



# Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River

## 2026 Annual Workplan for Resource & Recreational Use Management

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## MISSION

The National Park Service (NPS) at the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River (SRR) protects, conserves, and enhances the free-flowing character, exceptionally high water quality, and the scenic, recreational, ecological, cultural, and geological values of the Upper Delaware River valley through collaborative partnerships and cooperation with state and local government entities. It exists within a complex framework of federal legislation, policies, and cooperative agreements designed to balance conservation, recreation, and local interests. NPS operates under the authority of the National Park Service Organic Act, the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, and other applicable laws that ensure the protection of its free-flowing character, high water quality, and diverse natural and cultural resources. The Upper Delaware SRR River Management Plan (RMP) additionally serves as a guiding document for cooperative stewardship and local land use for the NPS and local governments.

**NPS Mission:** The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the National Park System for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The National Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world. The primary legal framework from which the National Park Service must operate is Title 36 of the Code of Federal Regulations (36 CFR), which regulates federal agencies of the United States regarding parks, forests, and public property.

**Wild and Scenic Rivers Act:** In 1968 Congress passed the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, and “*declared to be the policy of the United States that certain selected rivers of the Nation, which with their immediate environments possess outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values, shall be preserved in free-flowing condition, and that they and their immediate environments shall be protected for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations.*” In 1978, Congress used the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to designate the Upper Delaware River as a unit of the national park system and a component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System through P.L. 95-625 Section 704.

**River Management Plan:** Published in 1986, the River Management Plan (RMP) guides the management of the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River. Although it does not supersede law, the RMP established an agreement between all levels of government for management of the Upper Delaware River and its resources. The RMP provides guidance on the management of land use, water resources, fisheries and wildlife, threatened and endangered species, unique land resources, cultural resources, facilities, and water use.

**Other Environmental and Legislative Acts:** Management of the Upper Delaware SRR is also subject to additional environmental and legislative acts, including but not limited to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA), the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966.



## HOW WE ARE ORGANIZED

Our dedicated team of twenty permanent, year-round employees, approximately thirteen seasonal employees, and myriad interns and volunteers operate the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River NPS unit. Staff work within six divisions, each playing a crucial role in preserving resources, ensuring visitor safety, and maintaining park operations.

**Interpretation & Education:** Fosters shared stewardship, engagement with schools and local communities, and excellence in visitor service. By connecting people with the Upper Delaware SRR's natural and cultural significance, staff deepen public understanding and appreciation of its resources.

**Facilities:** Maintains NPS buildings, structures, grounds, and utility systems, ensuring they remain in good condition for long-term use. Facilities staff provide leadership and expertise in preserving and managing the park's physical infrastructure to support its mission.

**Visitor & Resource Protection:** Promotes a sense of responsibility and mutual respect with the public to maintain the integrity and beauty of the Upper Delaware river corridor. They are committed to ensuring a safe and respectful environment for visitors, staff, and wildlife, while upholding the rule of law and promoting stewardship, education, and conservation.

**Administration:** Ensures smooth operations through financial management, business operations, human resources, and IT services. Administration staff serve both NPS employees and the public to support budget planning, personnel actions, property and fleet management, and commercial service and special use permits.

**Natural & Cultural Resource Management:** Protects the ecosystem, historic sites, and archaeological resources, and implements management strategies for NPS resources. Resource staff ensure federal and state agencies comply with environmental and historic preservation laws within the Upper Delaware SRR corridor, and oversee the research permit process for research activities on the river.

**Superintendent's Office:** Guides the park unit's strategic direction, oversees daily operations, and plans and directs financial and human resources necessary to accomplish the mission. The superintendent's office staff oversee the implementation of the Upper Delaware SRR enabling legislation and other federal and state laws, and the Upper Delaware River Management Plan (RMP).



# PARTNERSHIPS

The Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River Management Plan (RMP) envisions a collaborative approach to effectively manage and preserve the river. By partnering with community organizations, local governments, and other groups, we combine expertise and resources to ensure the river remains safe, clean, and accessible for future generations.



## **VOLUNTEERS**

Volunteers are vital to the Upper Delaware SRR, supporting essential NPS initiatives and inspiring community involvement and stewardship. Programs such as Wear It Watchers promote water safety, while the Delaware Highlands Conservancy's Eagle Watch volunteers guide and educate the public on bald eagles and their habitat. The National Canoe Safety Patrol volunteers enhance visitor safety, ensuring that canoeists and kayakers can navigate their adventures safely and with confidence.



## **NATIONAL CANOE SAFETY PATROL (NCSP)**

The National Canoe Safety Patrol (NCSP) promotes water safety and responsible paddling. Their mission is to ensure the safety of everyone who enjoys the Upper Delaware SRR while promoting responsible and sustainable recreational use. Their volunteers are dedicated to making a difference to visitors recreating on the river, and have contributed over 87,000 hours to the Upper Delaware SRR since 1994. More information about the NCSP and how to support their mission can be found at [nationalcanoesafetypatrol.org](http://nationalcanoesafetypatrol.org).



## **DELAWARE HIGHLANDS CONSERVANCY**

The Delaware Highlands Conservancy preserves agricultural and forest lands vital to healthy local foods, clean drinking water, biological diversity, outdoor recreation, and to the overall beauty and quality of life we enjoy in the Upper Delaware region. The Conservancy also partners with NPS to hold the Winter Eagle Watch program during January and February each year, when Conservancy volunteers staff the Zane Grey Museum, the Ten Mile River and Lackawaxen Accesses to provide visitors with information about wintering and resident bald eagles in the Upper Delaware River Valley.



