



D&R CANAL WATCH

Number 91

www.canalwatch.org

December 2023



The D&R Canal Watch is happy to announce the first of many celebratory events that will be held throughout 2024.

At each of these events we will sell our brand-new mug for a mere \$10. As always, the money will be used for projects that will enhance our historic D&R Canal State Park.

Saturday, January 13, 2024: Towpath clean-up. 10:00 a.m. Meet at Lock 11 in South Bound Brook, across from the post office (11 Madison Avenue) on Canal Road. Join members of the Canal Watch in their effort to keep the state park a beauty spot in Central New Jersey. Leader: Bob Barth 201-401-3121; bbarth321@aol.com.

Sunday, January 21 — The East Millstone Historical Society will host Linda Barth, who will present a **slide program about the D&R Canal**, then and now. 2:00 p.m. at the Millstone Valley Fire Department on Amwell Road (Route 514) in East Millstone.

Sunday, February 4: 10:00 a.m. Towpath Walk, Demott Lane to Landing Lane. 4.2 miles roundtrip. Meet at Demott Lane off Easton Avenue, Franklin Township. (GPS 1289 Easton Avenue, Somerset NJ 08873). View work on the Landing Lane bridge. Leader: Bob Barth, 201-401-3121; bbarth321@aol.com.

Saturday, March 9: 10:00 a.m. until about 1 p.m. Geology walk and talk along the D&R Feeder Canal near Scudder Falls. Meet at the Scudder Falls parking lot just off Route 29 (River Road), near the intersection of River Road and Bernard Drive, Ewing. Much of the walk will be along the tow path, however, walk will include short hikes up and down steep hills to view rock outcrops. Walk led by Pierre Lacombe, retired USGS geologist, pjlacombe25@gmail.com

Saturday, March 23: 10:00 a.m. History Bike Ride, Griggstown Causeway to Kingston, 10 miles roundtrip on the D&R Canal towpath. Explore the structures along the D&R Canal with Canal Watch trustee Bob Barth. Meet in the causeway parking lot in Griggstown. Bring water; helmet required. Allow three hours. Leader: Bob Barth, 201-401-3121, bbarth321@aol.com.

Sunday, April 7: 10:00 a.m. Towpath Walk, Weston Canal lot to East Millstone, 4.2 miles roundtrip. See the spillway at Somerset County's Colonial Park and the newly restored bridgetender's station in East Millstone. Leader: Bob Barth, 201-401-3121, bbarth321@aol.com.

(continued)

Saturday, April 13: 2:00 p.m. **Nature Walk: Meet at the historic Van Wickle House off Easton Avenue at the foot of DeMott Lane (GPS 1289 Easton Avenue, Somerset NJ 08873). See and hear Baltimore and Orchard Orioles and other nesting songbirds as we walk along the D&R Canal and identify the nature around us. Leaders: Herve and Anne Barrier, hb9955@gmail.com, 908-670-5743.**

Sunday, June 16: 2:00 p.m. **Canal Watch Annual Meeting. Capt. Bill McKelvey will present a slide program on the D&R Canal. **Fellowship Hall behind the Griggstown Reformed Church.** Use the GPS address of 1065 Canal Road, Princeton (even though it is nowhere near Princeton). For information, call Linda Barth, 908-240-0488; barthlinda123@aol.com.**

Sunday, July 28: **Canal Road Walk and Roll. 10:00-4:00. Canal Road closed from East Millstone to Butler Road. Enjoy a day with friends and family along the scenic D&R Canal with no cars! For more information, please call 732-873-1991, option 4.**

Sunday, August 25: **Canal Road Walk and Roll. 10:00-4:00. Canal Road closed from Griggstown Causeway to Route 518 in Rocky Hill. **Meet Gen. Washington as he prepares to march with the army to Yorktown, VA.** Enjoy a day with friends and family along the scenic D&R Canal with no cars! For more information, please call 732-873-1991, option 4.**

Saturday-Sunday, October 12-13: 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Saturday; noon to 4:00 p.m. on Sunday. **Somerset County's Journey Through the Past. Canal Watch members will open the East Millstone bridgetender's home and station (and the historic outhouse, for observation only). Linda Barth, 908-240-0488; barthlinda123@aol.com.**

