
D&R CANAL WATCH NEWSLETTER

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Jim Amon in farewell slide talk

Jim Amon, executive director of the Delaware & Raritan Canal Commission, who has announced that he will retire in February, will give a slide talk, "Farewell Summary: My Love Affair With the D & R Canal, 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 4.

The talk will be given at the Lawrence Township Municipal Building, located on Route 206 just south of the 1-295 interchange. Everyone is invited to this free talk.

Using color slides he took himself, Jim will take us on a canal tour, demonstrating its great beauty and historic importance. And he will review his 30 years of work to make the canal park what it is today and his plans and hopes for the future of the canal, or, as he puts it, "where we've been and where we're going."

As the first and only executive director of the commission, Jim and the canal park seem so bound together that one can't think of one without the other.

The commission was established in October, 1974, when the D & R Canal State Park was created, to accomplish three main tasks: to review and approve, reject or modify any action by the state in the Canal Park, or any permit for action; .to undertake planning for the development of the Canal Park; and to prepare and administer a land use regulatory program that will protect the Canal Park from the harmful impacts of new development in central New Jersey.

In his 30 years as commission director, Jim has done much more than carry out this mandate. His cleverness, powers of persuasion, caring, insight, and passion for the canal have brought it from the derelict, overgrown nuisance and eyesore it was in 1973 to a treasured linear park that it is today. The D & R Canal Watch is privileged to be able to sponsor Jim's last public presentation as an official spokesman for the canal.

We thank Jim for his incredible dedication to the canal park. This wasn't a job he performed; it was a mission. This wasn't an interest; it was truly a consuming, three-decade-long personal commitment to improve not only the canal park, but lives of all of us who treasure it.

Canal walk slated Sunday, Nov. 21

The next in a series of walks that began this spring in New Brunswick and is working its way south along the main stem of the D & R Canal will be held 10 a.m. Sunday Nov. 21.

We will explore the section between Blackwells Mills and the Griggstown Causeway, approximately 3.5 miles.

Meet at the Griggstown Causeway parking lot where we will use a shuttle system to ferry everyone up to Blackwells Mills where the walk will begin. See you there!

New canal access path forged

Historic Rockingham opened to the public in July after its most recent move from Route 518 to Kingston-Rocky Hill Road in the vicinity of Laurel Avenue and Kingston. Now a path from Rockingham provides access to the canal, thanks to the efforts of park naturalist Stephanie Fox and D & R Greenway volunteers.

The 1.5-mile trail runs from the Rockingham property's northern side near the arched pedestrian bridge through mature forested land to the berm-side path along the canal, across from the towpath.

Ivan's wrath affects canal

The flooding on the Delaware River resulting from September's Hurricane Ivan damaged sections of the Feeder canal, but we came off much better than the Delaware Canal in Pennsylvania.

Waste gates between Bulls Island and Prallsville were broken through, considerably lowering the water level.

The river side of the canal between Prallsville and Stockton was seriously scoured although the integrity of the canal banks was not compromised.

The good news is that while the state Water Supply Authority has its trucks, gravel, and equipment in to repair the scouring, it will re-establish a path on the berm between river and canal between Prallsville and Stockton. This will mean we will have a choice between the rail trail which is several feet east of the canal and mostly not visible from it in this section and a more scenic canal path that hooks up with the one that already exists on the berm between Stockton and Brookville.

The bridge over the guard. lock at the entrance to Bulls Island was damaged, but has been repaired.

The campground on Bulls Island was virtually destroyed, with most of the road system washed out, trees downed, bathhouse damaged, fire rings buried or moved several feet from their positions and a thick layer of sand over everything. The

estimates to repair the damage are high, \$89,000, and there are doubts that the work can be accomplished before the 2005 camping season. Fortunately, the ranger headquarters building, maintenance equipment garage, and new Bulls Island office building were left undamaged by the storm.

Major changes on Mapleton Road

Lands on the east side of Mapleton Road, between Kingston and Route 1, are set to be transferred to South Brunswick Township as open space through the state Green Acres program and a generous donor, and has received an Historic Register listing.

One of the main buildings is being rehabilitated for use by the D & R Canal State Park for offices and classroom space. Many of those involved applaud this move and hope it succeeds, as it would bring, the offices of the superintendent and park interpreters from the creaky old farmhouse in Blackwells Mills to a more spacious and suitable location nearer centers of population and the midpoint of the canal.

The other exciting prospect is that all of the former nursery land on the canal side of Mapleton Road lying in South Brunswick has or will in the near future be given to the park by Princeton University. Ownership of a large part has already been transferred.