## **UPPER DELAWARE COUNCIL (UDC)**

The Upper Delaware Council was established in 1988 to unite local, state, and federal agencies to manage the Upper Delaware SRR, and advocate and educate on the protection of the river and private property rights. NPS provides annual financial support, totaling just over \$11 million to date. However, inflation and the unfulfilled state contributions from New York and Pennsylvania challenge the UDC's financial sustainability. More information on the Upper Delaware Council and how to support their mission can be found at [upperdelawarecouncil.org](http://upperdelawarecouncil.org).



## **FRIENDS OF THE UPPER DELAWARE RIVER (FUDR)**

Friends of the Upper Delaware River focuses on the protection and restoration of the Upper Delaware River watershed cold water ecosystem and the communities that surround it. FUDR build coalitions and partnerships to organize stakeholders with the goal of river protection. NPS partners with FUDR on many efforts, including the Upper Delaware River Network which organizes a wide diversity of watershed stakeholders in the implementation of practices and projects that address climate change, water quality, wildlife habitat, and recreational opportunities.



### **DELAWARE RIVER BASIN COMMISSION (DRBC)**

The Delaware River Basin Commission was created by an interstate federal compact to bring the Delaware River under collective and balanced control and to ensure fair usage by the four basin states. The DRBC conducts programs and research related to water quality protection, water supply allocation, water conservation, regulatory review and permitting, watershed planning, drought management, flood mitigation and loss reduction, and river recreational

activities.



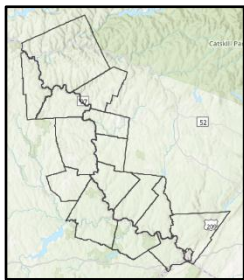
### **NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION (NYSDEC)**

New York State DEC operates thirteen public river accesses in the Upper Delaware SRR corridor, which NPS co-manage. Details on locations and co-management activities for river accesses can be found on page 16. NPS conducts joint law enforcement operations to enforce fishing and boating activities with NYSDEC throughout the season.



### **PENNSYLVANIA FISH & BOAT COMMISSION (PAFBC)**

PA Fish & Boat Commission operates six public river accesses in the Upper Delaware SRR corridor, which NPS co-manage. Details on locations and co-management activities for river accesses can be found on page 16. NPS cooperates with PAFBC on the enforcement of fishing and boating regulations.



### **LOCAL GOVERNMENTS**

The Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River corridor consists of 73.4 miles of river and 55,574.5 acres of land from ridgeline to ridgeline along the river in five counties and 15 municipalities. Pennsylvania County partners include Wayne and Pike Counties, and New York County partners include Orange, Sullivan, and Delaware Counties. Municipal partners in Pennsylvania include Buckingham, Manchester, Damascus, Berlin, Lackawaxen, Shohola, and Westfall Townships. New York municipal partners include the Towns of Hancock, Fremont, Delaware, Cohecton, Tusten, Highland, Lumberland, and Deerpark.



# TECHNICAL & FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

The Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River enabling legislation (P.L. 95-625 Section 704) allows the Secretary of the Interior to provide technical assistance to the States and their political subdivisions as they deem appropriate to implement programs compatible with the River Management Plan. The National Park Service at Upper Delaware SRR conduct several technical and financial assistance programs for local communities and organizations.

**Cultural Resources:** NPS staff provide the community with technical assistance and information on preservation techniques and relevant legislation. For example, NPS National Register specialists helped update and expand the nomination of the D&H Canal on the National Register of Historic Places, ensuring its historical significance receives proper recognition.

**Preservation and Skills Training:** At Upper Delaware SRR, staff are available to provide training in historic window restoration and minor carpentry repair, supporting historic preservation organizations and local entities with historic structures. This program is available to encourage passing these skills to future preservation organizations and workers.

**Planning & Geographic Information Systems GIS:** NPS provides planning and GIS support to counties, municipalities, and community partners, to help them implement the RMP. GIS assistance includes physical and online mapping, while planning support is available to aid in the evaluation of potential and proposed land use and development projects, and to assist in developing plans and ordinances that achieve, maintain, or increase substantial conformance with the RMP. In 2025 NPS provided technical assistance to the Town of Highland for the FEIS review for a proposed land development project.

**Technical Assistance Funding:** Through the Technical Assistance Grants Program, funded by NPS and administered by the UDC, UDC member municipalities apply competitively for grants to help implement the RMP. More information is available at [upperdelawarecouncil.org](http://upperdelawarecouncil.org).

**Deerpark Law Enforcement Financial Assistance:** The Upper Delaware SRR enabling legislation also contains provisions for NPS to contract with river towns and townships to enforce State and local laws. Changes in federal regulations impacting wage requirements resulted in most municipalities withdrawing from the program in 2018. However, the Town of Deerpark continues to participate in the program, supporting local police patrols at Hawk's Nest Scenic Overlook.

**Educational Trunks:** Upper Delaware SRR's traveling trunks supplement classroom learning with interactive, hands-on materials. Covering topics such as birds of prey, wildlife, bats, and animal tracks, these trunks provide students with an engaging way to explore the region's ecology and history. Other themes include the history of the Lenape Nation and the National Park Service. Materials such as reference books, videos, stories, skulls, hides, eggs, and puppets offer students a deeper understanding of the Upper Delaware River Valley.

