Park Manager’s Report

Josh Swartley

Since my last report, the Park Maintenance Staff has been able to plug up and repair all of the sinkholes in the northern section of the park. We began re-watering the upper section of the canal at the end of April, and by mid-May the canal was watered from Easton to New Hope. This was the first time in years that this section had been completely watered.

Then, on June 4th a large blowout was discovered along the berm-side of the Canal at the upstream end of the Tinicum aqueduct. The blowout drained the Canal in this area and prevented any water from flowing south of the wastegate near the Golden Pheasant Inn. The towpath was also closed in this section due to the instability of the berm, walls, and aqueduct abutment.

DCNR was able to secure emergency funding and execute an emergency repair contract on June 19 to begin stabilization work on the aqueduct, walls, and towpath. Currently, the contractor is in the process of making these repairs and we anticipate a completion date in mid to late July.

The stabilization work will allow us to open the towpath up again, but will not allow water to flow south. Before any additional work can be completed, DCNR’s design consultants will need to complete some additional inspections of the structure and do geologic testing at the site. Then the plans for a complete repair can be developed, and the project can be put out for bid. In the meantime, after the stabilization work is complete, we will attempt to install a temporary bypass at the site to allow some water to flow through the site and south toward New Hope.

On a more positive note, river levels remain high enough to provide water to the southern half of the Park from New Hope.

A Pattern to Break

MAY 2016 – The Canal was watered from Easton to the Virginia Forrest Recreation Area in Solebury Township. The flow from the north was being released through the wastegate at the Recreation Area so as not to inundate the work site of the Redfield Bridge. The pump at Centre Bridge, 1.3 miles to the south, was filling the Centre Bridge to Lock 11 in New Hope stretch thanks to the contributions from New Hope for Our Canal. From the New Hope inlet south to Bristol, the water level was good thanks to the Delaware River inflow.

And then came the leaks at the Kleinhans Aqueduct south of Easton. To prevent the collapse of the entire structure, the DCNR engineers ruled that water could no longer flow through it. Much to DCNR’s credit, it quickly moved forward with the installation of two 60” pipes and associated coffer dams to allow Canal water to flow through the aqueduct structure without exacerbating the structural problem.

The pipes served their intended purpose, but the flow volume through the aqueduct area was reduced, and the water from the north made it no farther than Lumberville unless it was supplemented with rainwater.

MAY 2017 – The Canal was watered from Easton to Lock 11 in New Hope. In fact, on May 26, the water from the north was flowing over the Centre Bridge coffer dam for the first time in many a year. Hopes were high that the use of the Centre Bridge
Park Manager’s Report cont’d

to Bristol. Good water levels are also being maintained in the north from Easton to Uhlerstown.

I’m pleased to announce that the Conrail Pedestrian Tunnel project in Falls Township has been advertised by PennDOT on its ECMS (Engineering and Construction Management System). The bid opening date is scheduled for July 13, 2017. Barring any issues with the bidding process, the initial job conference and possibly construction could begin as early as October 2017. This project has been a long time in the making and will be a major improvement for visitors who use the towpath in the Morrisville and Falls area. The pedestrian tunnel will eliminate one of the final three trail obstructions along the Canal.

The completion date for the reconstruction of the Lower Limeport Bridge in Solebury Township has been extended to July 21, 2017 because of problems procuring the lumber for the faux camelback trusses.

Enjoy the Canal!

A Pattern to Break cont’d

The Delaware Canal as it can be.

pump could be reduced saving $1,400 per month in electricity costs. The Canal from the New Hope inlet south to Bristol was beautifully full.

And then during the night of June 4 came the berm bank blowout at the Tinicum Aqueduct located just south of the Golden Pheasant Inn in Erwinna. See the Park Manager’s Report on page 1 for details. Again much to DCNR’s credit, the situation was declared an emergency and a contractor is working on the repair of the site. Plans are being made to install a system through which the Canal water can be run until the aqueduct can be replaced.

