

2024 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 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 has given an order to implement this program, starting with a Governance Board. Despite the IFPTE and two other national unions requesting a seat for labor, USACE has refused to allow one. 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 ensure the future of on-site USACE workers (see proposed legislation).
- Congress should write to the USACE to urge them to include workers in the governance of this program as a matter of good public policy.
- 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.

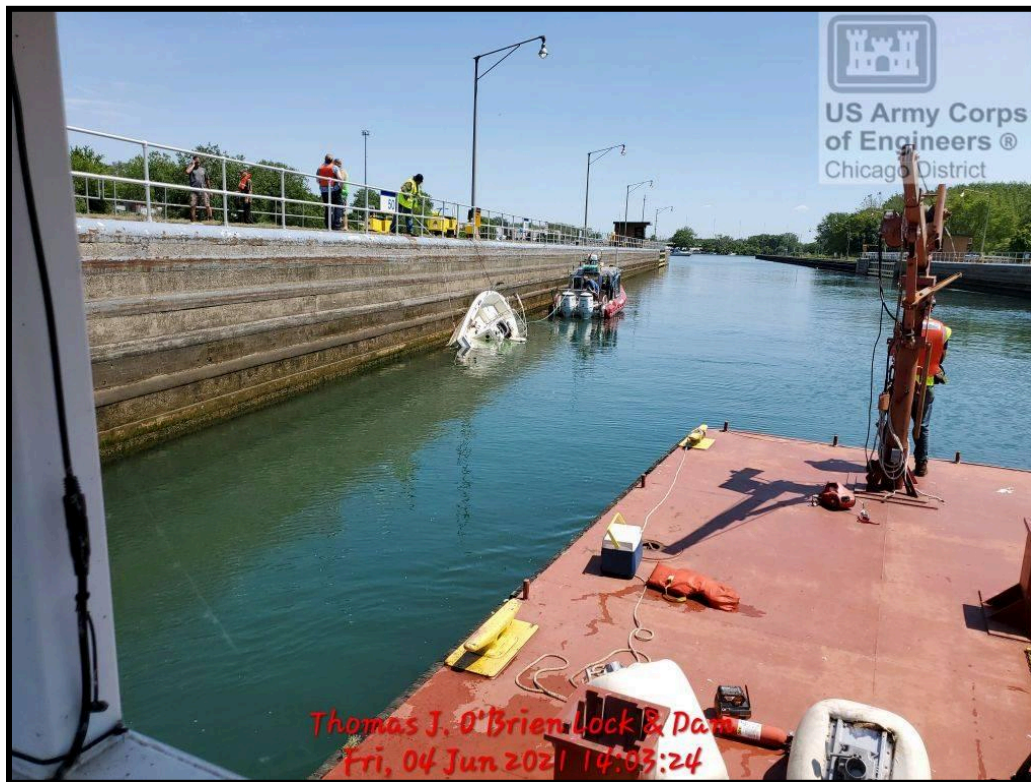
Proposed Legislation:

Sec. _____. SAFEGUARDING CORPS OF ENGINEERS CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE.

- (a) The Secretary, acting through the Chief of Engineers,
 - (1) shall maintain local on-site operations of any Corps of Engineers Civil Works critical infrastructure, as identified under Section 2321(a) of Title 33, and
 - (2) shall not operate any standing hydroelectric dams and navigation locks and dams through remote off-site operations, and
 - (3) shall not convert any new hydroelectric dams or navigation locks and dams to remote off-site operations, and
 - (4) ensure any new control system on critical infrastructure as identified under Section 2321(a) of Title 33, does not result in the reduction of federal employees supporting inherently governmental functions.
- (b) Definition. - in this section:
 - (1) the term “remote off-site operations” means the operation of any infrastructure, as identified under Section 2321(a) of Title 33, by any control system or or interconnecting network system that enables human operation or automated operation of one or several infrastructure sites from a location other than a site located on the physical infrastructure.



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.