



**July 15, 2026, Minutes of the Meeting
Delaware and Raritan Canal Commission**

TIME: 10:00 a.m.
DATE: July 15, 2026
PLACE: Prallsville Mills, Stockton, New Jersey

ATTENDING COMMISSIONERS:

Vice-Chairman Robert Bostock, Commissioner Phillip Lubitz and Commissioner Designee Robin Madden attended the meeting in the Commission Office. Commissioner Douglas Palmer, Commissioner Randy Jones, Commissioner Matthew Walsh and Commissioner Caryl “Chris” Shoffner participated via online platform and teleconference.

STAFF: Executive Director John Hutchison, Deputy Attorney General Jordan Viana and Executive Assistant Erica Vavrence attended the meeting in the Commission office. Commission Engineer Joseph Ruggeri, Communications Director Darlene Yuhas and Administrative Assistant Megan Black participated via online platform.

GUESTS: Michael Sellar, Facilities Manager, New Jersey Water Supply Authority (NJWSA); Bob Barth, D&R Canal Watch; Linda Barth, D&R Canal Watch; Michael Burns, Heather Miara, Julie Hajdusek, Alvin Chin, Ron Aulenbach, Sean Martin, and William Long.

Vice-Chairman Bostock announced that this was a monthly meeting of the Delaware and Raritan Canal Commission and that the provisions of the “Senator Byron Baer Open Public Meetings Act” (OPMA) had been complied with in the scheduling of the meeting.

Vice-Chairman Bostock announced that the meeting was being taped pursuant to the exception set forth at Section C.(1) of DEP Policy & Procedure 2.85 “Prohibition of Recording in the Workplace” Policy adopted on September 18, 2019.

Since some Commission members were participating via telephonic device pursuant to Article III, Section 4 of the Commission Bylaws, Vice-Chairman Bostock asked Executive Director Hutchison to call the roll:

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Vice-Chairman Bostock	Yes
Commissioner Designee Madden	Yes
Commissioner Jones	Yes
Commissioner Lubitz	Yes
Commissioner Palmer	Yes
Commissioner Shoffner	Yes
Commissioner Walsh	Yes

Director Hutchison stated that a quorum was present.

Administrative Items

Confirmation of August 19, 2026, Meeting Date

Vice-Chairman Bostock announced that the next meeting of the Delaware and Raritan Canal Commission was scheduled for August 19, 2026, at 10:00 a.m.

Proposed approval of a Lease Agreement between the New Jersey Water Supply Authority, the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), the Commission, and the New Jersey American Water Company, Inc., for the continued lease of approximately 28,000 square feet of State property, owned by the DEP and designated as Block 5101.01, Lot 5.01 on the tax maps of the Township of Lawrence, Mercer County.

Vice-Chairman Bostock asked for a motion on the approval of the lease and then a second. Commissioner Lubitz made the motion to authorize the Executive Director to sign the lease agreement on behalf of the Commission, which was seconded by Commissioner Designee Madden.

Commissioner Walsh stated that his wife has a business relationship with New Jersey American Water Company. He said while he did not believe that this constituted a conflict of interest for him, out of an abundance of caution, he would recuse himself from any discussion or vote on the proposed lease. His recusal was submitted in writing to the Executive Director.

The Vice-Chairman asked if there were any questions or comments from the Commission or the public. Hearing none, he asked Director Hutchison to call the roll.

Vice-Chairman Bostock	Yes
Commissioner Designee Madden	Yes
Commissioner Jones	Yes
Commissioner Lubitz	Yes
Commissioner Palmer	Yes
Commissioner Shoffner	Yes
Commissioner Walsh	Recuse

Minutes

Approval of the Minutes of the June 17, 2026, Commission meeting

Vice-Chairman Bostock inquired if any of the Commissioners wished to propose edits or corrections to the minutes of the June Commission meeting. Hearing none, the Vice-Chairman then asked for a

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motion to approve the minutes of the June 17, 2026, Commission meeting as prepared by staff. Commissioner Lubitz made a motion to approve the minutes as prepared, which was seconded by Commissioner Designee Madden.