**Other Community & Financial Assistance from NPS:** The National Park Service assists community groups and the public with historic preservation, recreation, and improved access to public lands, national resource conservation, and education and stewardship. More information can be found on the NPS Community Assistance Programs website: <https://www.nps.gov/getinvolved/community-assistance.htm>



## INTRODUCTION

In 2025, the National Park Service at Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River focused on alignment with national direction, emphasizing efficient operations and thoughtful resource allocation. By working closely with partners, leveraging volunteer contributions, and making effective use of existing resources, the park sustained and enhanced core functions in water resource management, wildlife conservation, cultural resource preservation, and visitor safety.

Looking ahead to 2026, NPS will continue these efforts in collaboration with partners and volunteers, with an increased emphasis on operational efficiency and resilience, while keeping the park unit open and accessible. The park's success depends heavily on volunteer support—currently thousands of annual hours—and the strong partnership network that contributes to key operational priorities. Efforts in 2026 will include expanding use of flexible staffing options where appropriate, using technology to streamline administrative and communication functions, strengthening coordination with community organizations, and strategically prioritizing work to achieve the greatest impact.

By competing successfully for project-specific funding and leveraging partner resources, Upper Delaware SRR exemplifies how creative resource development strengthens rather than constrains our mission. Through these approaches, Upper Delaware will continue to deliver excellence in resource stewardship, education, and visitor safety while adapting to evolving operational conditions.

This workplan provides an overview of NPS accomplishments in 2025 and planned activities in 2026. The organization generally follows the structure of the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River Management Plan.

## WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

The Water Resources Management section of the River Management Plan focuses on *water flows, water quality, and water resources development*. In addition to natural processes, *water flows* in the Upper Delaware are significantly influenced by the Cannonsville and Pepacton Reservoirs in New York State, north of the confluence of East and West branches of the Upper Delaware, and the Lake Wallenpaupack hydroelectric facility on the Lackawaxen River. *Water resources development* refers to construction such as bridges, conduit, or dams that could interfere with the free-flowing nature of the river or its tributaries. *Water quality* in the Upper Delaware SRR is uniformly good to excellent, the protection of which is a primary purpose of the river's Wild and Scenic Rivers designation. NPS staff are active in water quality monitoring and studies to help ensure water quality is maintained at or better than the levels present when the river was designated.

**DRBC Special Protection Waters (SPW) Program:** This water quality monitoring program is conducted through an informal partnership between the NPS and the DRBC to identify if "measurable change" is occurring. NPS collects water samples and tests in our local lab for dissolved oxygen, water temperature, air temperature, pH, and turbidity. We send samples for laboratory testing on alkalinity, total chloride, hardness, sulfate, total suspended solids, total dissolved solids, nitrate, nitrite, nitrogen, ammonia nitrogen, phosphorus, calcium, magnesium, sodium, potassium, and bromide. Data from this testing is available to the public through <https://nj.gov/drbc/programs/quality/spw.html>.



## 2025 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

**Barryville Gage below the Lackawaxen:** NPS provided stopgap funding to continue operation of the Barryville below Lackawaxen stream gage for Fiscal Years (FY) 2025 and 2026. Long-term funding or inclusion on the USGS Federal Priority Stream gage program is needed to continue discharge (i.e., cubic feet per second) reporting through this gage beyond FY 2026.

**Water Resource Development Compliance:** NPS staff conducted compliance reviews for proposed water resource development with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, including the Skinners Falls-Milanville bridge, PA State Route 652 Slide Repair, and PA State Route 1014 Westcolang Creek Bridge Replacement, and also engaged in continued coordination on the previously reviewed Milanville Calkins Creek Bridge Replacement project.

## 2026 WORK PLAN

**Special Protection Waters Program:** Upper Delaware SRR staff will continue to collect water samples bi-weekly at four locations from May to September.

**Water Resource Development Compliance:** NPS will remain actively engaged with the next phase of Skinners Falls NY-Milanville PA emergency bridge removal project until completion of all monitoring and compliance commitments, particularly in relation to NEPA and Section 106.

**Water-Quality Impacts of Visitor Use to Recreational Rivers:** Through a partnership with USGS, Namekagon River, Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, New River Gorge National Park and Preserve, and Upper Delaware SRR, this study will assess microbial, chemical, and physical water quality impacts from recreational use, and provide water-quality data to inform river management decisions regarding current monitoring programs, management plans, visitor use plans, and/or communication plans. Fieldwork began in 2025 and will continue in 2026.

# FISHERIES & WILDLIFE

The Upper Delaware River supports diverse aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems, including cold-water and warm-water fisheries, migratory birds, and rare species. NPS works with partner organizations to conduct research on conditions which may affect the distribution, numbers, and species of fisheries and wildlife found within the Upper Delaware River corridor. This science guides sound management decisions that support fish and wildlife species that rely on the healthy habitat found in the river corridor, including endangered species such as the dwarf wedgemussel.

## 2025 RESEARCH PERMITS

The National Park Service reviews proposals and issues permits for research activity happening on the river and on federally owned property. In 2025 we issued five research permits, all for river-related projects detailed below.

**Upper Delaware Macroinvertebrate Study:** Continuation of a project by Cornell University that began in 2023 to collect and assess abundance and diversity of aquatic macroinvertebrates within the Upper Delaware basin, including the East Branch and West Branch, and the Mainstem Upper Delaware between Hancock NY and Lordville NY. The resulting data will be compared to data collected by the NY DEC Stream Biomonitoring Unit and the PADEP to identify trends over the past 25 years.

**Distribution and population statistics of the Delaware River clubtail (*Gomphurus septima delawarensis*):**

Continuation of a project that US Fish and Wildlife Service began in 2024 to evaluate methodology for more widespread study of the condition of the Delaware River clubtail, a dragonfly species currently under consideration for inclusion under the Endangered Species Act.

