



**\$250,000 grant**

**March 16, 2006**

### **Convention & Visitors Bureau Grant gives Locks Restoration a Lift**

APPLETON, Wis. – A \$250,000 grant from the Fox Cities Convention and Visitors Bureau has given restoration of the historic Fox River locks both an important financial boost and recognition of its value to tourism.

"The Fox Cities Convention and Visitors Bureau's \$250,000 grant is the best endorsement we could have," said Wally Bergstrom, an organizer of a fund-raising effort led by the nonprofit group Friends of the Fox. "These folks really know what's good for tourism and work hard to improve quality-of-life issues."

"The Fox Cities Convention and Visitors Bureau has long believed that the Fox River offers untapped tourism potential," Executive Director Lynn Peters said. "The locks themselves offer great opportunities for visitors, but we also expect them to be a catalyst for future waterfront development. We're excited to be able to make this contribution to the project."

The \$250,000 grant was awarded to the Fox River Navigational System Authority following approval by the Bureau's Capital Development Committee and Board of Directors and endorsement by the Grand Chute Town Board last month. The grants are funded by a room tax at Fox Cities hotels and motels.

The state-appointed FRNSA is overseeing restoration of the locks, financed by a combination of federal and state money and local contributions. Friends of the Fox launched a campaign in May 2005 to raise \$6.25 million in contributions to speed up the reconstruction, so the full 39-mile navigational system can be operating by 2009. Sixteen of the 17 hand-operated locks will be put back into service. A boatlift will be added downriver of Kaukauna at the Rapide Croche lock, which remains closed as a barrier to lamprey eels and other invasive species.

"The donation of the Fox Cities Convention and Visitors Bureau is a wonderful example of the public-private partnership. Their generosity will help us in reclaiming the rich history of the Fox River Navigational System," Ron Van De Hey, FRNSA chairman, said.

That history covers a wide range of activities beyond boating through the locks.

"I think this grant by the Fox Cities Visitors and Convention Bureau approved by the Town of Grand Chute demonstrates that these groups understand the viability and importance of this project to the future benefit of Fox Valley residents," Robert Stark, Friends of the Fox president and FRNSA vice chairman, said. "It's not just about the boating, it is about everything that we hold dear – family, education, environment, heritage – our very way of life. The economic benefit will be ongoing. Their \$250,000 grant shows vision and forward thinking."

The project got under way with preservation work on the Kaukauna locks in September and continues with restoration of the four Appleton locks. Contractor C.R. Meyer Construction of Oshkosh is to complete that work this year.

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