Paddling Safely
on the Lower Fox River

SAFE PADDLING TIPS
- Wear personal flotation devices at all times
- Wear bright colors
- Stay on the water trail
- Hug the shore
- Follow the guides & safety signs
- Give way to powerboats
- Stay far away from dams & hydro intakes
- Approach Locks Carefully
- Do not Paddle During High Water
- Know Your Limitations!

Please visit www.heritageparkway.org for information about areas that are considered safe for paddling during normal flow conditions.
The Fox River is a wonderful, urban experience that requires respect of its many hazards. There are 17 locks, 12 dams, and many water intakes to be cautious of as the river drops 167 feet in only 39 miles! Water levels change from season to season and with little notice due to rain events. Dam operations can dramatically affect paddle conditions and need to be respected.

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Locks

- Approach the lock slowly and with caution.
- Stay beyond the lock walls until signaled to enter the lock.
- Be aware that the lock may be in use as you approach, locking other boats through from the other side.
- Lock Tenders direct timing and placement of all vessels in and out of the lock chamber.
- When entering the lock, there are mooring lines spaced along the lock wall. Lines should be held loosely while inside the lock chamber.
- Paddlers should have fees readily available for the lock tender.
- Water levels will fluctuate from 6 to 11 feet depending on the lock during passage.
- All paddlers must be able to control their vessel in a safe and sober manner.
- Lock operators will signal boaters when it is clear to depart the lock.
- Maintain a safe distance behind powerboats to avoid water turbulence.

Dams

- Know your location on the river with regard to each dam.
- Never approach a dam, from upstream or downstream.
- The current is stronger near the dam and can pull you in.
- Obey all signs and buoys.
- Paddle to the lock side of the river.
- Danger lies in being swept over the dam, but also below the dam, hydraulics may submerge you and keep you submerged.

Water Intakes

- There are many factories & utilities that utilize the river for hydropower.
- Heed Caution signs at water intake areas.
- Flows increase in these areas and can pull you into the direct flow of the intake.
- There are often grates, but the intake is a serious entrapment hazard.
- Never approach a water intake area.

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