**Mussel Survey, S.R 1002 (Skinners Falls Road) Emergency Bridge Removal Project:** PennDOT District 4-0 completed the emergency removal of the historic Skinners Falls Bridge over the Delaware River in the interest of public



safety. A mussel survey was completed by FHWA and PennDOT to determine the mussel species present within the project vicinity and evaluate project impacts.

**Genetic Divergence of Eastern *Elliptio* in the Susquehanna and Delaware River Watersheds:** Survey by SUNY Oneonta of known Eastern *Elliptio* beds in the Susquehanna River Watershed, Delaware River Watershed and St. Regis River to sample DNA via non-lethal visceral swabbing. The Eastern *Elliptio* play an integral role in freshwater ecosystems of the Susquehanna River Watershed (SRW) and Delaware River Watershed (DRW), and genome wide sequencing can provide insight into genetic divergence.

**Invasive Snail Removal and Monitoring:** See description below in 2025-2026 Fish & Wildlife Projects.

## 2025-2026 FISH & WILDLIFE PROJECTS

**Longitudinal Inventory of Freshwater Turtles in the Delaware River:** In partnership with Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area and with funding through the NPS Inventory & Monitoring Division, we participated in a two-year inventory of the freshwater turtles of the Upper Delaware and Delaware Water Gap in 2024-2025. This survey assessed species distribution and abundance, evaluated human and recreational impacts, and will provide data to guide effective park management of turtles, including at-risk species. The final report is expected in early 2027.

**Native Meadow Restoration Project at Milanville:** Meadows provide critical habitat for insects, birds, and small mammals, offering food, shelter, and breeding grounds essential for their survival. The extensive root systems of meadow plants also play an important role in reducing soil erosion and absorbing roadside runoff during flood events, helping to protect our local waterways. In 2024 we eliminated the previous growth next to the Milanville Ranger Station with recycled billboard covers donated by Adams Outdoor Advertising. In 2025, we seeded the area with a native grass and wildflower mix, which will be reseeded again in 2026 to expedite the establishment of native vegetation. This project will take 2-3 years to grow to maturity, and will increase biodiversity and reduce the need for mowing.

**NestWatch:** This ongoing monitoring program tracks status and trends in the reproductive biology of birds, including when nesting occurs, number of eggs laid, how many eggs hatch, and how many hatchlings survive. We participated in this program in 2025 by monitoring locations on NPS property, and plans to continue the same monitoring efforts in 2026. Other groups interested in participating can find information through the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and data from the program can be found at [nestwatch.org](https://nestwatch.org).

**Mystery Snail Research Project:** NPS partnered with the Academy of Natural Sciences on a project funded by the National Park Foundation to study the Japanese Mystery Snail, a large invasive gastropod that has been identified in multiple areas of the Upper Delaware river. This species is understudied in this region of the United States, and this is an opportunity to understand their ecology, test physical removal methods, and develop management plans and increase public awareness. Initial fieldwork efforts were conducted in 2025 and is anticipated to continue in 2026.

**Dwarf Wedgemussel Research Project:** In partnership with the United States Geological Survey (USGS), the PA Fish and Boat Commission, and the Delaware River Basin Commission, this project is a resurvey of the endangered dwarf wedgemussel to identify current populations. The results will be used as a framework and guide for future monitoring and management decisions and research efforts in the Delaware River. The study is funded by NPS Natural Resources Regional Block Allocation and by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. Fieldwork began in the summer of 2025 and is scheduled to continue in 2026, with the final report expected in 2027.



NPS employee holds Japanese Mystery Snails during survey

**Invasive Plant Management:** The Northeast Invasive Plant Management Team visited Upper Delaware SRR multiple times in 2025 to assist with invasive plant removal projects, including treating the knotweed on the icebreaker of the Roebling Bridge, early detection and removal of invasive species on the towpath in Lackawaxen, and beginning the process of removing wisteria from native trees at the Headquarters complex in Beach Lake. Work will continue in the



2026 season. Invasive species are harmful to existing ecosystems and biodiversity, as they can spread rapidly and outcompete native species, causing long-term ecological damage.



NPS employees stand in river holding nets

**Dragonfly Mercury Project:** The Dragonfly Mercury project is a nationwide study funded by the Eastern Rivers and Mountains Inventory and Monitoring Network that collects dragonfly larvae for mercury analysis. NPS staff collect, measure, and record the dragonfly samples from three locations: Milanville, Ten Mile River, and Callicoon, and send them to the U.S. Geological Survey laboratory. Scientists study the dragonfly larvae samples and test them for mercury. This helps develop information to understand how much mercury is in U.S. surface waters, and measure how well mercury emission reduction programs and policies are working.

## CULTURAL RESOURCES & ARCHIVES

The National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act requires that cultural resource features be protected and enhanced. In the Upper Delaware corridor, cultural resources include human history archeological sites, industrial remnants, and architectural features. It also includes the people who live in the corridor, their settlements, their commerce, and their agriculture. The National Park Service has an active role in the preservation and interpretation of the valley's cultural resources through its stewardship of NPS-owned properties and resources, such as the Zane Grey Museum and historic Cowen Farm.

