

Gov. Walker: Announces Little Falls Dam at Willow River State Park to receive \$11 million in Capital Budget

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Madison – Governor Walker traveled to Willow River State Park today to announce his Capital Budget will include the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) request to increase the reconstruction project for Little Falls Dam by \$11 million. This is on top of the approximate \$8 million Governor Walker and the Wisconsin State Legislature had already set aside for this project. Altogether, the total project cost is \$19,041,700.

“Every year, nearly one million Wisconsinites and visitors to our state make a trip to Willow River State Park to spend time outside with loved ones and take in our state’s natural beauty,” Governor Walker said. “This project, therefore, has a major impact on Wisconsin’s tourism economy and our resources. Our top priority is to restore Willow River State Park and Little Falls Lake to its former glory while ensuring the Little Falls Dam meets all of DNR’s requirements to maintain and protect our natural resources.”

Willow River State Park is the site of Little Falls Lake, a 172-acre impoundment formed by the Little Falls Dam. Recent inspections have called into question the structural integrity of the dam, and major issues include malfunctioning gates, seepage through the dam, and cracks in the concrete. In the spring of 2015, DNR decided that, in the interest of health and safety, the lake should be drained.

The additional \$11 million included in Governor Walker's Capital Budget, on top of the approximate \$8 million enumerated in the 2015-2017 State Budget, will go towards removing and replacing the existing dam with a newly constructed dam. DNR intends to replace the existing Little Falls Dam and will maintain pre-breach lake water levels of Little Falls Lake as well as the lake's aesthetic and recreational uses.

This project is necessary because the Little Falls Dam does not currently meet the spillway capacity regulations set by DNR and is classified as a high-hazard dam.