Saturday, October 19: **Final Program marking the 50th Anniversary of the D&R Canal State Park and the D&R Canal Commission. Prallsville Mills. Jim Amon will speak on the history of the D&R Canal State Park and the D&R Canal Commission. Linda Barth, 908-240-0488; barthlinda123@aol.com.**

Sunday, November 10: 10:00 a.m. **Towpath Walk, Demott Lane to Landing Lane, 4.2 miles. Meet at the historic Van Wickle House off Easton Avenue at the foot of DeMott Lane (GPS 1289 Easton Avenue, Somerset NJ 08873). Leader: Bob Barth, 201-401-3121, bbarth321@aol.com.**

In addition to the above activities sponsored by the D&R Canal Watch, you can see the D&R Canal State Park programs at this link: <https://www.dandrcanal.com/programs>.

Trail interpreter Pamela V'Combe will begin her series of walks in April.



Pamela V'Combe
Trail interpreter

GET READY TO CELEBRATE THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE D&R CANAL STATE PARK AND THE D&R CANAL COMMISSION IN 2024

Help us celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the D&R Canal State Park and the D&R Canal Commission in 2024

In 1974, most of the Delaware and Raritan Canal was declared a New Jersey state park, which is now used for canoeing, kayaking, cycling, fishing, horseback riding, birding, walking, jogging, and enjoying nature..

The D&R Canal Watch has been working with state park staff and the commission to plan a number of celebratory events for 2024.

A speaker series is planned, with two of the four presenters already scheduled. The featured speaker at our annual meeting on Sunday, June 16 at 2:00 p.m. will be canal historian Capt. Bill McKelvey. In 1976 Captain Bill wrote *The Delaware & Raritan Canal: A Pictorial History*, a photographic treasure trove of historic views of our canal. Two years later he followed that successful book with *Champlain to Chesapeake: A Canal Era Pictorial Cruise*, which included many photos of the D&R as well as the other inland waterways along the East Coast.

For the October 19 finale of the anniversary year, we are honored to host James C. Amon. Jim was the first executive director of the D&R Canal Commission. He will paint a picture of where we were in the 1970s and where we were in the early 2000s when he retired from the commission. At that time the D&R Canal State Park was the most frequently visited state park in NJ. The commission started with virtually no money (the first several annual appropriations were \$50,000—a sum that even then was small), no recognition (almost no one knew that there was a D&R Canal, much less a canal commission) and a fair amount of hostility toward the idea that a separate commission had all this power. (The hostility came from the surrounding municipalities, the surrounding counties, the Division of Parks and Forestry and the NJ Water Supply Authority.) Jim was able to work with all of them and create the wonderful park that we all know today.

In the park's 25th anniversary year, we published a book of poems about our historic waterway. **This year, thanks to Penelope Schott and many talented poets, we will publish a new book of canal poetry.** This volume will contain 50 poems, some new and some from the original publication.

In addition, park staff will sponsor and conduct a Scavenger Hunt. Details will be sent out early in the new year.

Finally, the Canal Watch has created a collectible mug for the 2024 celebratory year. Designed by park historian Vicki Chirco, the mug will be sold for \$10 at all of our events. We presented 10 to the park and 10 to the canal commission.

If you have any suggestions or ideas for other celebrations and festivities, please send them to Linda Barth at barthlinda123@aol.com.

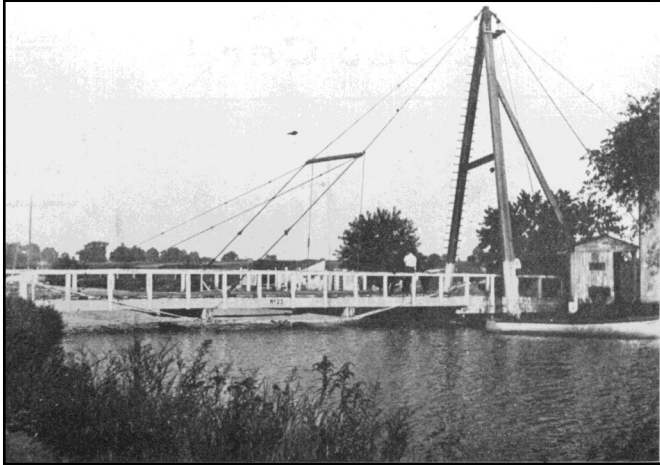
The Canal Watch is looking forward to celebrating with the park and the canal commission.



Canal Watch president Linda Barth presents ten mugs to commission executive director John Hutchison.

