

RECREATIONAL GUIDE

HENNEPIN CANAL STATE PARK

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. There are still remnants of an old dry dock at Lock 21, which was used to repair canal boats. The cement runners are all that remain of these historic docks.

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 **Original iron truss bridges** that have not been replaced by modern, paved overpasses can be seen at **Bridges 15 and 24 and at Locks 11, 14, & 17.**

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.

Visitor Center Hours

7:30am – 3:30pm / Monday – Friday
(Unless otherwise posted)

Phone: 815.454.2328
Fax: 815.454.2042



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.

Visit us on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/HennepinCanalStatePark>

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.

Refer to the **Towpath Surfaces** section for more information on where the towpath is gravel and where it is an oil & chip surface.

Equestrians use the grassy side of the trail, except where the trail is a shared gravel trail. 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.

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 2nd weekend in January**, when the area is used for archery deer hunting.

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 Sinissippi 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.

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. Or visit us on [Facebook](#) for 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.**

Our trails are NOT groomed. Riding the ice is at your own risk, as the snowmobile trails are the only DESIGNATED place to ride snowmobiles.

Mainline canal snowmobile routes		Miles
Lock 2-Bridge 15	South towpath	21.7
Bridge 15-Bridge 17A	North towpath	4.8
Bridge 17A-Bridge 18A	South towpath	0.5
Bridge 18A-Bridge 39	North towpath	23.7
Bridge 39-Bridge 40	South towpath	2.7
Bridge 42A-Lock 29	South towpath	1.5
Feeder canal snowmobile route		Miles
Bridge 45	West towpath	27.5

Parking

Visitors often ask where they can find parking along the canal and its trails. Large parking lots are shaded in the table below. The parking locations in the unshaded cells are smaller parking lots that can hold only 2-3 cars. Vehicular and trailer parking is permitted in any of our parking lots while you ride the trails and the parking lots are open 24/7.

Mainline canal parking lots:				Lock 3	Lock 6	Lock 11	Lock 17
Lock 21	Bridge 14	Visitor Center	Bridge 15	Bridge 16	Bridge 17	Bridge 18A	Lock 22
Bridge 22	Bridge 23	Lock 23	Bridge 29	Bridge 30	Bridge 38	Bridge 39	Lock 26
Bridge 41	Lock 28	Lock 29	Lock 30	Lock 31	Lock 32	Lock 33	
Feeder canal parking lots:							
Bridge 64	Bridge 63	Bridge 62	Bridge 61	Bridge 60	Bridge 59	Bridge 58	Bridge 57
Bridge 56	Bridge 55	Bridge 54	Bridge 53	Bridge 52	Bridge 51	Bridge 50	Bridge 49
Bridge 48	Bridge 47	Bridge 46	Bridge 45				

Towpath Surfaces (Bicycles/Hiking)

Towpath is located on both sides of the majority of both the mainline canal and the feeder canal. There are two types of paved surfaces along the canal: gravel/aggregate lime and oil & chip. Portions of the trail must be **shared** by hikers, cyclists, and equestrians where towpath is located on only one side of the canal around the aqueducts. The opposite side of the paved surface side is grass for equestrian use. The grassy side can be used by cyclists and hikers, but equestrians have the right-of-way.

The feeder canal is gravel from Bridge 46 to Bridge 56. The rest of the feeder canal is gravel.

Mainline canal towpath	Side of Canal	Surface Type
Lock 2 to Lock 12	South side	oil & chip
Lock 12 to Bridge 15	South side (shared)	gravel
Bridge 15 to Lock 22	North side	Oil & chip
Lock 22 to Bridge 20	North side (shared)	Gravel
Bridge 20 to Bridge 23	North side	Oil & chip
Bridge 23 to Bridge 24	North side (shared)	Gravel
Bridge 24 to Bridge 32	North side	Oil & chip
Bridge 32 to Bridge 33	North side (shared)	Gravel
Bridge 33 to Bridge 39	North side	Oil & chip
Bridge 39 to Lock 25	South side	Oil & chip
Lock 25 to Bridge 40A	South side	Gravel
Bridge 40A to Bridge 40	South side	Oil & chip
Bridge 40 to Lock 29	North side	Oil & chip

Camping

Camping at the Hennepin Canal is on a “first come, first serve” basis. Reservations not accepted. The canal site security officer visits campsites nightly to **collect camping fees in-person**. Camping on/along the trails or in the main complex area around the visitor center is NOT permitted. Camping is allowed only in our nine designated camping locations:

Equestrian camping is allowed only at Lock 21. All campsites have vehicular access & vehicular camping is permitted, however, there are no dumping/pump-out stations. There is no price difference between mode of camping, i.e. tent, RV, pop-up camper. Showers & electricity are not available at any of the sites, but there are toilets at each site (no running water). Quiet hours are observed from **10pm – 7am**.