At the request of the Vice-Chairman, Director Hutchison then called the roll:

Vice-Chairman Bostock	Yes
Commissioner Designee Madden	Yes
Commissioner Jones	Yes
Commissioner Lubitz	Yes
Commissioner Palmer	Yes
Commissioner Shoffner	Yes
Commissioner Walsh	Yes

The motion was approved.

Review Zone Actions

Zone A Projects

#26-0390A 277 North Union Street -- Demolition/Micro-forest Planting (Lambertville City)
#26-3880C 62-64 Coryell Street -- Parking Lot Entry Gate (Lambertville City)
#26-6405 322 North Union Street -- Demolition (Lambertville City)

At the direction of the Vice-Chairman, Director Hutchison provided an overview of the Zone A projects.

The Vice-Chairman asked if any members of the Commission or the public had questions or comments on the projects. Commissioner Lubitz observed that the projects included two properties that had sustained flooding, but were not in a flood zone, thus highlighting the impact of climate change on flood events in the canal Review Zone.

Mr. Barth said he was unfamiliar with the micro-forest concept and questioned whether it would work. He then indicated that if it were worthwhile, it ought to be required for all future projects that come before the Commission. Mr. Chin, a Program Specialist in the DEP Blue Acres Program and a trained botanist, provided Mr. Barth and the Commission with detailed background information on the concept of micro-forests, which entail planting dense, multi-layers of native trees and shrubs in small urban areas. Mr. Chin states that the dense planting promoted rapid growth as the trees and shrubs competed for the available sunlight. He also provided information on the ecological benefits that micro-forests provide when compared to grass lawns, noting in particular the beneficial impact upon birds and pollinator insect populations. Mr. Chin also noted that while there were upfront costs associated with the initial planting and maintenance of micro-forests in the first three years, a number of New Jersey communities had embraced the concept.

In response to Mr. Barth's proposal that micro-forests be mandated for future Commission project applications, Director Hutchison noted that he became impressed with the concept during his review of the project application, and that the Commission's existing regulatory authority would not preclude requiring micro-forests as a condition of approval in the appropriate situation.

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Commissioner Lubitz observed that while the micro-forest concept was interesting and that it made sense to attempt it in communities, it should be thoroughly evaluated before it becomes a blanket requirement for future projects. Vice-Chairman Bostock agreed that a thoughtful evaluation was required, rather than a uniform requirement.

Vice-Chairman Bostock then asked for a motion to approve the three Zone A projects. Commissioner Designee Madden made the motion to approve the projects, which was seconded by Commissioner Walsh.

The Vice-Chairman asked Director Hutchison to call the roll:

Vice-Chairman Bostock	Yes
Commissioner Designee Madden	Yes
Commissioner Jones	Yes
Commissioner Lubitz	Yes
Commissioner Palmer	Yes
Commissioner Shoffner	Yes (see discussion below)
Commissioner Walsh	Yes

Zone B Projects

#21-4959C Hamilton Road Residential Development -- West Tract (Hillsborough Township)

In response to a request from the Vice-Chairman, Director Hutchison provided a brief description of the project.

Vice-Chairman Bostock asked if there were any questions or comments from the Commissioners or from members of the public. Hearing none, he asked for a motion to approve the Zone B project. Commissioner Shoffner made a motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Palmer.

Vice-Chairman Bostock indicated that Commissioner Shoffner had been experiencing technical difficulties connecting to the meeting and offered her the opportunity to record her vote on the three Zone A projects before consideration of her motion. Commissioner Shoffner confirmed that she wished to be recorded in the affirmative on the Zone A projects. Director Hutchison said that her affirmative vote would be recorded, and the Zone A projects had consequently received unanimous approval.

