



# THE AGENCY NEWS

A Publication of the Fox Waterway Agency

2023 Season

## Update from The Executive Director

Hello Fox Waterway supporters! Thank you for your care and concern for our Chain O' Lakes and the wonderful Fox River that runs through it. Your purchase of a sticker to access the waterway makes you the primary caregiver of our dynamic waterway. In fact, the nearly \$2,000,000 that comes in from sticker sales annually is the primary means our Agency has to care for nearly 7,100 acres of waterway and almost 500 miles of shoreline. These dollars allow us to get some of our mission completed each year focusing primarily on keeping main channels open for recreational uses, restoring environmental quality, working to alleviate flooding, promoting tourism, and preserving and enhancing the quality of life along the waterway for residents and users alike.

Our Agency has worked hard led by our Chairman Wayne Blake, Directors Chuck Haling, Jim Meyer, Bill Hellyer, Chris Stochl, Jason Hettermann and Dan Mitchell along with our supporters, area legislators and stakeholders to bring in additional dollars and resources without negatively burdening our users. These efforts have led to over \$5,000,000 in additional equipment, property acquisition, and dollars for waterway improvements, since 2016, which have greatly enabled our Agency to enhance your waterway and protect the lands around it.

Although we've made some big strides, we have much more work to do to remedy years of eutrophication. With your continued help and support we remain confident additional progress will be made to further preserve and enhance our precious waterways for many future generations!



Joseph S. Keller  
Executive Director  
Fox Waterway Agency

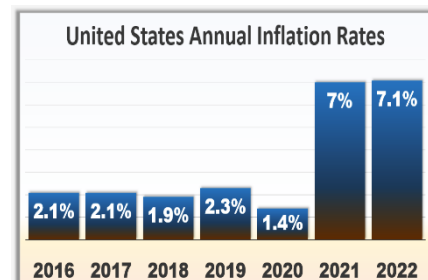
## Important News, Renewal Card and User Fee Information

The Fox Waterway Agency has made significant improvements to the Chain O'Lakes and Fox River over the past few years in the areas of safety, pollution reduction, signage, and habitat restoration.

- The Agency has dredged and removed over 400,000 cubic yards of sediment from channels, lakes, and the Fox River in just 4 years.
- Navigational aids such as signage, buoys, and buoy lights have been replaced regularly in an effort to identify hazards and provide safer navigation for all waterway users.
- With the help of area businesses, waterway residents/users, and our stakeholders, the FWA and Advisory board, led by Chairwoman Pat Smarto, Advisory board members, Anne Basten and Rob Bryson, working with Northwater's team of consultants to create a long-term Watershed Plan that will reduce waterway pollution and runoff sedimentation.
- With grant and agency funds, the FWA has performed significant shoreline preservation and recently rip-rapped along the edges of Grass Island to preserve wildlife habitat and reduce island erosion. A big thank you to Rep. Tom Weber for leading the charge on \$350,000 in Grant funding to get it done. And a big thank you to Rep. Joyce Mason for sponsoring legislation to bring in future grant dollars.
- We've enhanced our waterway and land fleet of equipment along with strategic property acquisitions which have further enabled our abilities to get more done for less. A big thank you to Senator Craig Wilcox for bringing in \$500,000 for a brand-new amphibious excavator.

As you may have noticed there has been a user fee increase for the 2023 boating season, our last one was in 2016. Our primary service/operational cost increases since then, are up about 200%. Thankfully with our work to bring in grant dollars over the years, we were able to minimize these costs to a more moderate 50% increase, including a nearly 24% increase in the US annual Inflation rate, since 2016. Our sticker fee increase is necessary to continue the support of the waterway in the following ways:

- Project funding and support
- Employee retention and recruitment
- Navigational aids and supplies
- Support of debris removal and flood mitigation efforts
- Continued equipment upgrades and strategic property acquisitions



Also, in an effort to simplify the User Fee categories, you may see changes in your watercraft class codes.

In order to have more complete and accurate watercraft records, the Fox Waterway Agency and its partners at various satellite locations will, if not already provided, require proof of State Registration at the time of user fee sticker purchase.

