



# Melvin Price - Locks & Dam 26

(Alton, Illinois)  
Mississippi River

**U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS**

**BUILDING STRONG.**

## Construction: 1979-1990

### General Contractors:

Lock: Joint venture of S.J. Groves & Sons, Minneapolis, Minn.;  
Guy F. Atkinson Company, South San Francisco, Calif.; and  
Dillingham Corporation, Pleasanton, Calif.

Dam: Joint venture of S.J. Groves & Sons, Minneapolis, Minn.;  
Guy F. Atkinson Company, South San Francisco, Calif.;  
Ball Construction Company; and Black & Veatch

**Congressional District: MO-3; IL-12**

## Description

Melvin Price Locks and Dam, located at Mississippi River mile 200.5, is two miles below the site of the old Locks and Dam 26 which was razed in 1990. It is approximately 20 miles above St. Louis. Its 31,000-acre pool is 40.6 miles long.



The complex has twin locks. The main lock is 110 by 1,200 feet; the auxiliary lock is 100 feet by 600 feet. The locks are U-shaped and supported on steel H-piles. The maximum lift is 24 feet.

The movable dam has nine, open-frame, non-submersible Tainter gates, each 42 feet high by 110 feet long. Individual, electrically operated, cable hoists are housed in pier-top operating houses. The 1,160-foot-long movable dam is supported by steel H-piles driven into bedrock.

## History/Significance

The lock was put into operation on October 10, 1989. The complex is also known as Locks and Dam 26R and constitutes the first replacement of an original installation of the 9-Foot Channel Project.

The basic components of the complex are similar to those built in the 1930s. The most striking difference is the immense size of the new structure, which dwarfs the older installations. But the significance of the new installation is not limited to its colossal size. Throughout its design and construction, the Corps and various contractors engaged in an extensive program of computer-assisted design, testing, and evaluation to create a structure that represents the present state-of-the-art in river navigation control works.

Co-located on the site is the Corps' National Great Rivers Museum.

## Annual Tonnage (20-Year Historical)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Tons</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Tons</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Tons</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Tons</u>
2017	63,059,956	2012	28,953,338	2007	65,248,495	2002	79,037,946
2016	63,707,314	2011	51,587,941	2006	70,759,977	2001	75,867,386
2015	53,686,893	2010	53,502,569	2005	66,512,090	2000	77,110,017
2014	53,660,699	2009	56,403,848	2004	67,670,539	1999	77,580,836
2013	40,098,295	2008	56,295,661	2003	72,413,323	1998	73,913,375

**U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS – ST. LOUIS DISTRICT**

1222 SPRUCE STREET, ST. LOUIS, MO 63103-2833  
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## Commodity Tonnage (2017)

All Units (Ferried Autos, Passengers, Railway Cars)	-
Coal, Lignite, and Coal Coke	1,087,950
Petroleum and Petroleum Products	4,222,473
Chemicals and Related Products	11,265,496
Crude Materials, Inedible, Except Fuels	5,058,656
Primary Manufactured Goods	5,140,762
Food and Farm Products	36,127,729
Manufactured Equipment & Machinery	109,740
Waste Material	11,400
Unknown or Not Elsewhere Classified	35,750

## Vessel & Lockage Data (2017)

Average Delay - Tows (Hours)	2.69
Average Processing Time (Hours)	0.87
Barges Empty	20,637
Barges Loaded	38,967
Commercial Vessels	5,584
Commercial Flotillas	5,511
Commercial Lockages/Cuts	5,583
Non-Vessel Lockages	-
Non-Commercial Vessels	58
Non-Commercial Flotillas	52
Non-Commercial Lockages/Cuts	52
Percent Vessels Delayed (%)	71
Recreational Vessels	718
Recreational Lockages	348
Total Vessels	6,360
Total Lockages/Cuts	5,983

## The 9-foot Channel Navigation Project

The 9-foot Channel Navigation Project includes 37 lock and dam sites (42 locks) on 1,200 river miles in Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri and Wisconsin. Constructed largely in the 1930s, it extends from Minneapolis-St. Paul on the Upper Mississippi River to its confluence with the Ohio River and up the Illinois Waterway to the T.J. O'Brien Lock in Chicago.

The maintenance needs of this aging infrastructure have surpassed annual operations and maintenance funding. This limited funding has adversely affected reliability of the system and has primarily resulted in a fix-as-fail strategy, with repairs sometimes requiring days, weeks or months. Depending on the nature of a failure and extent of repairs, shippers, manufacturers, consumers and commodity investors can experience major financial consequences. Additionally, today's 1,200'-long tows must split and lock through in two operations within the Project's 600' chambers. This procedure doubles and triples lockage times, increases costs and wear to lock machinery, and exposes deckhands to higher accident rates.

More than 580 facilities ship and receive commodities within the Project. Grains (corn and soybeans) dominate traffic; cement and concrete products are the second largest group. A modern 15-barge tow transports the equivalent of 1,050 semi-trucks (26,250 tons, 937,387 bushels of corn, or 240 rail cars). In 2016, the 9-foot channel project generated an estimated \$2 billion of transportation cost savings compared to its approximately \$246 million operation and maintenance cost.

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