The Vice-Chairman then proceed to dispose of the motion on the Zone B projects and asked for any comment from the Commissioners or the public. Hearing none, he asked the Director to call the roll:

Vice-Chairman Bostock	Yes
Commissioner Designee Madden	Yes
Commissioner Jones	Yes
Commissioner Lubitz	Yes
Commissioner Palmer	Yes
Commissioner Shoffner	Yes

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Commissioner Walsh

Yes

Executive Director's Report

Director Hutchison reported on the workload for the period encompassing June 17, 2026, through July 15, 2026. In addition to the 4 projects listed on the agenda, the staff had issued 15 deficient staff reports, 12 jurisdictional determinations, 9 certificates of approval, and 4 general permits. The Director also noted that staff reports had been completed for three projects calendared for consideration at the August 19, 2026, Commission meeting.

The Director reported that in addition to those matters, staff had organized and conducted 13 pre-application meetings related to proposed and pending projects. As of July 14, 2026, 34 projects undergoing staff review. Mr. Hutchison observed that the pace of work in the office was busy at the present time.

Director Hutchison reported that fee collections totaled a “respectable” \$36,362.50 for the month, which was the first month of Fiscal Year 2027.

The Director noted that the most significant event of the month was the convening of the first public engagement session for the Master Plan revision project, which was held during the evening of July 14 at the Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers University, in the City of New Brunswick. The Director noted that the meeting was well-attended, and in his opinion the Commission's project consultant did an admirable job organizing and conducting the session. Director Hutchison said he was particularly impressed with the thought-provoking and challenging questions and comments posed by members of the public. He also thanked the Bloustein School for making their facilities available to the Commission at no cost.

The Director noted in his introductory remarks at the session, that New Brunswick has enjoyed a long and historic association with the Delaware and Raritan Canal. The Bloustein School also played a significant role in the Master Plan process through their preparation of their 2021 report entitled [Observations and Recommendations for the Delaware and Raritan Canal Master Plan Update](#), which highlighted the need to revise and update the plan, and analyzed and suggested new tools and approaches that could guide future stewardship of the canal park.

Also, with regard to the Master Plan project, the Director reported that staff emailed detailed information on the 5 proposed public engagement sessions to 77 county and municipal officials in 5 counties and 34 municipalities in the Commission's Review Zones. The information was well-received by local government officials, who informed Commission staff that they had posted the information on their websites or social media platforms. He further noted that the Commission received requests to be added to mailing lists, and the overall response strongly indicated that there is genuine enthusiasm for the project and for opportunities to share their views on shaping the future of the park.

The Director also reported that the staff worked collaboratively with the DEP Press Office and the State Park Service on the preparation and distribution of a press release to broaden awareness of the public participation opportunities. Director Hutchison said he was grateful that DEP Acting Commissioner

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Potosnak had considerably contributed a quote to the release and encouraged the public to participate in the planning process.

Director Hutchison reported that the Commission also saw evidence of the interest in the Master Plan project in its website analytics, which indicated a solid uptick in users' visits to key information being promoted on the website home page, which now features a new landing page dedicated to the plan process and updates.

The Commission project file digitization project continued to move toward its conclusion, the Director reported. Administrative Assistant Megan Black scanned another 13 boxes of files, bringing the year-to-date total to 88. A total of 476 boxes out of 526 boxes of project files have been digitized, which constitutes 89% of the total. The Director said he believed the challenging project would be finished by year's end. Completion of the document digitizing will be a milestone for the Commission's ability to respond quickly to Open Public Records Act (OPRA) requests and provide engineers with critically important data on cumulative impervious surface coverage as well as ensure continuity of operations.

Concluding his report, the Director thanked D&R Canal Watch for inviting him to address their annual meeting on June 28. He noted that the event offered an opportunity to discuss the Master Plan revision project to a group of key stakeholders interested in the canal. The assembled group raised interesting questions and suggestions related to the plan, and the Director said he implored them to take an active part in the process by either attending a public session, or by sending the Commission their ideas using the link on the Commission website.

