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## State to begin removing Ellsworth Dam in July

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The Ellsworth Park dam will be removed with an IDNR crew and equipment, and that crew is working on a dredging project on the Kaskaskia River, Young indicated through an email.

Commercial News file photo



DANVILLE — A date has been set for the start of the dam removal projects.

Work on the Ellsworth Park Dam is scheduled to begin July 13, according to Chris Young, communications director with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

Young previously said the Ellsworth Park dam will be removed with an IDNR crew and equipment after the crew finishes a dredging project on the Kaskaskia River.

All permits are in place for the removal of the Ellsworth Park Dam, and IDNR has been finalizing contracts with aggregate providers and special waste haulers for the removal of the dam, also according to Young.

Plans also call for the removal of the Danville Dam behind the Public Safety Building starting this fall.

The removal projects were among the state projects that have been under review after Gov. Bruce Rauner took office. He ordered a review of all state contracts or grants awarded after Nov. 1, 2014.

Due to the hydraulic conditions of the Danville and Ellsworth Park dams, and that no riverbed protection was placed below the dam upon construction, a submerged hydraulic roller occurs. During time, the turbulent forces generated by a hydraulic roller have eroded a scour hole in the original bed material at the base of the dam. The tailwater submerges the hydraulic jump, creating the submerged hydraulic roller. These rollers typically pull in and hold objects, including people, which often leads to emergency rescues or drownings, according to the IDNR.

The most recent drowning at the dams, of several over the years, was of a 24-year-old canoeist in July 2003.

The city has reviewed the construction plans for the Ellsworth Park Dam removal and issued an approval letter to the IDNR, Danville Engineering and Urban Services Director David Schnelle said earlier this year.

Danville City Council members in January, 2014 voted 13-1 to have IDNR remove the Ellsworth Park Dam and 12-2 to remove the Danville Dam behind the Public Safety Building.

Aldermen took into account city liability of a known hazard, where drownings have occurred, and costs to remove the safety hazards in agreeing to go forward with the IDNR recommendations on removals.

The IDNR allocated \$2 million-plus funding for the removal of the Ellsworth Park Dam and Danville Dam.

In 2006, then Lt. Gov. Pat Quinn launched the Illinois Dam Safety Initiative to educate the public about dam safety, and propose much needed changes to make waterways safer.

Since then, progress has been made on safety measures, including the passage of legislation calling for standards of signs, buoys and other ways to communicate risks to the public about the dams on public waterways, according to the IDNR.

In October 2012, former Gov. Quinn announced the identification of 16 low-head dams throughout the state for removal or modification during the next few years.

The General Assembly appropriated funds for the Danville dam removals through bond sales that are part of the Jobs Now program.

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