

# HENNEPIN CANAL STATE PARK

*Your guide to navigating fun on the Hennepin Canal*

## Points of Interest

Visitors often ask where they can see a working lock, a lift bridge, an aqueduct, lock tender houses, and where can they find the most scenic or historic portions of the canal.

NO working locks remain on the Canal, however, a traditional **Marshall gate** remains at Lock 16. Marshall gates opened and closed on the principle of buoyancy.

Historic **Lift bridges** still exists at **Lock 21, Lock 22, & Lock 26** but are not operable. The Lock 21 bridge is the only bridge that can be accessed with a public motor vehicle.

Other historical bridges still exist on the Canal. **Original iron truss bridges** that have not been replaced by modern, paved overpasses can be seen at **Bridge 15, Bridge 24, & Lock 24**. At **Lock 2** you can find another iron truss bridge. The Lock 2 bridge opened and closed for Canal waterway traffic on a **railroad track system**. The cantilevers can still be seen under the bridge, but the bridge has been altered to allow pedestrian traffic to safely cross.

When the locks were in operation, the locktenders that manned them were required to live along the Canal. Several "Locktender Houses" still stand at Lock 17, Lock 20, Bridge 16, & Lock 33. One of the houses at Lock 33 was the Canal overseer's house and is used today as an office for IL Department of Natural Resources staff.

There are six remaining aqueducts on the Canal: **Aqueducts 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, & 9**. Most of them can only be viewed by walking along the Canal trails, however, you can get a glimpse of aqueduct 3 from County Road 1400N, just east of Wyanet.



## Park Regulations

**Fires** are only permitted in state installed fire grills

**Firewood:** It is unlawful to cut any living tree along the Canal corridor. It is permissible to use downed wood for campfires, but no wood may be taken from the park.

**Pets** must be leashed at all times with a leash no longer than 10 feet

No **fireworks** of any kind are permitted

It is unlawful to operate any **motor vehicle** other than on posted roadways. The towpath is off limits to all, but authorized vehicles.

**Swimming** is prohibited in all canal waters

## Visitor Center Hours

7:30am – 3:30pm / Monday - Friday

(Unless otherwise posted)

Phone: 815.454.2328

Fax: 815.454.2042

This guide was created by the Hennepin Canal staff to help answer questions on boating, camping, events, fishing, group visits, hiking, horseback riding, hunting, shelter reservations, skating, skiing, snowmobiling, and trapping on the Hennepin Canal.

## FUN FACTS

- **Construction on the Canal began in 1892 and was completed in 1907.**
- **The Canal was used to transport grain, steel, coal, salt, and passengers.**

## School & Group Visits/Events

The canal staff is happy to accommodate group activities, events, weddings, schools visits, etc. Groups of 25 or more are required to fill out a **Group Use Permit**.

Public events, such as charity runs, require applicants complete an **Activity Permit** & a **Permit To Sell** form, including proof of insurance (non-profit groups may request a fee waiver via this form).

For groups planning to see the Visitor Center museum, please call ahead to avoid any closure dates that may result from staff obligations.

## Shelter Reservations

The Hennepin Canal has one large and two small shelters in the Main Park Complex area and one shelter located at the Lock 21 day use area. The large shelter in the Main Park Complex area can be reserved for \$25/day by calling the Visitor Center. A public grill and picnic tables are located at each shelter, and the large shelter is adjacent to a playground.

## Skiing/Ice Skating

Ice skating is allowed on canal waters at your own risk.

There is a cross-country ski trail in the Main Complex area, which begins at the visitor center parking lot and extends south toward Township Road. This 2.3 mile trail has gentle up and down hills.

The cross-country ski trail is **closed from 31 October-the 2<sup>nd</sup> weekend in January**, when the area is used for archery deer hunting.

For non-park related or general IDNR inquiries, please email:

**DNR.Parksadmin@illinois.gov**

## Snowmobiling

Snowmobiling on the Hennepin Canal trail is allowed when the trails are declared open by site staff. To check if the trails are open, call the visitor center at 815-454-2328. A pre-recorded message is left during winter hours to indicate daily trail status.

The trail is either open or closed; there are NO partial openings/closings. To declare the trail open requires 4 inches of snow on the ground & 6 inches of frost in the ground. **When the trail is closed, the entire park is closed to snowmobile use.**

Snowmobilers may ride the ice at their own risk. The water does not always freeze solidly inside the tubes. Be aware of ice conditions, ice skaters, and structures (including tubes).

