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County to Apply for Grant for Water Mile Markers

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CLEARFIELD – Yesterday, the Clearfield County Commissioners approved applying for a \$5,000 mini-grant through the Susquehanna Greenway program for 95 water mile markers for the West Branch of the Susquehanna River.

Since January, the county's Emergency Management Agency has been called out on five water rescues/searches. The searches involved approximately 20 people, including one fatality, along the river, said Lisa Kovalick, community development specialist.

According to her, Clearfield EMA called upon resources from all over the state during an eight-day water search in May. She said it involved multiple water, land and search rescue teams, the National Guard, the Pennsylvania State Police, fire departments, civil air patrol, R.J. Corman and other private resources.

"It occurred in the eastern end of the West Branch, which is the most desolate area with little to no cell phone service," said Kovalick. She pointed out that Shawville to

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Karthus accounts for 63 water miles, and there are only three areas to get on the river.

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While by water, the river is wide with rapids in the spring. The Moshannon Falls is noted as a caution area on the West Branch."

The Susquehanna Greenway program has created a sign design guide for municipalities to improve marking water trails, she said. Kovalick noted that Clearfield County currently doesn't have any water mile markers to indicate to local enthusiasts to tourists their location on the West Branch of the Susquehanna River.

She said that emergency personnel currently cannot communicate their exact location during a search and rescue effort. However, with the grant funding, she said the county EMA will purchase the materials to set water mile markers along the river from Karthus to Cherry Tree.

According to her, Jerry Pollock, EMA deputy director, will be the coordinator of the grant. She said John Kaskan, GIS director, will assist in marking coordinates for the placement of the water markers and mapping them to upload into the County Control CAD system.

Kovalick also noted that so far, the Karthus, Girard, Goshen and Curwensville fire departments and the Clearfield, Sandy Township and Curwensville swift water rescue teams have offered to volunteer man hours to install the water marker signs.

Next year Kovalick said a second grant phase will entail water trail orientation; bridge markings; access signs for land-based users; greenway orientation; and interpretive panels. She said the grant will focus solely on safety this year and on tourism and economic development next year.

In other business, Commissioner John A. Sobel said the board needed to appoint someone to the Clearfield County Recreation & Tourism Authority, the governing board for Visit Clearfield County (VCC). The CCRTA, he said, must have nine board members and currently has eight.

According to Sobel, the county received five letters from very talented individuals who would like to serve on the CCRTA board. However, he pointed out that the county is "highly engaged" in a transitional process occurring at the CCRTA.

As a result, he suggested the commissioners hold onto the letters of interest from the individuals who would like to serve on the CCRTA board. Instead, he suggested the appointment of a second commissioner.

According to Sobel, one commissioner serves on the CCRTA board. The county solicitor, he said, has advised the commissioners that any appointment resides with the parent board.

At that point, Sobel said that Commissioner Joan Robinson-McMillen recently finished serving on the CCRTA board. He said she's now highly involved with local economic development activities.

Sobel then suggested the appointment of Commissioner Mark B. McCracken to the CCRTA board. McCracken accepted the nomination, and was appointed to the CCRTA board by a 3-0 vote.

McCracken said he served on the CCRTA board for a number of years when it became the county's Tourism Promotion Agency (TPA). He believed his past experience will allow him to assist the CCRTA board through its transition.

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