### 2025 -2026 CULTURAL RESOURCE & ARCHIVES PROJECTS

**Museum Collections:** For several years, the National Park Service has been carrying out a phased, ongoing effort to move museum collections from Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River to Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area for permanent storage. This long-term project follows National Park Service law and policy and is guided by the NPS Regional Museum Storage Plan. In 2026 NPS staff, interns, and volunteers will assist with packing, documenting, and transferring materials, supported by funding from the National Museum Services Center for archival supplies. Relocating collections to Delaware Water Gap's museum storage facility, which meets the Secretary of the Interior's standards for the care and housing of museum collections, helps ensure they are preserved, protected, and available for research, education, and interpretation for current and future generations.

**Baseline Archaeological Inventory and Evaluation:** In accordance with Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), the National Park Service (NPS) is required to identify, evaluate, and manage historic properties under its ownership to ensure their preservation and consideration in agency planning and decision-making. To fulfill these responsibilities, NPS carried out extensive archaeological survey work at Cowen Farm and Minisink Ford throughout 2025 to document and evaluate archaeological features associated with human occupation along the river, with the final report to be completed in 2026.

**Museum Core Document Updates:** The Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River will finalize updates in 2026 to both its Museum Collections Emergency Operations Plan and the Museum Fire Section of its Structural Fire Management Plan to fully align with NPS standards and policies. These updates provide detailed, site-specific guidance for preventing, responding to, and mitigating emergencies affecting cultural resources, including step-by-step procedures for fire response, artifact evacuation, salvage operations, and coordination with local fire departments. By integrating museum-



specific actions with broader park emergency operations, the plans ensure that historic structures, archives, and irreplaceable collections are effectively protected while enhancing overall preparedness for emergency situations.

**Oral History Transcription Project:** NPS continues advancing its oral history transcription initiative, preserving more than 40 years of local and river history through intern and volunteer efforts. Avery Ohliger, an intern through Wayne County Workforce Alliance, made outstanding contributions by transcribing over 18 hours of oral history recordings, completing 11 interviews in eight weeks through the use of audio restoration tools and AI-assisted transcription. He also created training materials to support remote volunteers. In recognition of his significant impact, Avery was awarded the 2025 National Park Service Region 1 Excellence in Volunteer Service Impact Award for the Youth & Young Adult Category.



NPS will continue advancing the oral history project in 2026 with the help of interns and volunteers, focusing on completing the editing, indexing, and online publication of oral histories collected. This effort will ensure that these historical recordings are accessible to researchers and the public, continuing the NPS commitment to preserving and sharing the rich history of the Upper Delaware region.

## LAND-BASED FACILITIES

NPS staff manage a variety of facilities in the Upper Delaware SRR corridor including visitor contact sites, interpretative sites for cultural and natural features, river access sites, river rest stops, and administrative facilities. Public river accesses in the Upper Delaware are primarily owned by New York and Pennsylvania. NPS works cooperatively with both states to manage and maintain public river accesses to provide for public access to and enjoyment of the river.

### 2025 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

**River Accesses:** NPS installed a monofilament recycling station at the river accesses in Lackawaxen. In coordination with The Conservation Fund and NYSDEC, NPS installed a bulletin board with trail safety tip information at the Tusten Mountain trailhead near the Stone Arch Bridge. Seasonal NPS staff collected 440 gallons of trash in 2025 between Memorial Day and Labor Day weekends. Not included in that total were larger trash pieces such as grills, tires, old tubes and life jackets, boat pieces, and chairs.

**Margold House:** NPS completed improvements to the second floor of Margold to make the building available for storage and staff offices. Improvements consisted of installing new interior doors, trim, baseboards, and casing around the windows and doors.

**Maintenance Shop:** Replaced roof and ceiling of maintenance building in Lackawaxen, and converted interior lighting to fixtures to increase energy efficiency.

**Cowen Barn:** Addressed deterioration and maintenance needs through replacing barn roof and gutters.

**Roebing Toll House:** Repaired deteriorated and damaged siding and painted the exterior of the building.

**Overweight Vehicle Signage:** Coordinated with PennDOT and Lackawaxen Township to increase overweight truck signage for the Roebing Bridge on Route 590 and Route 6 to provide trucks ample notice to re-route to address wear and tear caused from the weight and vibration of vehicles over 10 tons, which can lead to accelerated structural deterioration.



**Headquarters Fencing:** Created a more inviting NPS Headquarters complex by removing the fencing that enclosed a parking area.

## 2026 WORKPLAN

**River Access Co-Management:** NPS staff coordinates the management and maintenance of river accesses primarily with New York Department of Conservation (NYDEC) and Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PAFBC). The states perform major improvements and repairs at the accesses they own, as well as general maintenance and heavy debris removal. Where able, NPS assists in high water event cleanup and debris removal, as well as seasonal mowing, weed eating, and trash pickup. NPS also provides seasonal kiosks and staffing, seasonal life jacket pickup and return stations, safety and informational signage, and the installation and maintenance of traffic counters to track access usage at select river accesses. Details on the 2026 cooperative access management workplan can be found in the Appendices.

**Roebling Bridge Ice Breakers:** Design work will begin in 2026 and continue through 2027 for the rehabilitation of the Roebling Bridge Ice Breakers to remove vegetation and replace aged timbers.

**Interpretive Wayside Panels:** Replace interpretive wayside panels at ten river accesses in 2026-2027 to relay important safety information and improve visitor experience.



**Zane Grey Museum Emergency Roof Repair:** The Zane Grey Museum experienced severe ice damming on the roof due to the combination of extreme cold temperatures and the heavy snowfall of Winter Storm Fern in January 2026. The ice dams caused damage to the interior and exterior of the building as well as some of the friezes in the museum study. NPS is seeking funds to repair the roof and prevent ice damming in the future. Once the roof issue is addressed, we will pursue conservation of the friezes.

