

## 2023 Legislative Priority: Increase Oversight on USACE Plans to Remotely Control Locks and Dams

**Background:** The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is in the process of evaluating and implementing new remote off-site control of federal hydroelectric and navigational locks and dams with little to no Congressional oversight or public disclosure, and has not yet decided whether federal employees will remain on-site to operate and control this critical infrastructure. While USACE has very recently provided some information to navigation and energy sector stakeholders, it would appear that USACE plans to implement this plan with the absolute minimum input from anyone, especially the workers who know these facilities best.

**Current Status:** Throughout the nation, approximately 2,000 federal government employees at USACE work to ensure 24/7 operations at over 230 federal locks and dams so that commerce can transit across our nation's 25,000 miles of inland waterway while approximately 75 federal hydropower plants at USACE dams generate clean renewable electricity, often in rural areas. USACE announced that they have completed a nationwide Framework Report, and plan to release a National Implementation Plan in 2023. Now is the time to shine light on this issue.

**Impacts:** Local 777 worries about public safety, physical and cyber security, and good stewardship of federal investments, if this plan continues unchecked. We worry that this plan will jeopardize jobs - good paying stable jobs that are often in rural communities and often filled with U.S. veterans. Finally, Local 777 worries that with remote operations, the flow of U.S. interstate commerce and/or the supply of U.S. energy could be more frequently interrupted.

### **Requested Action:**

- Congress should defund and prohibit implementation of off-site remote operation of any USACE hydroelectric and navigational locks and dams until Congress can review the national security, commerce, and public safety implications of off-site operations, and USACE affirms that it will maintain full on-site staffing levels and qualified on-site personnel will operate and control this critical infrastructure throughout the U.S.
- Congress should request that USACE provide information regarding physical security and cybersecurity risks associated with off-site operations. Further Congress should review and investigate compliance with laws, regulations, Presidential executive orders and federal policies on cybersecurity, and compliance with CISA's National Infrastructure Protection Plan for Dams.

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*Local 777, IFPTE, AFL-CIO represents over 200 employees of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Chicago District. We work in Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin and plan, design, build, operate, and maintain Federal water resources infrastructure and environmental restorations, and protect our nation's aquatic resources and commercial navigation.*

*Our members work in offices, on construction sites, at locks and dams, on government vessels, at flood control reservoirs, and at dredged material management and electric barrier facilities.*

*The views expressed are those of Local 777 only, and not of the Department of Defense or Department of the Army.*



Commercial navigators rely on lock and dam operators to direct traffic, keep order, and to assist their deckhands with catching lines in hazardous weather conditions.



USACE Workers rescued the boaters and took action to keep the boat from sinking in the lock which could have snarled the flow of commerce.