The one, if only, silver lining of the blowout is that the replacement of the Tinicum Aqueduct will be expedited. The existing structure is nothing but a steel I-beam trough that was put in place in 1952. The trough constrains the flow volume, so having a new aqueduct capable of carrying a full volume will be a great benefit to Smithtown, Lumberville, and all points south.

TWO YEARS. Two times when all seemed well with the Canal. Two failures related to aqueducts that quashed hopes for a fully watered Canal.

On the positive side:
• In 2017 the Canal has been fuller for longer periods of time than it was in 2016.
• DCNR continues to move quickly to restore water to the Canal.
• DCNR is taking more proactive steps to identify problem areas and plan for their repair or replacement.

There’s no doubt about it, the Delaware Canal can be a heartbreaker, but we also know that it fills so many hearts with joy. Together we will continue to advocate and work for the Canal that we all desire. A Canal with patterns that are positive.
AN EVENING WALK IN THE "WILDS"
SATURDAY, JULY 22
6:30 P.M.
Meet in the parking lot of the Giving Pond Recreation Area, 1069 River Road, Upper Black Eddy, PA 18972. The lot is approximately one mile north of the Frenchtown Bridge and .02 mile south of Jugtown Hill Road.

The sun will be setting to the west and the heat of the day waning as we set off to explore a part of the Delaware Canal State Park that lies adjacent to the towpath north of Uhlerstown. Our 2–mile, around-the-pond and up-on-the-towpath walk will allow us to see the sights for which the 90-acre Giving Pond is known—scenic beauty and lots of wildlife. Those of you who are our Facebook Friends have seen many a photo taken at the Giving Pond.

A former sand and gravel quarry, the Giving Pond Recreation Area was acquired by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in 2002 and designated a part of the Delaware Canal State Park Complex. Situated between the Canal and the River, the quarry has been allowed to fill with water and is well along in the process of transformation from an industrial site to an abundant natural habitat.

Join us for a summer evening saunter that may have a few surprises—the splash of beaver tail, perhaps?

PADDLING ON THE CANAL
SUNDAY, JULY 30
10 A.M.—NOON or 1–3 P.M.
Meet at the Black Rock Road Picnic Area at the intersection of the Canal and Black Rock Road in Yardley.

Once again we’ve been able to schedule three, ever-popular paddling programs in cooperation with the Delaware Canal State Park education staff, even though the “staff” is down to just one very hard-working person. You’ll have six opportunities to see the Delaware Canal from the vantage of the water, and you don’t even have to own a boat to do so. State Park Educator Katie Martens will be leading two sessions of paddling on July 30 and has equipped kayaks ready to be loaned. These sessions are perfect opportunities to find out whether kayaking is for you.

Making our way north might require extra energy, but launching boats at Groundhog Lock is easy. There is a wooden boat launch at the Lock; no muddy banks to scramble up and down. The scenery along the Canal banks in Raubsville is lovely, and there are great tales to tell about the lost town of Uhlersville.

This late summer adventure will be led by State Park Educator Katie Martens, who will have fully equipped kayaks available to borrow. You may reserve a Park kayak or bring your own canoe or kayak and personal flotation device.

The details provided in the July 30 notice apply to this event as well. It’s always advisable to get your registration in early, especially if you’re planning to paddle with family or friends.

Paddling on the Canal is cool in more ways than one.
“OH, THE BRIDGES WE SHALL SEE” WALK
SUNDAY, AUGUST 27, 4 P.M.

Meet at the Virginia Forrest Recreation Area, 3292 River Road, New Hope, PA 18938. (1.3 miles north of the intersection of Route 263 and River Road.)

Building a canal didn’t just entail digging a long ditch; it also required building bridges to reconnect the land that the new ditch divided. When the Delaware Canal was constructed between 1827 and 1832, more than 100 bridges were included in the project. Today the Canal still has many of these crossings, and its bridges come in all shapes and sizes. On our 4.4-mile round trip walk between the Virginia Forrest Recreation Area and the Lower Limeport Bridge, we will encounter five different bridges. The largest will be Centre Bridge-Stockton Bridge over the Canal and the Delaware River. The newest will be the recently rehabilitated Lower Limeport Bridge. All of the canal bridges illustrate the ongoing quest to design a structure that both captures the character of the original camelback bridge and can accommodate modern day vehicular use.

