



Illinois Department of Natural Resources

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JB Pritzker, Governor
Colleen Callahan, Director

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Stratton Lock and Dam improvements ensure Fox River Chain O' Lakes boaters experience shorter wait times in lock *\$22M improvement project benefits thousands of recreational boaters annually*

McHENRY – Boat and jet ski operators will experience shorter wait times and a safer experience overall when they pass through the lock at Stratton Lock and Dam on the Fox River thanks to the completion of a \$22 million improvement project at the facility.



Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) Director Colleen Callahan today was joined by state, federal and local leaders to celebrate the completion of the project.

“Our numerous waterways are one of the many things that make Illinois special,” **Governor JB Pritzker said.** “With the completion of this improvement project, boaters on the Fox River will have safer, more efficient access through Stratton Lock and Dam, so they can spend less time waiting and more time enjoying the water and summer sun with their families. A huge thank you to IDNR and the Fox Waterway Agency for their leadership. Here’s to a great 2022 boating season!”

Improvements at the site in McHenry include doubling the lock's capacity and replacing five deteriorated dam sluice gates with three new equivalent-sized automated torque tube hinge gates. The gate structure is now safer and more reliable, and the lock is more efficient.

Prior to increasing the lock capacity, boaters waited up to three hours at a time to move through the facility. Wait times have been cut to about 20 minutes. Nearly 20,000 watercraft pass through the lock during boating season between May 1 and Nov. 1 each year.



The project began in 2014 but was delayed during the two-year state budget stalemate, then restarted in 2018. It was completed in time for the 2022 boating season.

“Safety is a priority for IDNR at all times. Enjoyment of our sites and activities is a close second,” **Callahan said**. “With this long-overdue investment in the Stratton Lock and Dam, IDNR has made it possible for boaters to spend more time enjoying the Fox River and Chain O’Lakes and less time waiting for their turn in the lock.”

The Chain O’Lakes is vital to the region’s economy and way of life, said **State Rep. Tom Weber (R-Lake Villa)**.

“Since my first day in office, one of my main priorities has been its protection and preservation, and this is one of many necessary steps we need to take to ensure the quality and maintain control of our waterways,” he said.

Both the lock and the dam are operated by the IDNR Office of Water Resources in accordance with the McHenry County Dam Act for recreation in the Chain O’Lakes. The office has operated the gate control structure at the dam since 1939.

The Fox Waterway Agency oversees the Fox River and Chain O’Lakes public waterways, including the 15 interconnected lakes that make up the Fox River Chain O’Lakes and 30 miles of the Fox River stretching from the Wisconsin border to the Algonquin Dam.

“The users of this great waterway celebrate the final completion and enhanced benefits of this worthwhile project and are grateful for the team at IDNR for getting it done,” said **Joe Keller, executive director of the**

Fox Waterway Agency. “The FWA is very excited about continued progress in our work with IDNR to further improve, restore and preserve the Fox River, Chain O’Lakes and the many precious resources around it for generations to come.”

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