The Lock and Dam System

The Upper Mississippi River – Illinois Waterway System includes 37 locks and 1,200 miles of navigable waterway in Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, and Wisconsin. The 9-foot Channel Navigation Project was largely constructed in the 1930s and extends down the Upper Mississippi River from Minneapolis-St. Paul to its confluence with the Ohio River and up the Illinois Waterway to the Thomas J. O'Brien Lock in Chicago. The maintenance needs of the aging infrastructure are increasing at a rate much greater than the operations and maintenance funding provided for the system.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Rock Island District, is responsible for management of 12 lock and dam sites on 314 miles of the 866 total miles of the Upper Mississippi River from Dubuque, Iowa, to Saverton, Mo.; and eight lock and dam sites on 268 miles of the 327 total miles of the Illinois Waterway which flows from Chicago to St Louis. The Illinois Waterway boundaries start in the Chicago Area Waterway System on the Chicago River at river mile 325.6 and also on the Calumet River at river mile 325 and continue downstream to Illinois River mile 79.9 near Beardstown, Ill. The Illinois Waterway is composed of seven water systems: Illinois River, Des Plaines River, Chicago Sanitary and Shipping Canal, South Branch Chicago River, Cal-Sag Channel, Little Calumet River and the Calumet River.

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