The famed Bucks County Impressionist Edward Redfield will play a role in our stories since two of the bridges lead to properties where he and his family lived, and the Centre Bridge is the subject of his most dramatic and acclaimed painting. Get out and about on this informative, late summer afternoon walk and, perhaps, have a good excuse to go out for dinner. If the weather is stormy, rainy, or just too hot, the walk will be cancelled. For a Go/No Go message, visit www.fodc.org where the information will be posted by 11 a.m. on August 27.

TOWPATHS AND TALES
AN AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHIC HISTORY
OF THE CANALS ALONG THE DELAWARE RIVER
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13
7:30 P.M.

The Old Library by Lake Afton, 46 West Afton Avenue, Yardley, PA 19067

Take a flight over the Delaware River Valley to the time when PA’s Delaware Canal and NJ’s Delaware and Raritan Canal had recently ceased commercial operation. Then soar over the landscape as we know it today—without ever leaving the ground.

During his 21 years with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Mike McCann examined the histories of properties along the Delaware River. He reviewed aerial photographs taken from 1930 to the present under a stereo microscope while in the process of determining whether land qualified for New Jersey’s Green Acres Program. Since his retirement, he has created a presentation of scanned aerial images that features the River Valley as it has changed (or not) over time. If you are curious about how things once were, particularly before the 1955 flood, you’ll want to attend this program, which includes images of the Point Pleasant, Lumberville, and Yardley bridges that are now gone.

Katie Martens, State Park Educator, will be leading both the morning and afternoon paddling sessions from the launch site at the Pidcock Creek overflow. Paddlers first will venture south to the Bowman’s Hill stop gate and then north through the scenic widewaters toward New Hope. There will be history to share, both Canal and Revolutionary, and wildlife to see.

Katie will have kayaks, paddles, and PFD’s available to borrow or you are very welcome to bring your own kayak or canoe. You may sign up by contacting 215-862-2021 or friends@fodc.org. If you are planning to use Park equipment, a $10 per person donation is requested. Please register early. The Park kayaks are much in demand.
Marking the Miles

While walking or biking along the 58.9-mile Delaware Canal, it’s natural to wonder “What mile is this?” Fifty-nine answers to that question do exist if you look down and to the side of the towpath.

The current system of granite Belgium blocks cut with the appropriate mile numbers and set in concrete at ground level is the successor to two earlier marking projects. A few older wooden markers followed by plastic “flippers” installed in the mid-1990s by former Board member John Nay and his grandson Josh still can still be found. Both the wood and the plastic, which stood above ground level, could not withstand the wrath of park mowers. Then along came Pete Sperry, who, after participating in his first Canal Walk, was filled with “where” questions. He became a member of the Friends’ Board of Directors in 2002, and jumped into documenting and setting distances correctly on the towpath. His approach was two-pronged. A more lasting type of mile marker had to be found and installed at accurate intervals, and a detailed chart of mileage and landmarks needed to be developed.

After consulting with the Park Manager, Pete set his course to install the Belgium block system. He inspired his fellow Board members to embark upon a mile marker fund-raising campaign, which was enthusiastically supported and quickly completed. (A list of the donors can be found at www.fodc.org under The Canal/Maps/Mile Markers.) Pete’s next step was to determine the correct locations. Through a painstaking process of using historic maps, a measuring wheel, and his GPS unit, he found that the beginning point of Canal now lies in the Delaware River in Bristol. From that point, he measured and calculated the points going north to the end in Easton.

With locations pinpointed, Pete hand-selected the granite blocks, had the numbers sandblasted by a local gravestone maker, and then drilled and fastened an anchor bar in each stone. Twenty-four energetic volunteers came forth to undertake the digging, concrete mixing, pouring, placing, filling, and finishing needed to place the 59 markers.