**Zane Grey Museum ADA Improvements:** Completion of design for physical accessibility to the historic Zane Grey Museum and the Zane Grey cultural landscape is planned for 2026. Design will include relocation of visitor parking to make it ADA-accessible, installation of accessible walkways to the cultural landscape and museum, a ramp accessing the existing back porch, and an ADA-accessible restroom facility.



# WATER USE PROGRAM

The Water Use Program described in the River Management Plan aims to provide facilities which meet basic public recreational needs and which are, for the most part, informal, relatively small, and in keeping with the natural, scenic, and rural character of the area, and to continue to provide for the lawful recreational use of the river.

## COMMERCIAL USE AUTHORIZATION PROGRAM

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**Commercial Use Authorization (CUA) Online Application and Payment System Updates:** Starting in the 2025-2026 season, applicants began submitting all CUA applications through the online NPS portal. Beginning in 2026, NPS requires all reports to be submitted through the portal.

**CUA Management Fee Structure Change:** In conjunction with a shift to the NPS-wide online CUA system in 2025, Upper Delaware SRR transitioned to an annual management fee structure based on NPS park-dependent gross receipts, a change from the previous tiered structure with a flat fee based on visitors served. This change will bring Upper Delaware SRR into compliance with the law to charge a fee that at a minimum covers all costs related to authorizing commercial activity within NPS boundaries. The CUA fee for the 2025-2026 season started at 1.5% park-dependent gross receipts and will increase to 2.0% for the 2027-2028 cycle.

**CUA Compliance and Monitoring:** In response to input from the public and CUA holders, NPS Rangers now spend more time making direct contact with river users to identify unenrolled operators and verify compliance with program guidelines. Staff across all divisions monitor river activities and educate the public about permitting requirements.

## GAME, FISH, AND BOATING LAW ENFORCEMENT

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The Visitor and Resource Protection (VRP) Rangers at Upper Delaware SRR ensure the safety and well-being of all visitors, with a particular focus on boaters. Rangers conduct rescue and emergency response operations, support state and federal agencies in unified command situations, and assist other national park units as needed. When necessary, they perform recovery operations for drowning victims with care for both the environment and the dignity of those affected. Several staff members also serve on the national NPS Dive Team, contributing to recovery and resource management efforts.

VRP Rangers enforce fishing and boating regulations, protect the river's natural and cultural resources from misuse and illegal activity, and maintain a safe, respectful environment for all visitors. Strong relationships with local communities, emergency responders, and park partners further support public safety and resource protection. All of these responsibilities are backed by a commitment to rigorous officer training and development, ensuring staff are prepared for the diverse challenges of managing the Upper Delaware.

## 2025 VISITOR PROTECTION ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The VRP Law Enforcement (LE) Rangers responded to and generated approximately 865 reportable incidents throughout the year. Common law enforcement contacts included fishing without a license, prohibited glass, no personal flotation device in possession or readily available, and noise complaints from land and water. LE Rangers work towards compliance through the use of educational contacts, verbal or written warnings, and citations.



Upper Delaware SRR has increased presence throughout the river corridor, including outreach via pre and post season meetings with liveries and fishing guides, as well as talking to local residents while out in the field. Based on the continued dialog, NPS is adjusting operations to better respond to operational needs. NPS ensures an LE Ranger is dedicated to illegal fishing and guiding activity incidents and concerns, compliance checks, and any construction activity within the ordinary high-water mark of the river. NPS continues to work closely with law enforcement agencies in New York and Pennsylvania to increase joint patrols.



Six NPS Canoes in a row at the Narrowsburg, NY river access.

## 2026 VISITOR PROTECTION WORKPLAN

**Spill Response Plan:** Continue efforts with the US Environmental Protection Agency to develop a coordinated spill response framework for the Upper Delaware River.

**Roebing Bridge Vehicle Load, Weight and Size Limits Enforcement:** Targeted enforcement of the 10-ton gross vehicle weight and 15 mph speed limit at Roebing Bridge to prevent advanced deterioration of the structure increased in 2025 and will continue through 2026.

**Maintain Partner River Patrol Levels:** In addition to NPS standard river and corridor patrols, NPS increased joint river patrols with NYDEC in 2025 to enforce fishing, boating, and hunting laws, and plan to maintain partner river patrol frequency in 2026.



## WATER SAFETY

The Upper Delaware SRR Water Safety Committee meets regularly to plan and implement programs to promote and improve safety on both the Upper and Middle sections of the Delaware River. The committee brings together Upper Delaware SRR staff, and representatives from organizations involved in improving safety and river recreation on the River. Currently this includes NPS Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, NPS Branch of Prevention and Response, NCSP, NYSDEC, PAFBC, Pocono Television Network (PTN), and the UDC.

### 2025 WATER SAFETY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

**National Canoe Safety Patrol:** NCSP assisted with and performed over 105 river rescues in 2025, up from 86 in 2024.

**Water Safety Messaging:** The committee amplified water safety messaging through appearances in publications such as Destination Hancock magazine, Connections magazine, on radio programming including Bold Gold Media Radio, WJFF Radio Catskill, and on two static billboards and one digital billboard in three highly visible locations through Adams Outdoor Advertising in partnership with the UDC.



NPS employee presenting Alex Wrona with an Upper Delaware Water Safety Challenge Coin

**Water Safety Challenge Coin Award:** Five individuals received the Water Safety Challenge Coin for their efforts to translate the Water Safety talk into Spanish, German, Polish, Chinese, and Russian. Members of the public can submit nominations for the water safety challenge coin award through the Upper Delaware SRR webpage.

