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Caution urged around Dells Hydro Dam in Eau Claire

High water washes out safety barrier

EAU CLAIRE, Wis. (July 1, 2025) – Due to high river flows as a result of recent heavy rain, the boat restraining barrier upstream of the company’s hydro plant in Eau Claire is not properly secured in place at this time.

Boaters and fisherman are urged to stay well away from the Dells dam on the lower Chippewa River due to high river flows, debris in the water, and unprotected spillway and powerhouse intake. Power is being generated in the powerhouse and excess water is being discharged through the spillway.

Xcel Energy has placed signage at the five boat launches on Dells Pond to inform water recreationalists about the missing boat barrier. Depending on water conditions, crews hope to reinstall the barrier by Thursday, July 3.

“Boating, canoeing or kayaking above the Dells hydro dam is not recommended until we can safely reinstall the boat barrier,” said Rob Olson, manager, Hydro Operations at Xcel Energy. “The boat barrier assists in keeping boaters away from the powerhouse intake and spillway section.”

Xcel Energy offers these tips for personal safety near dams:

- Avoid using the river during times of high flow.
- Obey all warning signs, barriers and flashing lights, horns and sirens.
- Wear a personal flotation device (PFD) – a life jacket.
- Always stay outside buoy lines and away from restricted areas near dams.
- Never swim or wade near a dam.
- Never boat or fish alone when near a dam.
- Leave your boat motor running to provide maneuvering power.
- Stay clear of spillways. Changing currents and “boiling” waves can make boat control difficult near dams.
- Reverse currents occur below dams. They can pull a boat back toward the dam into the spillway and capsize it.
- Never anchor boats below a dam because water levels can change rapidly.

- Bring a cell phone and contact 9-1-1 in an emergency.

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We are committed to leading the clean energy transition, meeting our customers' need for more, cleaner power, while keeping bills as low as possible. Because the people we serve depend on us to power their lives.

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