As with most Canal stories, there are a few buts. The floods of 2004, 2005, and 2006 greatly impacted the mile marker project. The severe damage to the Canal banks prevented the installation of some of the markers, and earth had to be replaced around some of the already installed markers. (It is a testament to the quality of the volunteers’ work that mile markers stayed in place even though the banks around them were heavily eroded.) Lastly, quite a few markers did not survive the heavy construction involved with the flood repair work. Pete and volunteers have been tackling marker repair and replacement projects on a periodic basis ever since the floods. This spring, three construction-damaged Mile Markers were replaced:

- Mile Marker 13 in Yardley
- Mile Marker 31 in Lumberville
- Mile Marker 46 in Upper Black Eddy

The crew will head to Easton to tackle Mile Markers 57 and 58 in the fall. When these two blocks are installed, the Mile Marker system will again be complete from #1 at the Grundy Mill in Bristol to #58.9 at the Forks of the Delaware in Easton. When you’re out on the towpath, look for the markers and thank all the people who were dedicated to putting them there.

One Fine Day

Community crews and Canal Tenders joined forces on Saturday, April 8 to give the full length of the Canal its spring cleaning. 340 volunteers turned out for the Friends’ annual Clean-Up Day. Collectively they spent 785 hours clearing trash, debris, and vegetation from the towpath and accumulated 348 full bags of trash and 17 tires.

The Proof is in the Egg

Friends welcomed spring by hiding 15 plastic eggs along the towpath from Easton to Bristol. Inside each egg was a coupon for a Friends’ tee shirt or a Canal Critter finger puppet. By the end of May six of the 15 eggs had been claimed. Nine eggs may still be out there waiting for you to find them. What the egg hunt proved is that Delaware Canal visitors come from near and far. The finders were from Bethlehem, Easton, Lederach, and New Hope in Pennsylvania and from Stockton and Trenton in New Jersey. We’ll have another hunt next April after Canal Clean-Up Day, so keep your eyes peeled!
Will Rivinus starts an early Canal Walk in the traditional way—by blowing the conch shell horn.

Back in June of 1987, Will Rivinus led the first 60-mile Canal Walk from Easton to Bristol over five successive Saturdays. The Friends have had a Canal Walk each year ever since. The walk season has changed from summer to fall, and there were years when conditions made it impossible to walk the full 60 miles, but each year has seen walkers on the towpath.

For our 30th Anniversary, we’ll be hiking downhill from the Forks of the Delaware in Easton to Riverfront Park in Bristol. We’ll be seeing sights and sites along the way and meeting people, among whom will be Will Rivinus, who has promised to drop in.

It’s time to start getting your legs in shape and find the perfect walking shoes. No need to search for a shirt. Special 30th Anniversary tee shirts will be available. (Let’s see who has a full collection of Canal Walk tee shirts—10th Anniversary, “Where’s Jack,” and 25th Anniversary.)

The full Canal Walk 2017 itinerary will appear in the fall issue of Canal News and on-line at www.fodc.org. We hope that this is the year when you’ll join us for the challenge, the camaraderie, and the fun.
Just Good Old Fun

More decorated boats, more decorated ducks, and more people! The Delaware Canal Festival held on June 16 at the Lagoon Park in Historic Bristol Borough was the best yet.

Defying a gloomy forecast, the weather on the evening of the Festival was perfect. Youngsters, oldsters, and in-betweens flocked to Lagoon Park to indulge in the offerings of the food trucks and have fun decorating ducks, playing games, listening to the pop/rock band Finster, and finding out about local organizations. They were also there to see the creativity and ingenuity shown off in the Decorated Boat Parade, the Decorated Duck Contest, and a Cardboard Boat Float. It’s always wonderful to see families and friends working together on their entries.

The Friends thank their fellow event co-sponsors Historic Bristol Borough and Raising the Bar and also Allied Electronics, Driftwood Water Adventures, Grundy Commons, Mignon Jewelry, Penn Community Bank, Blue Chip Copy Center, and numerous individuals for generously supporting the event. It takes an enthusiastic community to make a good event happen, and Bristol Borough is exactly that.

