

Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
Bureau of Water, Permit Section
(IEPA)

2520 West Iles, Post Office Box 19276, Springfield, Illinois 62794-9276, 217/782-3362

The IEPA has issued a Public Notice of a request for a Clean Water Act Section 401 water quality certification that would allow the issuance of a federal permit for the discharge of pollutants to waters of the State.

Public Notice Beginning Date:

Friday, September 5, 2025

Public Notice Ending Date:

Thursday, September 11, 2025

Agency Log No.: C-0004-25

Federal Permit Information: Federal permit/license no. LRC-2015-128 is under the jurisdiction of Chicago District, Regulatory Branch U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Name and Address of Discharger: City of Evanston, Timothy Carter - Lorraine H. Morton Civic Center, 2100 Ridge Ave., Evanston, IL 60201

Discharge Location: In Section 18 of Township 41-North and Range 14-East of the East 3rd Principal Meridian in Cook County. Additional project location information includes the following: 1647 Sheridan Road; Church Street Boat Ramp at the terminus of Church Street at Lake Michigan, Evanston, IL 60201

Name of Receiving Water: Lake Michigan

Project Name/Description: Church St. Boast Ramp Annual Dredging - proposed removal of sand from the Church Street Boat Harbor

Construction Schedule: Beginning May 2025 and ending Jun 2025

The Public Notice period will begin and end on the dates indicated in the heading of this Public Notice. Interested persons are invited to submit written comments on the project to the IEPA at the above address. Commenters must provide their name and address along with comments on the certification request. The IEPA Log number must appear on each comment page. Commenters may include a request for public hearing. Only hearing requests and comments that pertain to Clean Water Act Section 401 authority will be considered. This authority provides consideration of whether the permit or license would be consistent with Sections 301, 302, 303, 306, or 307 of the CWA, as well as "any other appropriate requirement of State [or tribal] law". Requests for additional comment period must provide a demonstration of need. The final day of comment acceptance will be on the Public Notice Ending date shown above, unless the IEPA grants an extended notice period. The attached Fact Sheet provides a detailed description of the project and the findings of the IEPA's antidegradation assessment.

If written comments or requests indicate a significant degree of public interest in the certification application, the IEPA may, at its discretion, hold a public hearing. Public notice will be given 30 days before any public hearing. If a Section 401 water quality certification is issued, response to relevant comments will be provided at the time of the certification. For further information, please see the contact information below.

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Post Document. No. C-0004-25-09052025-PublicNoticeAndFactSheet.pdf

401 Water Quality Certification Fact Sheet for Evanston Church Street Boat Ramp

IEPA Log No. C-0004-25

Contact: Angie Sutton 217-782-9864

The City of Evanston (“Applicant”) has applied for a 401 Water Quality Certification for impacts associated with annual dredging and relocation of up to 15,000 Cubic Yards (CY) of sand from the Church Street Boat Harbor to just south of the boat ramp. The project site can be found in Township 41 North, Range 14 East, Section 18 in Cook County, Illinois. Dredging would occur in an area of approximately 29,433 square feet to maintain a minimum depth of six to seven feet as required at the launch and approach areas. The dredged material would be placed immediately south of the dredged area in open water for beach nourishment purposes. The dredged material will be placed on the concrete boat ramp where a loader will pick up and deposit the sand in the disposal area. Dredging will be done by mechanical equipment bucket excavator and loader.

The sand ramp is used by the general public, as well as the City of Evanston to launch power boats for emergency water rescue, aquatic camps, and recreation programming. Recently, the U.S. Coast Guard notified the City of its intent to cease operating the Wilmette and Kenosha stations. This will leave only the Evanston Fire Department, and the joint rescue boat stationed in Wilmette as the only water rescue assets on the north shore. With this change, it will be critical that the Evanston Fire Department have access to the harbor to launch its fire rescue boat and water rescue jet skis. The Evanston Fire Department also responds to water related emergencies on the Lake Michigan waters up to the community of Highland Park.

The Applicant is requesting renewal of a 10-year permit which would enable them to continue dredging operations.

This project will minimize impact to the maximum extent practicable. The proposed work is anticipated to be conducted from the landside and will be conducted in a manner that limits the potential for environmental impacts, therefore, compensatory mitigation is not planned.

Information used in this review was obtained from the application documents dated March 29, 2024, May 9, 2024, February 20, 2025, and May 20, 2025.

Identification and Characterization of the Affected Water Body.

Lake Michigan has 0 cfs of flow during critical 7Q10 low-flow conditions. Lake Michigan is classified as a Lake Michigan Basin Use Water. Lake Michigan is not listed as a biologically significant stream in the 2008 Illinois Department of Natural Resources Publication *Integrating Multiple Taxa in a Biological Stream Rating System*, nor is it given an integrity rating in that document. Lake Michigan, Waterbody Segment IL_QLM-01, is listed on the 2024 Illinois Integrated Water Quality Report and Section 303(d) List as impaired for aesthetic quality with a potential cause given as total phosphorus, and fish

consumption use with potential causes given as aldrin, dieldrin, endrin, heptachlor, mercury, mirex, polychlorinated biphenyls, and toxaphene. Aquatic life, primary contact, and public and food processing water supply uses are fully supported.

Greenwood Beach, Waterbody Segment IL_QM-03, is listed on the 2024 Illinois Integrated Water Quality Report and Section 303(d) List as impaired for fish consumption use with potential causes given as mercury and polychlorinated biphenyls and for primary contact recreation use with potential cause given as E-coli.

A Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Report has been prepared and approved by the USEPA for 51 beaches along Illinois' Lake Michigan shoreline to address Primary Contact Use Recreation impairments due to excess bacteria. The proposed activity occurs within an area identified by the May 15, 2013, report "Shoreline Segments in Suburban Lake County, Illinois" as a Beach Protection Area and is therefore subject to this TMDL.

Identification of Proposed Pollutant Load Increases or Potential Impacts on Uses.

The pollutant load increases that would occur from this project include some possible increases in total suspended solids. These increases, a normal and unavoidable result of dredging and filling, may occur in the lake at the project site. Benthic habitat will also be disturbed in the project area but impacts to aquatic life uses of this area are not anticipated.

Sand and water samples were analyzed for particle size distribution and asbestos, and supernatant testing from three location within the boat launch facility was conducted. Each sample showed less than twenty percent passing through a # 230 U.S. sieve and no asbestos was detected. Supernatant testing was performed on water samples taken April 3, 2023, March 15, 2024, and April 3, 2025. The testing included background pollutant levels, and pollutant levels for 1-hour, and 4-hour times. The most recent testing (2025) indicated potential elevations in zinc, ammonia, total suspended solids (TSS), total dissolved solids (TDS), phosphorus, and chloride compared to the background levels. Testing during dredging was done on May 1, 2023, April 26, 2024 and April 27, 2025 at surface and mid-depth levels in 2 different locations including at 100 feet and 500 feet from the discharge location. Each location and depth was tested prior to starting, 1 hour after, and 4 hours after dredging began. The most recent testing results indicated that phosphorus slightly exceeded the background level. Elevated TSS concentrations were observed 500 feet from the disposal location. The highest ammonia level recorded was 1.13 mg/L. Monitoring of zinc, sulfate, chloride, phosphorus, TDS and ammonia during dredge spoil placement is recommended.

Fate and Effect of Parameters Proposed for Increased Loading.

The planned dredging activity will take place in the same location as previous years. The increase in total suspended solids would be local and temporary, and existing aquatic life use in the shallow, nearshore zone will temporarily be disturbed but will recover over time. Depth readings are charted in the harbor prior to any work. Dredging is performed only in areas that do not meet a minimum depth of 6 to 7 feet. The proposed project will improve the launch area and approach areas. Due to the minimal adverse impacts associated with the dredging and disposal of material to the water body, no mitigation plan has been proposed.

Purpose and Social & Economic Benefits of the Proposed Activity.

Annual operation of the ramp is necessary to maintain access to the boat harbor. The ramp is used by the general public, as well as the City of Evanston to launch power boats for emergency water rescue, aquatic camps, and recreation programming. Due to the recent closure of the U.S. Coast Guard stations in Wilmette and Kenosha, Evanston Fire Department will need harbor access to launch its fire rescue boat and water rescue jet skis. The Evanston Fire Department responds to water related emergencies on the Lake Michigan waters up to the community of Highland Park.

Assessments of Alternatives for Less Increase in Loading or Minimal Environmental Degradation.

The applicant evaluated the following alternatives:

No Action Alternative:

This option would result in unsafe conditions in the harbor, economic loss, and loss of recreational benefits of Lake Michigan. Additionally, emergency rescue operations would be significantly delayed, if not rendered impossible altogether.

Mechanical Excavator dredging with Open Water Disposal (Preferred Alternative):

This option would involve routine annual maintenance. This has shown to be successful with prior, similar projects with up to 10,000 CY to be dredged and placed for open water disposal immediately south of the dredged area offshore.

Barge Dredging: This option was shown to be economically unfeasible. It was also found that due to the project size, turbidity would not be decreased. For these reasons, barge dredging was not chosen as the preferred option.

Beach Disposal: Greenwood/Dempster Street Beach is the existing public beach to the south. This location is at peak elevation for swimming and sailboat launching. Due to the size of the beach, disposal is not possible, and in addition, it was found that hauling sand this far south is not economically feasible. For these reasons this was not chosen as the preferred option.

Summary Comments of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Regional Planning Commissions, Zoning Boards or Other Entities.

On February 20, 2025, the IDNR EcoCAT review was initiated for the project (Project # 2509805) and identified protected resources that may be in the vicinity of the proposed action. The Department has evaluated this information and concluded that adverse effects area unlikely. The consultation was terminated.

However, the state-listed Sea Rocket and Seaside Spurge have been identified in the vicinity. Because habitat may be found in the project area, the Department made the following recommendations:

- Search for, flag, and avoid the plant if possible.

“If avoidance is not possible, please consider seed collection and planting, translocation, and surface soil conservation measures to help promote the continued existence of this plant in the area.”

Agency Conclusion.

This preliminary assessment was conducted pursuant to the Illinois Pollution Control Board regulation for Antidegradation found at 35 Ill. Adm. Code 302.105 (antidegradation standard) and was based on the information available to the Agency at the time this assessment was written. We tentatively find that the proposed activity would result in the attainment of water quality standards; that all technically and economically reasonable measures to avoid or minimize the extent of the proposed increase in pollutant loading have been incorporated into the proposed activity; and that this activity would benefit the City of Evanston by providing access to the Church Street boat harbor for emergency and recreational use. Comments received during the 401 Water Quality Certification public notice period will be evaluated before a final decision is made by the Agency.