**Website:** With input from the Water Safety Committee, the “Plan your River Trip” page on the Upper Delaware SRR website was updated, and new web pages for River Safety, Public River Accesses, and Landowner Resources were added to improve public access to important river-related information.

**Upper Delaware SRR Volunteer Appreciation Potluck:** Upper Delaware SRR honored volunteers with the second annual recognition ceremony and a potluck in September.

### 2026 WATER SAFETY WORK PLAN

**Youth Water Safety Outreach:** Upper Delaware SRR is re-establishing a robust Water Safety Outreach Program with early onboard seasonal staff to visit most every fifth grade classroom throughout the river valley.

**Water Safety Brochure:** Distribute a new safety brochure for riverfront property owners and lodging businesses to improve and encourage safe river recreation by rental property users.

**Life Jacket Return Stations:** A new loaner life jacket station will be installed at Ascalona Campground in Barryville, NY upon request of the campground to help address the high rate of water safety incidents near this location. A life jacket return station will also be placed at the Sparrowbush DEC Access to make it easier for borrowers to return the loaner life jackets at the end of their river excursions. In 2026 NPS will evaluate the need for a fourth return station at the Narrowsburg DEC Access.



## EDUCATION & VISITOR EXPERIENCE

The goals of the educational and visitor experience programs at the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River are to promote environmental and cultural stewardship, and to cultivate a knowledgeable and responsible community that recognize the importance of river and water safety for the well-being of all residents and guests. We aim to enrich the visitor experience, inspire lifelong appreciation for the river, and encourage individuals to safeguard their natural resources for future generations.

### 2025 EDUCATION & VISITOR EXPERIENCE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

**Water Snapshot:** Upper Delaware SRR staff visit 5<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms, then those students visit the river to learn about what a watershed is, what their watershed address is where they live and go to school, why environmental stewardship matters, and how to test for five simple water chemistry parameters and what they tell about water quality.

**Summer Programs:** Summer staff develop and provide a variety of educational programs for all ages and travel to summer school programs, summer and day camps, libraries, homeschool groups, senior citizen centers, and art centers within the river corridor and beyond, including Honesdale, Port Jervis, Jeffersonville, Glen Spey, Milford, and Monticello. In 2025 summer staff presented 77 programs to 1,852 individuals. Topics covered the history of the Lenape Nation, river water safety, and the region's rich natural environment, with a focus on local wildlife such as butterflies, bald eagles, snakes, turtles, waterfowl, salamanders, and black bears, as well as geology, wildflowers, and mushrooms.

### 2025 HIGHLIGHTED EVENTS

**Fairs & Festivals:** In 2025 NPS Rangers attended 15 fairs and festivals, making 4,615 points of contact, up from 2,815 in 2024.

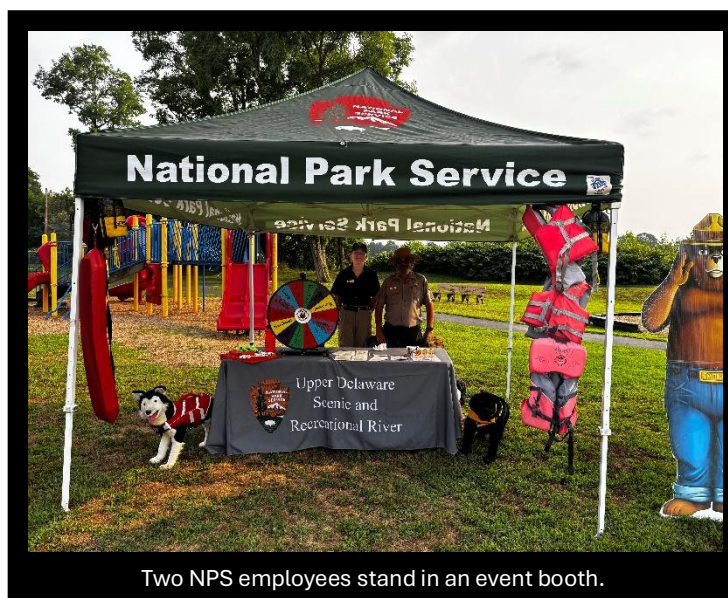
**D&H Canal Days:** NPS welcomed 305 fourth grade students from four school districts on-site to learn about canal life in the 1840's, canal lock operation, the significance of the Delaware Aqueduct, and the importance of song and stories.

**19<sup>th</sup> Annual Zane Grey Festival:** Over 800 people attended the 2025 festival, which included a birds of prey show, carriage rides, crafts, demonstrations, and booths from organizations around the river valley.

**Vintage Baseball Game:** Organized with Zane Grey's West Society, the Flemington Nashanock and Elizabeth Resolutes went head-to-head in a vintage baseball game at Veteran's Memorial Park in Lackawaxen in August, which over 250 people attended.

**Fins and Feathers Programs:** Our 2025 Fins and Feathers intern worked closely with NYDEC, PA Fish and Boat Commission, Trout Unlimited, and Project Healing Waters to develop and present fishing clinics and tabling events during the summer season. These clinics were geared towards people of all skill levels who were interested in learning more about the recreational opportunities in Upper Delaware. In addition, the intern presented guided birding hikes to local camps.

**Litter Clean Up:** NPS staff participated in multiple river and shoreline cleanup efforts throughout 2025, including the UDC's 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Upper Delaware Litter Sweep, National Trails Day with Girl Scout Troop 20386, Kittatinny's On and Under the Delaware River Clean-up, a service project with the Youth Group from Beach Lake Free Methodist Church, and the Interpretive Division's end-of-season stewardship day.



