

## Topic Page: [Illinois Waterway](#)

Definition: **Illinois Waterway** from *Merriam-Webster's Geographical Dictionary*

Combined system of rivers, canals, and state recreation areas, NE Illinois, with Chicago at N end; comprises: **Illinois and Michigan Canal** 96 mi. (154 km.) long, from Chicago River to La Salle on Illinois River, opened 1848, discontinued 1900; S branch of Chicago River, connected by **Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal** 28 mi. (45 km.) long with Lockport on Des Plaines River, opened 1900, by which current was reversed and the flow of sewage directed into the Illinois River.

### Summary Article: **Illinois Waterway**

From *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

Historic canal network connecting Lake Michigan with the Mississippi River, a distance of 526 km/327 mi. Construction of this important transportation artery in the 19th century ensured that the city of Chicago played a central role in the development of the Midwest. The advent of the railway gradually reduced its importance, and nowadays it is largely recreational.

The Illinois Waterway was created by the construction (completed in 1848) of the 155 km/96 mi-long **Illinois and Michigan Canal**, which connected the South Branch of the Chicago River with La Salle, near the head of navigation on the Illinois River. The canal bypassed navigational obstructions on the Des Plaines River. In 1900, the network was greatly improved when the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal replaced the old canal for the 48 km/30 mi-long stretch between Chicago and Lockport. At the same time, engineers reversed the flow of the Chicago River by closing its outlet into Lake Michigan, thus causing it to flow into the Waterway. The Des Plaines River was improved below Lockport to its junction with the Kankakee River (forming the Illinois River) at Dresden, and the old canal fell into disuse. The Waterway, which took traffic from the Mississippi at Grafton, Illinois, only 62 km/38 mi above St Louis, made Chicago, rather than St Louis or other older river ports like Cincinnati, the key to Midwestern development. The Waterway gradually lost trade to the railways and, since 1959, the vast majority of commercial shipping entering and leaving the Great Lakes does so by way of the St Lawrence Seaway to the north, rather than using the Illinois Waterway.

### APA

Chicago

Harvard

MLA

---

Illinois waterway. (2018). In Helicon (Ed.), *The Hutchinson unabridged encyclopedia with atlas and weather guide*. Abington, UK: Helicon. Retrieved from [https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/illinois\\_waterway](https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/illinois_waterway)

---



© RM, 2018. All rights reserved.



© RM, 2018. All rights reserved.

## APA

Illinois waterway. (2018). In Helicon (Ed.), *The Hutchinson unabridged encyclopedia with atlas and weather guide*. Abington, UK: Helicon. Retrieved from [https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/illinois\\_waterway](https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/illinois_waterway)

## Chicago

"Illinois Waterway." In *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*, edited by Helicon. Helicon, 2018. [https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/illinois\\_waterway](https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/illinois_waterway)

## Harvard

Illinois waterway. (2018). In Helicon (Ed.), *The Hutchinson unabridged encyclopedia with atlas and weather guide*. [Online]. Abington: Helicon. Available from: [https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/illinois\\_waterway](https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/illinois_waterway) [Accessed 18 October 2019].

## MLA

"Illinois Waterway." *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*, edited by Helicon, 2018. *Credo Reference*, [https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/illinois\\_waterway](https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/illinois_waterway). Accessed 18 Oct. 2019.