The Bridges of the Delaware and Raritan Canal

By Vicki Chirco, park historian—from the www.dandrcanal.com website



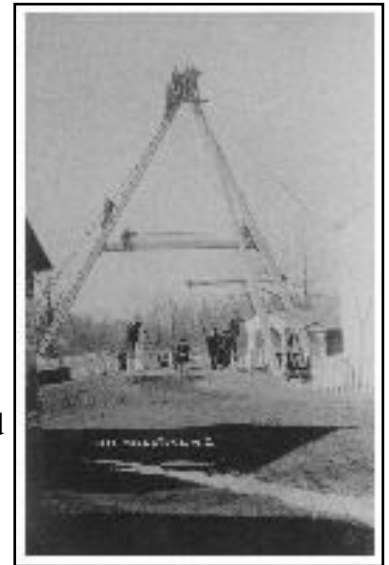
The stationary bridges along the D&R Canal today are very unlike the original structures that spanned this transportation corridor when it was used for boat traffic. Unlike Pennsylvania's Delaware Division Canal, all the bridges crossing the D&R Canal were initially movable and gave the canal an advantage - no height restriction. Low profile mule-drawn canal boats, heavily built steam-powered vessels, elegant tall-masted ships, and personal yachts were all able to navigate the corridor.

The first bridges along the D&R were A-framed swing bridges. The support for this simple, well-designed timber bridge was built in the form of the letter "A" giving the bridge its name. From the peak of the "A" support beams, cables were strung downward and anchored to the bridge's deck; a span that reached over 68 feet in length. Horse, wagon, carriage, and pedestrian traffic crossed the canal when the bridge was in the closed position.

A bridge tender, employed by the canal company, was responsible for a crossing location where he operated the swing bridge by hand with the aid of a bridge key or wrench using a system of gears and cranks similar to the lift locks. The tender monitored the tension in the supporting suspension cables to keep the bridge in good working order by regularly climbing the attached ladder to the apex of the "A" where he could inspect and tighten the cables as needed. Each tender was provided with a house that was located adjacent to the assigned bridge. The housing was part of the tender's salary.

Adjacent to each bridge crossing was a small wood-framed structure large enough to accommodate a few items such as a chair, table, lamp, and small stove. This bridge tender station allowed the tenders some comfort as they waited for the sound of a boat horn or the blow of the conch shell that signaled the approach of an oncoming vessel. When heard, preparation to open the bridge began. A barricade halted the road traffic before the bridge gears put the well-balanced deck in motion. Slowly the long deck swung low across the waterway to the open position parallel to the side of the canal and cleared the path for the oncoming boat traffic to proceed. Once through, the deck swung back across the canal into the closed position and road traffic resumed.

The A-framed swing bridge served the D&R Canal well for over 80 years before being replaced in the early part of the 20th century with the stouter kingpost style swing bridge better suited to handle the weight of the automobile. As the new horseless carriages arrived and gained popularity in the 19-teens, the need to retire the A-frames grew more pressing. By the 1920s, all the A-frames were replaced by the more practical King-Post swing bridges. Although the D&R Canal closed as a transportation corridor in 1932, these second generation swing bridges remained a fixture along the canal until they were removed and replaced in the early 1950s by the stationary bridges you see today.



Battery-operated weed whacker donated for work on the D&R Canal

Dear Canal Friends,

Thanks so much to Sandy Simpson, who has graciously donated a weed whacker to the Canal Watch.

We are MOST appreciative for this generous gift.



Class of 2020-2023

Theodore Chase (Griggstown)
Tim Roth (Long Valley)
Jeff McVey (Lambertville)
Barbara Ross (Princeton)

Class of 2022-2025

Linda Barth (Somerville)
Robert Barth (Somerville)

Christopher "Kip" Bateman (Branchburg)
Barbara ten Broeke (East Millstone)

Class of 2021-2024

Tom Lederer (Princeton)
Marion Munk (Piscataway)
Wayne Petko (South Bound Brook)
Charles Martin (Franklin Township)

EVENTS YOU MAY WISH TO ATTEND

★ **EXPERIENCE THE BATTLE OF PRINCETON** ★

**At Princeton Battlefield
State Park, NJ
Sunday, January 7, 2024**

*A reenactment of the January 3, 1777
Battle of Princeton, followed by a
memorial wreath-laying ceremony at
the Colonnade and Memorial Grove with
military representatives, color guards,
and lineage groups.*

Register at www.pbs1777.org
Registration open after November 1.