Soon new paths and other improvements will make this an important addition to the park. Studies will be made to see if a path can be completed on the berm side of canal between Kingston and the Millstone aqueduct.

A catwalk under the Dinky bridge allowing canal users a path between Alexander Road and Washington Road (before, the high Dinky embankment made through passage difficult) and other berm path improvements between Princeton Basin and the aqueduct are about to get under way.

If a way can be found to build a path over or around the wetlands just downstream of the aqueduct to connect with an existing berm path out of Kingston, paths will exist on both sides of the canal between Princeton Basin and Kingston, offering cyclists and walkers round-trip circuits, figure eight configurations, and lots of other possibilities.

Mule to get a real name



No self-respecting mule can go long without a name. And so on Nov. 4, when the Canal Watch hosts a talk by Jim Amon, it will be announced to a no doubt hushed audience, the results of a contest to give "Mr. Mule" something a bit more personal to go by when it greets admirers.

The life-size Fiberglass mule was purchased this summer by the Canal Watch as a gift to the D & R Canal State Park. Mules were the primary power source pulling canal boats before the advent of steam power. And they were still common into the 20th century, especially on the Feeder canal.

The mule is currently stabled at Bulls Island but it will eventually have permanent quarters in the Longhouse in Griggstown, once the museum there is restored as an interpretive center and a local history repository. Also called, appropriately, the Mule Tenders Barracks, the building was ravaged during floods caused by Hurricane Floyd in 1999. It's hoped that the mule will help encourage support for restoration of the Longhouse and other state-owned buildings on the Griggstown Causeway.

Finalists in the naming contest are Hinny, Stubbs (as in stubborn), Echo, (the significance of the mule in the valley ought to echo forever), Sunflower (he wears sunflowers on his hat), Muleligan, Canalice Alice (mules pulled barges on canals and Alice is a pretty name), Trudge (they trudged slowly along), Dela (Dela wears a hat and rare tan), Marshmallow Jack, and finally Rocky (the canals were rock-lined and rocks were thrown at the mules to get them to pull).

Stay tuned.

And finally, a word of grateful thanks to Susan Data-Samtak and husband John Samtak for volunteering to transport the mule in their horse trailer from Philadelphia to Bulls Island (See photo). Unloading the Fiberglass beast was quite a sight!

The Samtaks frequently ride the towpath of the main canal on their horses, are involved with the Somerset Horse and Pony Association, and campaign at every opportunity to allow horseback riders on the Feeder path (the Park maintains that horse's hooves will destroy the surface of the paths there which is different from that on the Main Canal).

State park offers fall programs

The D& R Canal State Park is offering a full list of free programs in November. Registration is required by calling either the Somerset office at (732) 873-3050, the Bulls Island office at (609) 397-2949 or in

the Programs section of www.dandrcanal.com

Inclement weather or illness can cancel programs.

Among the offerings:

Nov. 6: Walk the Path in Lawrence. A morning walk with the D & R's historian, Vicki Chirco, with a visit to two historic homes along the way, The Port Mercer Canal House and the Brearley House. Meet 9:30 a.m. at Port Mercer Canal House for a brief talk about canal history before walking on the towpath to the Brearley House followed by a tour of this 18 th century brick farmhouse. Total distance: 2.5 miles.

Nov. 13: Bike the Path to Ten-Mile Lock. Another trip with the D & R's historian, this time a morning bike ride. Bring your bike and meet at 10 a.m. at the park office at Blackwells Mills, 625 Canal Road. The group will head north past Zarephath to Ten-Mile Lock and back, an 11-mile round-trip.

Nov. 20: Nature and History Walk to Alexander Road. With the D & R historian and naturalist the group will meet at the Millstone Aqueduct on Mapleton Road in Plainsboro at 10 a.m. for a 3-mile round-trip walk south to Alexander Road.

D&R Canal Watch 2004-2005 New Membership and Renewal Form				
Individual \$15 _____	Family \$25 _____	\$50 _____	\$100 _____	Other _____
Name _____				
Address _____				
City _____		State _____	Zip _____	County _____
Phone _____		E-Mail _____		
We need volunteers to lead walks/trips (natural, historical, recreational) or have computer, photo or design skills. May we call on you? Yes _____ No _____ Try me _____				
D&R Canal Watch is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization. Please make your checks payable to D&R Canal Watch, PO Box 2, Rocky Hill, NJ 08553.				

The D & R Canal Watch
PO Box 2
Rocky Hill, NJ 08553