Two NPS employees stand in an event booth.



## 2026 ACTIVITIES PLANNED

In addition to many of the above-listed annual events, NPS staff and volunteers are planning to expand educational and water safety programming in 2026 with the following activities and events.

**America 250:** NPS will be working with numerous partners to plan activities and educational programs for the 250<sup>th</sup> Commemoration of the Declaration of Independence occurring in 2026, including supporting the Administration's Freedom250 branded events at other national park units.

## GATEWAY COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

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In 2025, the Secretary of the Interior issued **Secretary's Order 3434**, establishing a Department-wide policy to strengthen coordination and partnerships with gateway communities. The order directs the National Park Service to recognize gateway communities as key stakeholders in park planning and management; foster transparent, ongoing communication between park staff and gateway leadership; leverage federal programs and authorities to support local needs and capacity; and institutionalize community engagement as a core management practice.

For the purposes of this initiative, gateway communities include cities, towns, tribes, or unincorporated areas that are geographically adjacent to, or serve as primary access points to, a national park unit. Gateway Community Leaders include elected officials, emergency services directors, nonprofit leaders, business or tourism representatives, or other trusted individuals who represent the interests and needs of the community.

As a partnership river, the Upper Delaware SRR maintains a number of long-standing gateway coordination activities with local communities. These include partnering with the Upper Delaware Council, which represents 13 towns and townships in the river corridor, providing technical assistance to local municipalities and organizations as detailed on page 6 of this report, and coordinating planning and response with local emergency service and law enforcement agencies. Through these activities, the park unit will continue to integrate and sustain meaningful engagement with gateway communities, strengthen partnerships, and support the shared goal of protecting resources while contributing to vibrant, resilient communities.

## 2026 ACTIVITIES PLANNED

**Water Safety Coordination:** Expand outreach to emergency service providers to strengthen operational relationships, improve local emergency responder integration into water safety discussions, and improve coordinated response capabilities.

**Emergency Responder Coordination:** Increase coordination and site familiarization with local fire departments to enhance responder familiarity with Upper Delaware SRR facilities and resource protection priorities, and strengthen cooperative response through scheduled tours of NPS buildings with local firefighters and NPS staff.

**UDC New Delegates Meet & Greet:** Introduce annually elected leadership, as well as newly appointed UDC representatives and alternates to NPS operations through optional site tours, staff introductions, as well as discussion of their municipality's concerns and priorities.

**Research Coordination:** Increase coordination with nonprofit organizations engaged in research and conservation of the Upper Delaware River through participation in the FUDR Scientific Advisory Committee, the Pike/Wayne Conservation Partnership Research Committee, and through increased collaboration between NPS and partner staff to expand capacity, align shared priorities, and support shared resource protection initiatives.





## 2026 ACCESS MANAGEMENT PLAN

The National Park Service cooperatively manages 20 river access with the states of Pennsylvania and New York, who own the accesses. The table below provides an overview of ownership and management of the public river accesses within the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River co-managed by NPS, and the amenities provided at each.

River Mile	NPS Co-Managed River Accesses	Owner	Corridor Segment	Paved	Boat Launch Ramp	NPS Portajohn	NPS Mowing Trimming	NPS Weekend Trash pickup	NPS Ranger Kiosk	NPS 2025 Traffic Counts	NPS Life Jacket Station	NPS Sign	NPS Maintenance Notes
329.75	Hancock Angler Parking	Village of Hancock	REC	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	N/A	No	No	
324.5	Buckingham	PA FBC	REC	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Monthly	No	44,792	No	Yes	
321	Lordville	NYS DOT	REC	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	N/A	No	No	NPS sign installation planned for 2026.
314.75	Long Eddy	NYS DEC	SCENIC	No	No	Yes	Trim only	Yes	No	N/A	No	No	
313.5	Basket Creek	NYS DOT	SCENIC	No	No	No	No	No	No	N/A	No	No	
312	Kellam's Bridge	NYS DEC	SCENIC	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	N/A	No	Yes	
302.75	Callicoon PA	PA FBC	REC	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	11,772	No	Yes	High demand for trash removal.
303	Callicoon NY	NYS DEC	REC	No	No	No	No	No	No	N/A	No	No	
298.25	Cochecton	NYS DOT	REC	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	N/A	No	No	
298.25	Damascus	PA FBC	REC	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	30,797	No	Yes	High demand for trash removal.
295.5	Skinners Falls	NYS DEC	REC	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	91,949	Yes	Yes	
290.25	Narrowsburg	NYS DEC	REC	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	59,197	No	Yes	Will evaluate need for life jacket return station here in 2026.
289.75	Darbytown	PA FBC	REC	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	101,260	No	Yes	
284.25	Ten Mile River	Cons. Fund	SCENIC	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	16,592	No	Yes	Remove high water debris, install gravel on driving surfaces. NPS sign panels replaced 2025
277.5	Lackawaxen Access	PA FBC	REC	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	54,651	Yes	Yes	Remove high water debris, add gravel along access, PAFBC supplies materials.
277.5	Lackawaxen, ZG Parking Lot	PA FBC	REC	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	N/A	No	No	
275	Highland	NYS DOT	REC	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	N/A	No	No	NPS does not have equipment needed to clean debris here - no truck access.
273.5	Barryville	NYS DOT	REC	No	No	No	No	No	No	N/A	No	No	
271.75	Cowen Farm	NPS	REC	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	N/A	No	Yes	
261.25	Mongaup	NYS DEC	REC	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	**	Yes	Yes	