Photograph by Al Pochek



**Tickets on sale
beginning on
Friday, January 5 -
- Somerset County
Purchase Your
Tickets to Five
Generals Bus Tour
on Sunday, February
18**

Heritage Trail
Association
www.htanj.org

Time to purchase
your tickets for the
**Middlebrook Five
Generals Bus Tour** in
its 33rd year! With the
upcoming 250th anniversary of the Revolutionary War, this tour takes you through the Middlebrook Cantonment area, stopping at 5 of the remaining homes that housed Generals Washington, Knox, Green, von Steuben and Alexander (Lord Stirling).

Discover Revolutionary New Jersey

Five Generals Bus Tour

Wallace House, Somerville; Gen. George Washington

Van Horne House, Bridgewater; Gen. Benjamin Lincoln

Staats House, South Bound Brook; Gen. F. von Steuben

Jacobus Vanderwerf House, Bedminster; Gen. Henry Knox

Van Veghten House, Bridgewater; Gen. Nathanael Greene

Limousine Coach with personal narration

Canal Watch Calendar of Events

To see our events for 2023, please check page one and two of this issue.

We have been sending the Canal Watch newsletter by email so that you can read it in **COLOR**. You also have one less item to recycle. If you would like a black-and-white paper copy, please write to Linda Barth at barthlinda123@aol.com and she will mail a printed copy to you.



Lock 10 near Zarephath
Robert H. Barth

Board of Trustees

Linda Barth, president
Charles Martin, vice president
Wayne Petko, secretary
Tom Lederer, treasurer
Robert Barth
Christopher "Kip" Bateman
Ted Chase
Jeff McVey
Marion Munk
Barbara Ross
Tim Roth
Barbara ten Broeke

The D&R Canal Watch
P.O. Box 2
Rocky Hill, New Jersey 08553
908-240-0488

www.canalwatch.org
<https://www.facebook.com/dandrcanalwatch/>
info@canalwatch.org

Our Mission

The D&R Canal Watch is an independent, nonprofit organization working to engage the public in the protection of the environment and preservation of the heritage of the D&R Canal.

News from the D&R Canal Commission meeting, September 20, 2023

Executive Director's Report

Director Hutchison reported that a large document scanner was delivered to the office from Ricoh on September 28. The staff will undergo training for its use. The staff has submitted approvals to the DEP Office of Management and Budget for the hiring of two temporary employees at a rate of \$25.80/hour to scan Commission project documents and save them to the DEP shared drive, where they can be easily accessed for project application reviews and "Open Public Records Act" (OPRA) requests.

Director Hutchison reported that the project to repair the former Belvidere-Delaware Railroad trestle bridge, which conveys the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park multiuse trail over the confluence of the canal and the Wickecheoke Creek at Prallsville Mills, Stockton, has been completed. He noted that the reaction from people who have commented to the Commission staff has been overwhelmingly positive.

Director Hutchison reported that he and Darlene Yuhas began a long-term project to label and categorize on a spreadsheet the collection of Commission historical photographs, which have been kept in five three-ring binders in the Executive Director's Office. They are also examining how best to reproduce clear images from the photo negatives that are also kept in those binders. When completed, the Commission would scan the images, so that they can be shared with colleagues at the State Park Service and the rest of the DEP, as well as the NJWSA. He stated that he looked forward to working with the Commission's stakeholders to help identify images that have not been annotated.

Among the general permits issued this month were permits to relocate the USGS gaging station from the New Hope-Lambertville Toll Bridge to a location near the Lambertville Municipal Utilities Authority wastewater treatment plant while a project to rehabilitate the 119-year-old bridge is undertaken starting in January 2024 by the Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission. Director Hutchison also issued an emergency general permit to the NJ Department of Transportation (NJDOT) for repairs to the bridge that conveys Landing Lane over the Delaware and Raritan Canal in New Brunswick. On September 29, 2023, a vehicle struck the southeast wingwall parapet of the bridge, causing part of the parapet and wingwall to fracture and fall into the canal. Fortunately, there were no apparent injuries, and Rutgers University was playing football in Madison, Wisconsin, which hopefully eased the Saturday traffic impact of the accident.

