



**To:** Director Natalie Phelps-Finnie  
**From:** Deputy Chief John L. Miller #2005  
**Date:** 05/04/2026

**Subject:** Modified Restricted Boating Area Conditions on the Upper Fox River, Chain O'Lakes, and Lower Fox River.

Deputy Chief John L. Miller, in coordination with Fox Waterway Agency Executive Director Joe Keller, Lockmaster Joe Farej, and regional law enforcement and emergency management partners, advises that water levels on the Upper Fox River and Chain O'Lakes system have receded sufficiently to permit limited controlled boating activity under restricted conditions. However, hazardous navigation conditions, including elevated water levels, floating debris, submerged hazards, strong currents, and dangerous tailwater conditions, persist in portions of the Lower Fox River.

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources has the authority to designate Restricted Boating Areas when navigation is significantly dangerous to the public, and to modify or rescind such restrictions when conditions permit safe public access.

**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, and the restricted area shall be physically marked by buoys, signs, manned watercraft or yellow police tape. This designation will remain in effect until the Director of the Department of Natural Resources determines that navigation is no longer significantly dangerous to the public, but in no case shall the designation remain in effect longer than 90 days. Rescission of the Restricted Boating Area designation shall be publicly announced in local media and posted at local public boat launches and marinas and any markings shall be removed. (Source: Added at 29 Ill. Reg. 15550, effective September 27, 2005)

I recommend modification of the current Restricted Boating Area designation, effective 1600 hrs. on 05/04/2026, as follows:

The Upper Fox River from the Stratton Lock and Dam north to the Wisconsin State Line, including the Chain O'Lakes system consisting of Grass Lake, Lake Marie, Channel Lake, Lake Catherine, Bluff Lake, Petite Lake, Fox Lake, Nippersink Lake, and Pistakee Lake, shall be reopened to boating traffic under a NO WAKE ONLY restriction.

The Lower Fox River shall remain CLOSED to all non-emergency boating traffic from immediately south of the Stratton Lock and Dam in McHenry County south to the Bridge Street Bridge in Millington, Kendall County, due to continued hazardous navigation conditions in the tailwaters and downstream river system. If approved, the Office of Law Enforcement will coordinate the modified Restricted Boating Area designation with the United States Coast Guard, Fox Waterway Agency, local law enforcement, and affected local authorities.

Approved By Director Natalie Phelps-Finnie

05/04/2026

Date