

Governor Pritzker Announces \$17.5 Million In Funding To Renovate Rend Lake Resort In Southern Illinois

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SOUTHERN ILLINOIS — Governor JB Pritzker announced today that a long-awaited renovation of the popular Rend Lake Resort in Southern Illinois will get underway in

2023 with an investment of more than \$17.5 million. The funding will be used to renovate the conference center, restaurant, cabins, pool, and boatel, which collectively will enable the resort to host lodging guests, conferences, and other visitors and events.

“Rend Lake has been around for 50 years—and for that half-a-century, it has been a shining example of the rich history, the human ingenuity, and the values of sustainability that make Illinois special,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “Today, I am proud to announce that we will be investing more than \$17 million to renovate Rend Lake Resort—restoring the site to its former glory. With this funding, we are strengthening our tourism industry, our economy, our recreational offerings, and our holistic and social wellbeing all in one.”

The Rend Lake Resort is located at the 3,300-acre Wayne Fitzgerald State Recreation Area and is operated by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (DNR) on the shore of Rend Lake in Franklin and Jefferson counties. The resort site features a hotel, conference center, cabins, restaurant, boatel, gift shop, pool, tennis courts, and more.

Opened in May 1991, the space was shuttered in 2016 after mold was discovered in the hotel and other buildings, requiring extensive remediation throughout the site. At the height of its operation, the Resort drew 2.4 million visitors annually and employed up to 125 staff members. It had an estimated economic impact of nearly \$245 million in 2010, and occupancy rates were around 90% during the high-season period between late spring and late fall.

“Rend Lake Resort was and will be again, an important part of our regional economic engine for Southern Illinois,” said Mayor Jason Ashmore, City of Sesser. “The resort will offer more opportunities to visitors of Rend Lake which will in turn spur economic growth for all of the surrounding communities. We want to thank Governor JB Pritzker, DNR, CDB, Senator Bryant, Senator Fowler, and Rep Severin for all their hard work on making this come to fruition.”

“I want to thank Gov. Pritzker for helping us make this long-awaited project a reality,” said Colleen Callahan, director of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. “This is so much more than an investment in the Rend Lake Resort. It’s also an investment in our state parks, in local jobs, in the regional economy, and the people of Southern Illinois.”

Rend Lake is the second largest of Illinois’ three man-made lakes with 19,000 acres of water and 162 miles of shoreline. The lake itself is operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and is a tremendous economic driver for southern Illinois. Easily accessible

from interstates 57 and 64, it's a popular site for boating, fishing, hunting, camping, picnicking, hiking, swimming, golfing, and more. The lake also provides drinking water for customers in seven Southern Illinois counties.

Wayne Fitzgerald State Recreation Area draws more than 1.3 million visitors annually. Dedicated in 1975, the park is popular for hunting, camping, wildlife-watching, picnicking, boating access, horseback riding, field trials, and other outdoor activities. The park was dedicated in 1975 and is named for the late Wayne Fitzgerald, a former State Representative from nearby Sesser who was a strong advocate for the construction of Rend Lake.