*Mainline Canal snowmobile routes:*

Lock 2–Bridge 15 (South towpath) 21.7 miles

Bridge 15-Bridge 17A (North towpath) 4.8 miles

Bridge 17A-Bridge 18A (South towpath) 0.5 miles

Bridge 18A-Bridge 39 (North towpath) 23.7 miles

Bridge 39-Bridge 40\* (South towpath) 2.7 miles

Bridge 42A-Lock 29 (South towpath) 1.5 miles

*Feeder Canal routes:*

Bridge 45-Summit Pool (West towpath) 27.5 miles

## Trapping

The Canal is a popular trapping location for muskrat, beaver, mink, and raccoon.

Prospective trappers may apply for a permit to trap at Mautino SFWA, Hennepin Canal, and Lake Sinnissippi by filling out a site specific trapping permit application, available at the Visitor Center.

Applicants need to provide their Customer number, a copy of their driver's license, and license plate information of the vehicle that will be used when trapping. Trappers must return their harvest reports within 15 days of the close of the season.

## Bicycling

There are more than 60 miles of biking enjoyment on the Main Canal, 29 miles along the Feeder Canal, and 3 miles along the Milan Section.

The surfaced portion of the trail on the main canal runs from Lock 2 (Bureau Junction) to Lock 29 (Colona). The surfaced trail on the Feeder Canal runs from the "Summit Pool" (where the Feeder meets the Main Canal) to Lock 33 (Rock Falls).

Equestrians will use the grassy side of the trail, except where the trail is shared (ag-lime/gravel). Bicycles may use both sides of the trail, but remember that horses have the right-of-way. There is only trail on ONE side of the canal around the aqueducts.

## Camping

Camping at the Hennepin Canal is on a "first come, first serve" basis. Reservations are not accepted. Camping on/along the trails or in the main complex area around the visitor center is NOT permitted.

The Hennepin Canal site security officer visits each campsite nightly to collect camping fees in-person.

The canal has nine designated camping locations:

Lock 6	Lock 11
Lock 17	Lock 23
Lock 26	Lock 22 (drinking water)
Bridge 14 (boat ramp)	Bridge 23 (boat ramp)
Lock 21 (Equestrian camping allowed, boat ramp, drinking water)	

All campsites have vehicular access & vehicular camping is permitted. Showers & electricity are not available at any of the sites.

**Pricing** – Class C rate (\$8.00/family unit)

**Youth Groups** - \$2.00/per person/per day or a minimum daily fee of \$20.00 (supervised young people age 18 or under)

**Quiet hours** are observed from **10pm – 7am**

The Visitor Center does not sell water usage stamps.

For information about watercraft registration, lost watercraft titles & water usage stamps, please visit:

[www.dnr.illinois.gov/boating](http://www.dnr.illinois.gov/boating)

The trail from **Lock 26 to Rt 80** (Bridge 40 to Bridge 41A) is **closed to ALL recreational activities** due to flood damage.

## Canoeing/Kayaking/Boating

Canoeing/kayaking is permitted on the canal, however, it is recommended that you do not canoe further west than Lock 26 on the main portion of the canal. The main canal from Lock 21 to Lock 2 is very scenic, but has 23 portages required to get around or traverse.

Lock 22 - Lock 23 = 9.1 miles / Lock 23 - Lock 24 = 10.1 miles

Lock 24 - Lock 25 = 5.4 miles

Along the Feeder canal from Rock Falls to the "Summit Pool", there is **29 miles of portage-free canoeing**.

A 10 horsepower maximum is established on all canal waters, except between Lock 24 & Bridge 37, which is posted unlimited horsepower.

Overnight mooring of water craft is prohibited on the Canal. The Canal **does not have** boat docks or a canoe concession. Watercraft moored for more than 6 hours will be considered abandoned and subject to penalties.

Boat ramps are located at the following locations:

### Main Canal

Lock 21	Lock 22	Bridge 15
Bridge 23	Bridge 28	Lock 24
Izaak Walton League Park near Bridge 37		
Bridge 39	Lock 29	

### Feeder Canal

Bridge 64	Bridge 56	Bridge 45
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## Fishing / Ice Fishing

Fishing on the Canal is allowed 24hrs/day. There is a limit of 2 poles/person for pole and line fishing. Bank pole fishing is illegal on the Canal (unattended poles stuck in the bank). Jug fishing is only allowed from sunset to sunrise. The most prevalent species of fish in the Canal are large and smallmouth bass, catfish, walleye, crappie, and bluegills. In the winter months, ice fishermen bring their tents & heaters, often frequenting the pond in the main park complex area.