Park Superintendent's Report

DEP Chief of Operations Robin Madden stated that Superintendent Rojewski was unavailable to attend the meeting and that she would provide her report. Commissioner Designee Madden reported that repairs at the pedestrian bridge on the multiuse trail at the Prallsville Mills were completed on October 6, 2023, and that the trail was open.

Ms. Madden reported that the multiuse trail was closed in the Titusville area of Hopewell Township due to a breach in the canal wall that resulted in a sinkhole. The breach and sinkhole were reported on October 5, and NJWSA had initiated repairs. She further reported that the DEP Office of Resource Development is working with the DEP to initiate emergency repairs for the sinkhole at the Prallsville Mills, located behind the grist mill adjacent to Wickecheoke Creek.

Ms. Madden also reported that NJDOT was overseeing the emergency repairs to the Landing Lane Bridge over the Delaware and Raritan Canal. She noted that a sinkhole caused by a collapsed storm sewer pipe was reported in July by a homeowner who lives on Easton Avenue/Main Street in South Bound Brook, adjacent to Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park property. Following assessment of the site conducted by the NJWSA and the State Park Service, it was determined that the pipe in question was not State infrastructure. South Bound Brook Borough subsequently determined it was not municipal infrastructure, and it was likely that the pipe was a drainage feature installed by a property owner without the required permitting. Although not assuming ownership, the State Park Service, with the help of NJDOT, would commence repairs to the pipe as an emergency measure. She noted that an application to authorize the emergency project would be submitted to the Commission in due course.

New Jersey Water Supply Authority Report

Mr. Michael Sellar informed the Commission that the project to rehabilitate the stone culvert, which conveys Six Mile Run underneath Canal Road, the D&R Canal, and the towpath in Franklin Township, Somerset County,

was underway. The project will involve periodic road and towpath, which will be posted on the park website. Closures would not occur in the evening or on weekends.

Mr. Sellar reported site work continues for Phase 1 of the project to repair an approximate 1.0-mile section of the western embankment of the Delaware and Raritan Feeder Canal in Stockton Borough. The embankment separates the canal from the Delaware River and is generally located between the Prallsville Lock and the railroad bridge crossing over the canal at Brookville in Stockton. He stated that work north of Bridge Street would be complete within the week, and the contractor would then move to the section south of Bridge Street. Work was anticipated to be complete within several weeks.

Mr. Sellar stated that NJWSA continued to monitor the Delaware and Raritan Canal and the Millstone River for a blue-green harmful algal bloom (HAB) caused by cyanobacteria (i.e., blue-green algae), which was detected in the Millstone River last summer; however, no bloom had been detected thus far. Mr. Sellar stated that NJWSA staff was addressing the sinkhole associated with a culvert on Easton Avenue (Route 527) in Franklin Township near the border of that municipality with South Bound Brook. He stated that a contract was awarded for the project and a preconstruction meeting was to be scheduled.

Mr. Sellar reported that NJWSA crews mobilized on October 5 to address the leak on the Delaware and Raritan Canal in Titusville mentioned by Commissioner Designee Madden, and that after repairs had been completed the multiuse trail was reopened. Mr. Sellar reported that NJWSA would be conducting autumn mowing and leaf maintenance seven days a week.

You may take part in the monthly commission meetings either in person or online. Visit www.nj.gov/dep/drcc and click on “Meeting Information.” Then click on “Upcoming Meeting Notice.” The D&RCC meets at 10:00 a.m. on the third Wednesday of each month. The public is allowed to comment on the proceedings. In-person meetings have resumed; they are held at Prallsville Mills on Route 29, just north of Stockton Borough.

Renew your Membership for 2024



We would like to remind our members to please renew their membership. You can do so online by visiting www.canalwatch.org and clicking on “Join” at the top right. Please wait a few seconds for the membership form to appear. When you click “Submit,” you will be taken to the payment page.

If you prefer to pay by check, please make it payable to D&R Canal Watch and mail it to the Canal Watch at P.O. Box 2, Rocky Hill, New Jersey 08553.

Alternately, you may use the form on page ten and mail it with your check.

If you are not yet a member of the Canal Watch and would like to help us to support the park, please use the above directions to join.

Battery-operated weed whacker donated for work on the D&R Canal

Thanks so much to Sandy Simpson, who has graciously donated a weed whacker to the Canal Watch.

We are MOST appreciative for this generous gift.