Lock 6
Lock 11
Lock 17
Lock 21
Bridge 14
Lock 22
Bridge 23
Lock 23
Lock 26

Class C rate = \$8.00/family

Youth Groups = \$20.00 minimum daily fee. After minimum has been met, additional persons are \$2.00 each/per day (supervised young people age 18 or under).

IL Senior citizens = Monday—Thurs is free, Fri—Sun is \$8.00.

IL Disabled persons w/ Class 2 or 2A card = Free. Sun—Sat.

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. The following are some portage free routes:

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 are **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.

Mainline canal boat ramps:		
Lock 21	Lock 22	Bridge 15
Bridge 23	Bridge 28	Lock 24
Bridge 39	Lock 29	Izaak Walton League
Feeder canal boat ramps:		
Bridge 64	Bridge 56	Bridge 45

The Visitor Center **does not** sell water usage stamps. For information about watercraft registration, lost watercraft titles & water usage stamps, please call 1-800-382-1696 or visit:

www.dnr.illinois.gov/boating

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 (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 lagoon in the main park complex area.

Trout Program: On the 1st Saturday in April & the 3rd 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. A fishing license & an Inland Trout Stamp are required, unless you are under 16, blind, disabled, or an IL resident on leave from active duty in the Armed Forces.

Friends of the Hennepin Canal

Many IL state parks have “friends” groups – volunteer groups who are avid supporters of a particular park, its programs, and preservation. The canal is lucky that a group of avid park goers created the Friends of the Hennepin Canal.

The “Friends” participate in trash clean-ups, organized hikes, raise awareness about our programs and needs, and have generously donated time and useful items to the Hennepin Canal. In the spirit of their love for the canal, they go on a hike once per month, which is open to the public.

If you’d like a guided tour of the canal or want to learn a wealth of information about its history, while seeing its beauty, we recommend tagging along on one of these hikes with the Friends. They hike the canal in segments throughout the year, usually 3-5 miles at time. There is no fee to participate and membership to the Friends group is not required.

The hikes are on Sundays and the Friends provide transportation from the end point back to the start point. To find out more information, you can email: info@friends-hennepin-canal.org

Hiking

The Hennepin Canal offers over 100 miles of scenic hiking on the towpaths that abut the canal the entire length of the waterway. The towpath is mostly gravel, but there are some sections of paved surfaces (see **Towpath Surfaces** section).

Check out the “Distances on the Hennepin Canal” sheet online or at the visitor center, which indicates the distances between locks and aqueducts along the entire canal.

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

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: Open to IL residents only. 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 blind 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.

For additional information, please see the Hunter Fact Sheet for specific sites at:

www.dnr.illinois.gov/hunting/FactSheets/Pages/Northwest

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

Horseback Riding

Horseback riding is permitted along the Hennepin Canal from **15 April – 31 October**. The majority of the trail is grass, but there are some gravel surfaces where the trail is shared with hikers & cyclists. When there are shared portions of trail, to bypass around aqueducts, there will only be trail on one side of the canal.

Please clean up after your horse by bringing a shovel and pushing droppings off the side of the trail. Tethering horses to trees, riding in day use areas, & portable electric fences are **prohibited**. An equestrian campground is located on the south side of Lock 21's day use area. The table below details the location of the horse trails with an asterisk (*) denoting where the trail is shared.

Mainline canal horse trails:	
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 horse trails:	
Bridge 46-Bridge 60	East Side
Bridge 60-Bridge 61	West Side
Bridge 61-Bridge 18A	East Side

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 is adjacent to a playground and can be reserved for \$25/day by calling or stopping in at the Visitor Center to request an application. All of the other shelters are available on a first-come, first-serve basis. A public grill and picnic tables are located at each shelter.