



To: Director Natalie Phelps-Finnie  
From: Deputy Chief John L. Miller #2005  
Date: 04/18/2026  
Subject: Conditions on the Fox River and Chain O'Lakes

Deputy Chief John L. Miller #2005 advised that submerged structures and inundated piers have created conditions that are significantly hazardous to navigation on the Illinois portion of the Fox River. These hazardous conditions extend from the Wisconsin border in Antioch (including the entire Chain O'Lakes system) in Lake and McHenry Counties, south to the Bridge Street Bridge in Millington, Kendall County. The Chain O'Lakes system includes the following lakes: Grass Lake, Fox Lake, Nippersink Lake, Pistakee Lake, Lake Marie, Channel Lake, Lake Catherine, and Bluff Lake, along with all connecting channels and backwaters. In addition to posing a substantial risk to the boating public, these conditions are also treacherous for emergency service personnel responding to water-related incidents. This assessment is supported by Lockmaster Joe Farej, FWA Field Superintendent Rob Bowman, and representatives from local law enforcement and emergency management agencies, all of whom concur that current conditions present a significant threat to public safety.

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources is authorized to designate Restricted Boating Areas when navigation is significantly dangerous pursuant to: Section 2030.80 – Hazardous Navigation Conditions (Designated Restricted Boating Areas) In the event that the Department of Natural Resources determines the presence of conditions that make navigation of a body of water significantly dangerous to the public, the Director of the Department of Natural Resources may, in coordination with the federal government, designate Restricted Boating Areas on any affected body of water within the jurisdiction of the State of Illinois. This designation shall be made by public announcement in local media and by posting at local public boat launches and marinas. The restricted area shall be physically marked by buoys, signs, manned watercraft, or yellow police tape. The designation shall remain in effect until the Director determines that navigation is no longer significantly dangerous, but in no case longer than 90 days. Rescission of the designation shall be publicly announced and posted, and all markings shall be removed.

*(Source: Added at 29 Ill. Reg. 15550, effective September 27, 2005)*

Based on current and forecasted conditions, it is recommended that the Director expand the Restricted Boating Area on the Fox River to include the area from the Wisconsin border in Antioch (including the entire Chain O'Lakes system), south to the Bridge Street Bridge in Millington. This Restricted Boating Area should apply to all non-emergency boating activities and shall remain in effect until water levels and navigation conditions return to a safe and manageable state. It is further recommended that this designation become effective at 1200 hours on April 18, 2026.

Approved By Director Natalie Phelps Finnie

04/20/2026

Date