



RENAMING A RIVER REACH

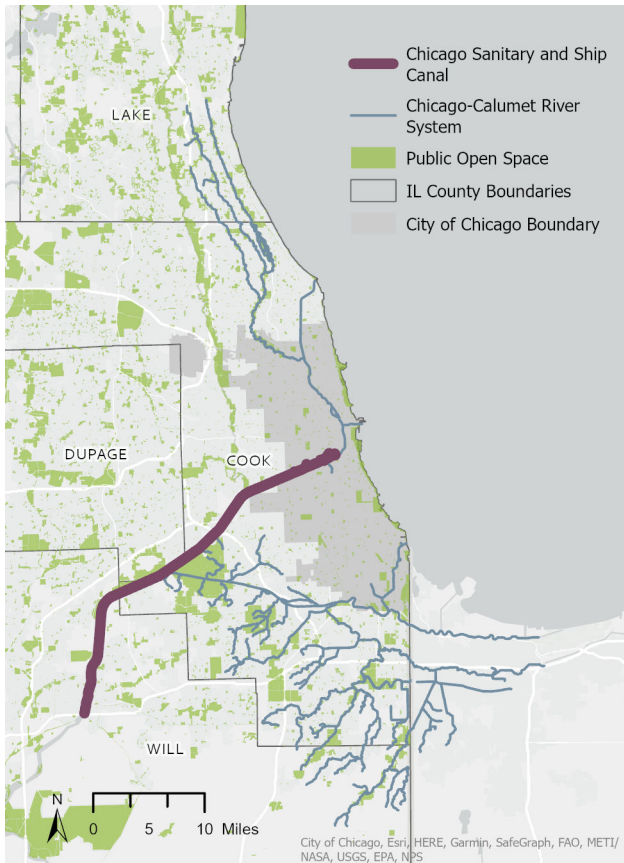
With a Bold Past and a Bright Future

FACT SHEET

The Story from the Start

For millennia, a natural portage which linked the Chicago River to the Des Plaines River made transit between the great watersheds of the Great Lakes and the Mississippi easier in a biodiversity rich region where prairie, forest, wetland, river, and lake come together in a natural mosaic. This natural portage led the way to the Illinois & Michigan Canal which inspired the explosive growth of Chicago, yet simultaneously contributed to the pollution of our lake and river.

In 1900, the Chicago Sanitary District built the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal to reverse the workhorse Chicago River away from Lake Michigan, the City's source of drinking water, to improve public health. It was heralded as an engineering marvel.



Why Rename?

A century later, the waterway created to protect Chicago is teeming with life because of advocacy and massive investments in clean water infrastructure. No longer the subject of unregulated pollution, channel catfish swim its lengths and migratory birds depend upon it during their journeys north and south. A wide range of industries utilize the canal and their vitality complements the millions of dollars that municipalities from Chicago to Lemont to Lockport have invested in riverfront amenities and growing waterfront economies. Investments that are contributing to the improvement of both community and environmental health. The word "Sanitary" no longer suits.

The Time Has Come

Right now there a nation-wide movement to modernize and correct the names of geographic features. It is time to rethink the name of this one and recognize it in a way that respects its history, its industrial uses and needs, the wildlife that depends upon it, and the people who live here now and did over millennia. Renaming the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal would accurately reflect the canal's improved health and recognize its natural, economic, and cultural value as an important portion of the larger Illinois & Michigan Canal National Heritage Area and all of the benefits that nationally significant status brings with it.



How to Change the Name

To officially change the name of a waterbody such as the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal, a widely supported application must be made to the U.S. Board of Geographic Names.

To ensure the nomenclature is thoughtfully developed with widespread community engagement, a Naming Commission will be formed and include members identified through stakeholder engagement and by those who elect to participate in the process.

The Naming Commission will include Native Americans, historians, conservationists, community representatives, elected officials, business leaders, government agencies, and more.

Where Are We Now?

In partnership with U.S. Representative Foster (IL-11), Friends has convened an Exploratory Committee which is in a quiet phase of the campaign working to build support from our senators, five members of the U.S House of Representatives, the presidents and boards of three counties, and leadership from the 13 municipalities through which the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal flows. The Committee has already begun to identify the relevant government agencies and their commissioners; corporate leaders and industrial user groups, partners and stakeholders, community members, and cultural and environmental justice groups whom we hope to have participate and support the cause.

Already U.S. Congressman Bill Foster (IL-11), Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle, Lemont Mayor Egofske, Lockport Mayor Steve Streit, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, the Forest Preserves of Cook County, and members of the conservation community including Friends of the Forest Preserves, Openlands, and The Trust for Public Land have signed on.

We intend to recruit members for the Naming Commission members and start discussions this fall.



Sign On Now!

Please visit boldpastbrightfuture.org to find out more about our campaign and to sign on to this important movement. We are accepting tax deductible contributions to support the campaign and developing a slate of environmental and programmatic goals tied to the renaming.

For more information on how you can support this historic effort, please contact:

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