



U.S. Army
Corps of Engineers
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NEWS RELEASE

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Army Corps of Engineers announces plan to activate new electric barrier

CHICAGO - The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers announced today that it plans to activate in late January 2009 a new electric barrier, known as Barrier IIA, in the Sanitary and Ship Canal near Lockport, Ill. The Army Corps has been operating a demonstration electric barrier in the Sanitary and Ship Canal since 2002. Both Barrier IIA and the demonstration barrier will operate at the same time to provide redundant back up. The purpose of the barriers is to block the passage of aquatic nuisance species such as Asian carp in order to prevent them from moving into the Great Lakes.

The Army Corps decision to turn on the barrier in January is based on a letter it received today from the U.S. Coast Guard stating that the Coast Guard has no objection to the Army Corps activating the new barrier at a maximum strength of 1 volt per inch, which is the operating strength of the existing demonstration barrier currently in operation in the Sanitary and Ship Canal. The January activation schedule was based on time needed to implement a new key safety precaution outlined by the Coast Guard -- the requirement for all red flag barges (with flammable cargo) to be escorted by Army Corps-provided bow boats as they transit the barrier area.

The Army Corps plans to work with the Coast Guard and navigation industry to develop plans for safety testing of the new barrier at higher voltages. The Army Corps is also continuing design work on the second phase of the new barrier, Barrier IIB.

Boaters are reminded to exercise extreme caution while traveling in the Sanitary and Ship Canal from the Midwest generation power plant to the pipeline arch, an approximately 1400-foot section of the canal from river mile 296.1 to 296.7. While traveling through the area boaters are advised to remain seated, stay out of the water, keep hands and feet out of the water and closely supervise children and pets or send them below deck. Boaters are also advised not to linger or attempt to moor in the restricted area.

The Army Corps is continuing to work with the Coast Guard, representatives from the barge and commercial navigation industry, recreational boating groups and others to find ways to enhance safety features in the barrier area. The Army Corps is also working with technical experts to find ways to improve the operational safety of the barrier array.