



## Illinois Department of **Natural Resources**

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### **IDNR, Buzzi Unicem USA Agree to Open Vermilion River Stretch in LaSalle County**

*Agreement will allow safety improvements, public recreational access Near  
Matthiessen State Park*

SPRINGFIELD, IL – The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) and Lone Star Industries, Inc., known as Buzzi Unicem USA, today announced an agreement that will allow a Buzzi Unicem-owned segment of the Vermilion River near Matthiessen State Park in LaSalle County to be opened for public recreation.

The agreement will permit the IDNR to install safety measures and additional warning signs on and around a low-head dam on Buzzi Unicem USA's section of the river. The IDNR will also designate a restricted boating area at the dam, and design and construct a future dam safety project on that segment of the Vermilion River. The area will remain closed to the public until these safety measures and warning signs are installed at the dam.

“We appreciate the willingness of the company to work with the IDNR to find ways to improve safety at their dam that will allow those who enjoy rafting, canoeing and kayaking on the Vermilion River to have access to that stretch of the river,” said IDNR Director Marc Miller. “The IDNR Office of Water Resources has developed a plan for installing safety measures at the dam, and will work on a more permanent project that can make the area around the dam safer for recreational users to enjoy for many years to come.”

Under terms of the agreement, the IDNR now decides when the stretch of the river can be used for public recreation for non-motorized boating, rafting, kayaking and canoeing. The agreement announced today allows the IDNR to begin work on the safety measures around the Buzzi Unicem dam before the end of this year. Public access to that segment of the Vermilion River could start with the 2011 boating season, pending acceptable weather and river conditions over the next several months.

Work on the project will take place over the next several months and could potentially create dozens of jobs.

Highlights of the IDNR dam safety improvements include:

- Placement of hanging buoys to direct all boat traffic to the “river right” location
- of the boat passage section of the dam.
- Placement of two diamond-shaped warning signs on the left abutment of the dam facing upstream and downstream.
- Placement of two signs upstream of the dam to notify the public of the existence of a dam ahead and to stay river right.
- Removal of exposed rebar in the dam structure, which currently protrudes into the open water where boaters and floaters pass.
- Placement of concrete blocks and/or rock in the scour hole below dam to reduce or eliminate hydraulic roller (or rapidly flowing undertow) at the base of the dam.
- Designation of a “Restricted Boating Area” around the dam.

Even with proposed safety modifications, low-head dams can pose significant hazards. According to the Association of State Dam Safety Officials, when water drops over a dam, a condition known as a “hydraulic roller” occurs. Recreational users are reminded to use extreme caution when approaching any dam. In addition, whitewater conditions on any river can be dangerous. The public is reminded to use extreme caution when navigating the area once the river area is reopened.