The D&R Canal Watch is asking for your support for our activities that protect, maintain, and promote the recreational, historical, aesthetic, and environmental qualities of the Delaware & Raritan Canal State Park. Over the past years, the Canal Watch has:

- **Restored the Kingston canoe/kayak boat launch**
- **Paid for the conditions assessment and the engineering drawings for the East Millstone and Griggstown bridgetender stations.**
- **Working with the park, we posted signage at six locations to help visitors find their way through Trenton.**
- Led history walks along both the main canal and the feeder, pointing out historic structures and Light Rail study tours
- Led history bike rides along the main canal and star-gazing events
- Sponsored bird watching walks along the main canal and bilingual nature walks
- Installed and facilitated canal interpretive signage at locks and spillways
- Activities in 2009 marking the 175th anniversary of the opening of the Delaware and Raritan Canal. These included “Meet the Canal Authors Day” and “The D&R Canal: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow,” by Richard Hunter” walks, bike rides, canoe and kayak rides, “Hands Along the Canal,” and proclamations from our legislature.
- Examination of Lock 9 to determine the feasibility of reopening the lock to navigation
- Post-flood cleaning of canal structures in Griggstown, Zarephath, and East Millstone
- Painting over graffiti in East Millstone
- Repair of shutters on the East Millstone bridgetender’s home
- Straightening and painting of the outhouse at the East Millstone bridgetender’s home
- Staffing the East Millstone bridgetender’s home during the village’s Canalfest in October
- A photographic exhibit of the homes of bridgetenders and locktenders.
- Services of an information technology consultant for the park’s computers
- Funded classes to certify maintenance staff in small motor repair, applying herbicides, etc.
- Contacted legislators and the governor’s office to keep the parks open and retain the commission
- Facilitated the mothballing of an empty bridgetender’s home by buying lumber and painting the windows.
- Installed Kaya-Arms on docks to facilitate entering and exiting kayaks
- Funding the park’s website and continued updating
- Paying the dues for the Meetup site used for announcing park activities
- Sponsored lectures on topics such as “The Role of the Delaware and Raritan Canal in the Growth of Trenton’s Industrial Potteries,” “The Operation of the Joint Companies and the Interrelationship of the canal with the state’s first railroad,” “The Roebling Story,” “Photography Along the Delaware and Raritan Canal

Canal Watch Achievements (continued)

State Park: Treasure in Central New Jersey,” “Meet Ashbel Welch, the second chief engineer of the Delaware and Raritan Canal,” and Jim Amon on how the canal and the park changed during his tenure with the commission.

- Purchased gifts that the park budget could not provide. These include a digital camera, seven picnic tables, several benches, a laptop computer and software, a desktop computer, an LED projector, an inflatable screen for outdoor viewing of videos, a subscription to the Meetup website, a scanner, printer ink, a water testing kit, an external computer drive, lumber for canoe dock at Griggstown, folding tables and twenty chairs for Bulls Island, development of a new park website and maintenance of the site at the rate of \$50 per month, and professional courses for the maintenance staff.

Renew your Membership for 2024



We would like to remind our members to please renew their membership. You can do so online by visiting www.canalwatch.org and clicking on “Join” at the top right.

Please wait a few seconds for the membership form to appear. When you click “Submit,” you will be taken to the payment page. If you prefer to pay by check, please make it payable to D&R Canal Watch and mail it to the Canal Watch at P.O. Box 2, Rocky Hill, New Jersey 08553.

Alternately, you may use the form below and mail it with your check.

D&R Canal Watch 2024 Membership Renewal Form Membership year: January 1 to December 31

Nonprofit Org \$10 _____ Individual \$15 _____ Family \$25 _____ Organization \$40 _____
Supporter \$100 _____ Patron \$250 _____ Business member \$500 _____ Benefactor \$1000 _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone(s) _____

Email address _____

Please send this form and your check, payable to the D&R Canal Watch, to D&R Canal Watch, P.O. Box 2, Rocky Hill, New Jersey 08553-0002. Dues can also be paid online at <https://canalwatch.org/join/>

For reasons of fiscal and environmental responsibility, newsletters will be posted on the Canal Watch website, www.canalwatch.org, and emailed to members for whom we have email addresses. If you require a paper copy, please check here _____.

Volunteers are needed to lead walks/trips. Do you have computer, photography, or design skills that you are willing to use for the organization? Would you like to join the Wednesday Work Crew? May we call on you? Yes ___ No ___ Try me ___ (circle your skill)