Following up on a matter discussed at prior meetings, Vice-Chairman Bostock asked for an update on the discussions Director Hutchison had been having regarding standing dead and dying trees along N.J. State Highway Route No. 29 (Route 29) generally in the area between Lambertville and the Titusville section of Hopewell Township. The Director reported that there had been some progress as a result of talks with the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) representative Hannah Duarte, who had in turn reached out to the NJDOT's Maintenance Division to make them aware of the need for tree removal. Since NJDOT's ability to use funds and to operate is confined to the Route 29 right-of-way, some planning would be required in coordination with the State Park Service and NJWSA to determine which trees could be cut down. However, the Director said he was guardedly optimistic that a plan to remove the dead trees could be devised over the course of the upcoming months.

Park Superintendent's Report

Commissioner Designee Madden provided the report for Superintendent Mitchell-Strehl who was unable to attend the meeting.

State Park Service maintenance staff had been working on tree removal along the canal multiuse trail following particularly damaging storms that had struck over the Fourth of July weekend, she said. Designee Madden stated that those storms also caused a seven-day power outage at the Bulls Island Recreation Area.

She reported that staff had installed new wayfinding signage in the City of Trenton at Mulberry Street

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and Jarvis Place (See DRCC #25-3460I).

Commissioner Designee Madden said that Bulls Island Recreation Area would host a “Moth Night” program to Celebrate National Moth Week where people could learn about the many species of moths that live in the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park on July 24 from 7:00 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. and a guided sunset “pop up” hike around the island on July 18 from 7:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

New Jersey Water Supply Authority (NJWSA) Report

Mr. Sellar reported that the contractor hired to tackle repairs at the Prallsville Mills culvert pit and the wastegate modification continued to work on submitting shop drawings for review and approval. While there was still no mobilization date, the project was expected to launch in August.

Treatment for invasive hydrilla in the canal began on July 6, but Mr. Seller reported that the thick growth of hydrilla and eel grass within the canal has posed a challenge for the continued passage of water through the canal.

Mr. Seller noted that disposal of the remains of the collapsed former railroad trestle that crossed the canal along Route 29 near the Mercer County Wildlife Center in Hopewell Township, was on hold pending the receipt of the required permits from impacted State agencies.

Mr. Sellar also reported that the NJWSA continued to procure consultant services for the rehabilitation of the Swan Creek aqueduct over the Delaware and Raritan Canal and the associated culvert in the City of Lambertville.

Mr. Sellar reported that no harmful algal blooms (HABs) had been observed or reported in the Delaware and Raritan Canal in 2026.

Mr. Sellar also indicated that NJWSA and a consultant were awaiting revised drawings on the Lightpath Company proposed fiber optic cable project and associated horizontal directional drilling under the canal in the vicinity of Prospect Street in the City of Trenton.

Finally, he noted that isolated but strong summer storms were keeping NJWSA maintenance staff busy with tree and debris removal from the Delaware and Raritan Canal, and that authority crews were also performing seasonal mowing activities along the length of the canal.

Executive Session

None.

New Business

None.

Old Business

None.

Public Comment

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Mr. Barth offered his praise for the Commission's first public engagement session for the Master Plan update in New Brunswick. He said the layout of information boards that solicited participants' perspectives on various issues was well done, but he preferred enabling those attending to ask questions and make comments as a group, instead of talking to others individually. He encouraged everyone to attend the upcoming sessions.

In response to Mr. Barth's comment, Vice-Chairman Bostock asked Director Hutchison if the session format could accommodate the addition of a public comment period. The Director said he would discuss opportunities for any format modification with the project's lead consultant, Clarke, Caton, Hintz to determine whether the suggestion change in approach was in compliance with the project's contracted scope of work. The Director also noted that the Commission was statutorily required to hold at least one public hearing on the master plan, which would be conducted prior to a vote on the adoption of the plan.

Written Public Comments

None.

Adjournment

There being no other business, Vice-Chairman Bostock entertained a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Lubitz, among others, made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by several Commissioners.

Vice-Chairman Bostock called for a vote on the motion to adjourn, which was unanimously approved by a voice vote.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:47 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Hutchison", written in a cursive style.

John Hutchison, Secretary