The Board has a Challenge for You

The 11 members of the Friends’ Board of Directors have committed $10,000 of their personal funds to create a new Legacy Fund Challenge. Each dollar contributed by you and other Friends’ supporters will be matched from the Board’s contribution pool. The goal of the Friends of the Delaware Canal Legacy Fund is to provide a sustainable and reliable source of additional income to support the mission and activities of the Friends into the future. Since the Fund reached its threshold value of $100,000 in 2011, each year the Board has voted to withdraw a sustainable amount (between $4,000 and $6,000) to supplement our organization’s income from membership, donations, and fundraising.

The Legacy Fund investments have done well over the years. Assuming no significant market retreat, if an additional $20,000 can be contributed, the Legacy Fund balance will reach $200,000. At that level, the Legacy Fund can provide 10% of the Friends’ annual income, which is used to fund our projects, activities, and advocacy work. To help grow the Legacy Fund, you have a number of options:

• Outright gift of cash, marketable securities or real estate.
• Gift from a tax-deferred retirement plan
• Bequest in your will
• Gift of a life insurance policy

To contribute now, you may go on-line and click on the Legacy Fund Challenge button on the homepage of www.fodc.org or mail your check to Friends of the Delaware Canal, 145 South Main Street, New Hope, PA 18938.

Take the Board up on its Challenge and help the Friends do MORE.

WHY I LOVE THE CANAL

By Board Member Judy Franlin

In New Hope, the Canal forms a tranquil green space that contrasts with the bustle of the community’s many restaurants and shops. From my home, I can watch dog walkers, moms and dads with strollers, school kids, bikers and hikers all enjoying this natural and historic marvel. It reminds me that the Canal belongs first to the people, and we all share in keeping it clean, watered and safe for everyone.

The Canal in New Hope looking south from the Mechanic Street Bridge.
Welcome, New Friends!

Kris Ballerini
Melissa Cliver
Bart Davidoff
Rachel & Rocco DiNiglio
George Foos
Colin Giltrow
Chris Guro
Ruth & Phillip Holmes
Maria Katonak
Jean Lipkin
Carol Mahoney
Ignacio Ortega

SAVE THE DATE: OCTOBER 8

You are cordially invited to join the Friends of the Delaware Canal for our eighth annual signature event—Faces & Places, a Celebration of Art and History along the Delaware Canal.

This year we will head south to Bristol Borough, a prize-winning small town overflowing with history and vitality. Our chauffeured tour will include:

• The splendid Margaret R. Grundy Museum and its riverside grounds and garden. This Victorian house, renowned for its woodwork and original furnishings, was home to Bristol’s illustrious citizen Joseph R. Grundy and his sister.

• Canal Works, an 1880’s era industrial building that was used over the years by a wallpaper printer, a seed company, and a radio equipment manufacturer. It has been masterfully rehabilitated and is now occupied by numerous up and coming businesses. The owner of Canal Works has created a two-floor display of Canal photos and fascinating documents and artifacts from the businesses of old.

• Dad’s Hat Pennsylvania Rye Whiskey Distillery, located in the historic Grundy Woolen Mill complex, makes small batch, classic rye whiskey with natural local ingredients. Esquire named it “one of the 10 best distilleries in America outside of Kentucky and Tennessee.”

• The Bristol Wharf at the foot of Mill Street, the heart of the Borough. A short walk will lead to Riverfront Park with its new pier, the Canal Basin, the King George II Inn, the shops of Mill Street, and some Bristol Stomping going on.

• When the tour concludes, join with friends, old and new, at the Centre for the Arts on Mill Street for spirits and an abundant array of hors d’oeuvres and desserts catered by the King George II. Highlighted at the Centre will be vintage and new canal and river-themed art works that will be up for sale, either direct or by auction.

For more information or to make reservations on-line, visit www.fodc.org and click on the Event link on the homepage or call 215-862-2021 or e-mail friends@fodc.org

Individual tickets are $150 each; patron tickets are $250.

Join us for Faces and Places in the town that you’ve been hearing so much about.