**Trout Program:** On the 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday in April & the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday in October, IDNR staff net off the lagoon behind the visitor center & release several hundred pounds of trout. Fishing for the trout is not allowed before sunrise on these days, but the program is open to the public.

## Hiking

The Hennepin Canal offers over 100 miles of scenic hiking on the towpaths that about the canal the entire length of the waterway. The towpath is mostly gravel, but there are some sections of paved surfaces.

To better plan your hiking trip, call and request or pick up one the "Distances on the Hennepin Canal" booklets from the visitor center, which indicates the distances between locks and aqueducts along the entire canal.

## Horseback Riding

Horseback riding is permitted along the Canal from **15 April – 31 October**. An equestrian campground is located on the south side of Lock 21's day use area.

The majority of the trail is grass, but there are some \*shared (with hikers/bicycles) gravel surfaces where there is only trail on one side of the canal – this occurs where the trail must bypass around the aqueducts.

Please clean up after your horse by bringing a shovel and pushing droppings off the side of the trail.

The following equestrian activities are **prohibited**: tethering horses to trees, riding in day use areas, portable electric fences

Equestrian use is restricted to the following trails:

### Main Canal

Lock 2-Lock 4 (North Side)

*\*Shared surface around Aqueduct 1*

Lock 4-Lock 12 (North Side)

\*Lock 12-Bridge 15 (South Side)

Bridge 15-Lock 22 (South Side)

\*Lock 22-Bridge 20 (North Side)

Bridge 20-Bridge 23 (South Side)

\*Bridge 23-Bridge 24 (North Side)

Bridge 24-Bridge 32 (South Side)

\*Bridge 32-Bridge 33 (North Side)

Bridge 33-Lock 24 (South Side)

### Feeder Canal

Bridge 46-Bridge 60 (East Side)

Bridge 60-Bridge 61 (West Side)

Bridge 61-Bridge 18A (East Side)

## The Hennepin Hundred Ultramarathon



The first Saturday of October the canal welcomes the **Hennepin Hundred**, a 100-mile ultramarathon that includes 50-mile & 50k points, and a 100-mile relay. The Hennepin Hundred is hosted by [Trails for Illinois](#) and [Ornery Mule Racing](#), who actively work to raise awareness for Illinois trails and contribute to their preservation and repair. Proceeds donated by Trails for Illinois, raised from the 2017 Hennepin Hundred race will be used by canal staff to re-deck the timbers of one of the original iron truss bridges (Bridge 15) along the canal towpath that is used by runners and other park-goers.

The race starts at Rock Falls, along the feeder canal, with a turnaround (50-mile finish) at Lock 17. The 100-mile finish line is at Colona. Runners begin in the morning and run through the night, stopping at some of the most interesting volunteer-run aid stations in the ultramarathon community. Whether you participate, donate to support our trails, or just come out to watch and show support, check out the Hennepin Hundred at their website:

[www.hennepinhundred.com](http://www.hennepinhundred.com)

## Hunting

The Hennepin Canal holds free lotteries each year for archery deer hunting (Hennepin Canal), dove hunting (Hennepin Canal & Mautino SFWA), and for duck blind drawings (at Lake Sinnissippi).

**Archery deer:** applications must be submitted to the visitor center by 31 July each year. Call to receive an application and map of designated hunting areas. Firearm/shotgun hunting is not permitted at the Hennepin Canal, with the exception of dove hunting.

**Dove hunting:** drawings for dove hunting plots begin the 1st day of dove season in September. To enter the drawing, prospective hunters must be present at the time of the drawing at the canal or Mautino's. There are approximately 50 food plots at Mautino's and 29 at Hennepin Canal.

**Duck hunting:** The duck blink drawing for Lake Sinnissippi is held each year on the last Saturday in July. To enter the drawing, prospective hunters must be present at the time of the drawing.

**The Visitor Center does not sell hunting tags/permits of any kind. To purchase hunting tags or find a list of vendors, please visit: [www.dnr.illinois.gov/LPR](http://www.dnr.illinois.gov/LPR)**