better boat tying methods, designated access, and add trash cans to sites. Regarding boat limits, responses noted that utilization is at or over capacity, that limiting the number is welcomed at various levels ranging from 3-5, and under 300 responses felt there was no need for limits. 21% of boaters have more than 2 boats, 8% have more than 3, 4% have more than 4, and less than 1% have over 8 boats. Per reservoir, those numbers are all under 1%. The question then becomes, how does the DEP increase access to the reservoirs without increasing the number of boats on the reservoirs? Rentals were suggested, and a boat sharing program through a Sportsmans Club. The last part of the survey was focused on cleanup and maintenance of the boating areas through volunteer programs.

9. ... asked how downed trees in these areas should be handled. The best thing to do is to contact DEP and they will send out their tree crew, which is forming in the West of Hudson. Is it possible to clear a path with a bow saw so a boat owner can access their boats and the water? Paul said it may be possible to set up a boat steward program so a select group can help to maintain these issues.
10. DEP Activities – A flier with Public Events was handed out, with one correction to location of the April 29 Family Fishing Day to Lake Gleneida. Ulster County Creek Week will be held after June. A new schedule for the rest of the summer will be released at a later date.
11. ... (Greene County) asked if there are any bids coming out for this program in Greene County, noting that much of the DEP properties up there in need of culling and that logging in this area will be of great benefit to the deer population. DEP is mostly around the reservoirs at this time, and the DEP's forestry program is doubling in staff.
12. Schedule Next Meeting – October 17, 2017, 6:00 pm
13. A motion to adjourn was made by Alan Budine and seconded by Joseph Liuni.