



News Release

April 28, 2010

Amber Sabin, 217.789.2116 ext. 2629

amber.sabin@cwlp.com

LAKE SPRINGFIELD MARKS 75 YEARS

Reaches full pool on May 2, 1935 for first flow over the dam.

In May, City Water, Light and Power will celebrate Lake Springfield's 75th anniversary serving as the water supply for Springfield and nearby communities. Construction of Lake Springfield began in the early 1930s to provide a new, more abundant water supply source to replace the Sangamon River and river valley well systems that had served the city for the previous six decades. In addition to alleviating future supply concerns being faced by Springfield, the new lake was also to be a source of cooling water for a new electric plant, the Lakeside Power Station.

"A safe and reliable water supply has been central to the health and economic development of our community going back to the city's first settlers in the 1800s," said Mayor Tim Davlin. "Thanks to a group of forward-thinking city leaders and the citizens who supported their vision, we are today celebrating the 75th anniversary of one of our city's greatest assets, Lake Springfield, which has provided us that necessary safe and reliable supply throughout the better part of the 20th century and continuing into the 21st."

CWLP General Manager Todd Renfrow said the lake construction was a key turning point for both the city and the utility. "The Sangamon River was not going to be able to continue providing enough water to meet the growing demand of the city," he said. "Without a new lake, which would allow the relocation and expansion of both the water treatment and electric generation plants, the City's future growth would have been seriously hampered."

The history of Lake Springfield is tied to the history of the formation of the city and the desire for a safe and adequate water supply. No centralized municipal water system existed in Springfield until 1868 when the City completed construction of the

Sangamon River water works to pump raw river water into town. The riverside water works, which underwent a series of expansions and improvements over the next sixty plus years—including the construction of supplemental wells and a filtration and clarification system and the addition of chlorine to the water to kill bacteria—served the city well until the early 1920s, when officials acknowledged that growing demand would soon outpace the amount of water available from the river. After much public debate, City officials decided to build a large lake four miles southeast of town, in the Sugar Creek valley.

In 1930, voters gave the City Council the go-ahead to issue \$2.5 million in bonds to build Lake Springfield, a 4,200-acre lake with another 4,200 acres of marginal land. Thanks to strong water revenues as well as assistance from such federal relief programs as the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Works Progress Administration, the City was able to pay off 100 percent of the bonds without raising city taxes or water rates. All told, building the Lake and its many auxiliary improvements, including, two dams, six highway bridges, one railroad bridge, two beaches, public parks, boat docks, fishing piers, clubs, camps, wildlife preserve, nature garden and a lakeshore power and water plant complex, would end up costing a total of \$5.64 million, which would be about \$88.3 million in today's dollars. Federal assistance and work crews were utilized to help cover much of the cost of the auxiliary projects, as well as that of the lake itself.

Built during the height of America's Dust Bowl drought, the lake took nearly three times as long as expected to fill. In spite of growing public skepticism, though, on May 2, 1935, Lake Springfield finally reached full pool, allowing the first water to flow over the brand new Spaulding Dam.

Among Lake Springfield celebration activities: A Mayoral Proclamation to be read at the May 5 City Council meeting, a [history of Lake Springfield web page](#) has been posted to the CWLP website and a pamphlet "75 Lake Springfield," is available upon request. The pamphlet can be [ordered online](#) on the [CWLP](#)

[website](#). [CWLP Facebook](#) Fans will also be asked to post their favorite Lake Springfield memories and photos on that [site](#).

Since 1868, when municipal water service began in Springfield, the mission has always been to provide the best and most reliable source of water at the lowest possible cost to the citizens of Springfield.

#