Returning waterway users, please refer to your FWA Renewal Cards for needed information. First-time users and those returning with a new watercraft will need to complete a new application, and provide proof of state registration.

The Fox Waterway Agency looks forward to another year of safe boating, fishing, swimming, and waterway festivities. We appreciate your contribution to making our waterways cleaner and safer. **See you on the water!**

Coming Soon for 2023



For Detained Boaters On The Water Without A Sticker  
(Big Fines Will Apply!)

# Project Focus... Grass Island Restorations – Chain O'Lakes

The protected island is a permanent solution. It is a prime example of applying practical engineering techniques to a natural system to aid in the recovery of critical habitat and soils.

The 27-acre Grass Island restoration project involved the use of approximately 6,700 linear feet of geotextile tubes of 37.5-foot diameter into which restored dredged lake bottom sediment was inserted. The tubes created a perimeter berm for an enclosed space to which additional dredged soils were added. When materials reached specified grade levels, native vegetation was planted, and the area became a refuge for birds and plants.

The results of the project completed over 20 years ago have been a success. Forester Terns have returned as well as a variety of other birds, while containing over 200,000 yards of rich reclaimed Midwestern soils.

In the fall of 2021, through the summer of 2022, the Fox Waterway Agency worked with HR Green and Bruce's Marine Construction Services to restore Grass Island shorelines that required reinforcement. This critical work restored riprap in several areas bordering Grass Island. The general construction project included approximately 1,200 lineal feet/2,508 tons of Class A4 riprap in Area 1, approximately 300 lineal feet/408 tons of Class A4 riprap in Area 2, and approximately 550 lineal feet/778 tons of Class A4 riprap in Area 3. As a result, the island will be preserved for many more years.

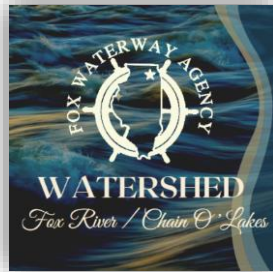
Currently, the FWA is in the planning stages to obtain approvals to restore other islands, lands, and habitats which will aid in the removal of rich sediments and soils from major channels frequented by our users.



## FWA Watershed...

What is Watershed Planning? Watershed planning and management comprise an approach to:

- Protecting water quality for the whole watershed
- Managing polluted runoff
- Pollution which is caused by a variety of land use activities including development, transportation, and agriculture



Watershed planning and management involves a number of activities including:

- Targeting priority problems in the watershed
- Promoting a high level of involvement by interested and affected parties
- Developing solutions to problems through the use of the expertise and authority of multiple agencies and organizations
- Measuring success through monitoring

### Major Benefits of a Watershed Plan

- Improves water quality through project implementation
- Opens door to additional funding mechanisms
- Comprehensive plan to effectively prevent/limit the sediment and material loading from reaching our system, thus reducing dredging needs
- Mechanism to help further promote proactive stewardship vs. reactive through sound science instead of crisis management
- Identify stakeholders and work as a cohesive unit towards a common goal
- Provide a forum for betterment of the system while prioritizing appropriate projects
- Educates the public and promotes community involvement

## Rich Top Soil... **SALE**

One of Lake and McHenry counties' best resources for successful gardening is the use of FWA's reclaimed topsoil. The soils are nutrient-rich with natural fish fertilizer which improves soil health and increases soil fertility by providing the primary nutrients necessary for plants to thrive. Proceeds are used to further preserve your Chain O'Lakes & Fox River.

**Please note that FWA is unable to deliver soil.** To make arrangements to purchase contact Kathy at 847-587-8540.

- **Contractor Soil Special** \$15/Cubic Yard (Semi/6 Wheeler Quantities)
- **Contractor Home Garden Soil Special** \$20/Pick-up Truck (Pickup Truck Load Only)

**DIRT FIELD OPEN** – Monday thru Friday 6a – 2p or by appointment after 2PM on weekdays or on Saturday, weather dependent



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Preserving our great Fox Waterway for all!

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