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CONTACT:

Lauren Grenlund (CDB)
Lauren.Grenlund@illinois.gov
Jayette Bolinski (DNR)
Jayette.Bolinski@illinois.gov

Renovation Work Begins at Rend Lake Resort

Construction Marks Complete Revitalization of Southern Illinois Landmark

Whittington – The Illinois Capital Development Board (CDB), in partnership with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (DNR), has begun a \$26.4 million renovation of the Rend Lake Resort facilities at Wayne Fitzgerrell State Recreation Area in southern Illinois. The project aims to revitalize the resort property, which has been vacant for almost a decade.

The selected contractor, Fager-McGee Commercial Construction, immediately began demolition and remediation work across the resort's 17 buildings. While a significant amount of initial work involved addressing unforeseen building issues behind the scenes, visible construction progress is expected to accelerate in the coming months.

“We are thrilled to see this long-awaited project progressing. Rend Lake is an Illinois treasure and a point of pride for thousands of residents,” said **IDNR Director Natalie Phelps Finnie**. “I appreciate Governor Pritzker’s commitment to getting the resort back up and running. We know how great the anticipation is in southern Illinois and how important this project is to the regional economy.”

The renovations include interior and exterior improvements to the following areas:

- **Cabins** – Full renovations of 11 cabins, including ADA accessible and standard, with new siding, windows, doors, insulation, drywall, finishes, HVAC, electrical, plumbing, and roof coatings.
- **Schooner Boatel** – Exterior upgrades including new siding, roof recoating, balcony decking, and concrete masonry cleaning; complete interior renovation with updated finishes and fixtures.
- **Flagship Boatel** – Structural repairs to the building and exterior walkway, walkway surfaces, concrete masonry cleaning, roof coating, and full interior renovations. Due to

structural complexities, this building is expected to be completed after the rest of the resort.

- **Restaurant** – Complete deck replacement, sidewalk, new roof coating, and full interior upgrades including new kitchen equipment, HVAC, finishes, and fixtures.
- **Conference Center** – Replacement of flat roofs, roof coatings on metal roofs, exterior painting, some siding replacement, and interior renovation including HVAC, finishes, fixtures, and kitchen equipment.
- **General Store** – Exterior work including new siding, roof coating, and deck replacement. Interior improvement including HVAC and a flexible layout.
- **Pool** – Replacement of pool equipment, removal of the hot tub and installation of a new children's splash pool, roof coating, and repairing of surfaces.
- **Other Site Upgrades** – Complementing earlier improvements completed by the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), there will be the addition of a new playground, upgraded tennis courts, repairs to docks, and trash enclosure enhancements.

"The Rend Lake Resort is a treasured recreational destination in southern Illinois and we are proud to partner with IDNR to bring it back to life, **said TJ Edwards, executive director of the Capital Development Board.** "The upgraded, modernized site will be ready to serve visitors and the community soon."

"Crews are hard at work on renovations at Rend Lake Resort, and I am encouraged by the actions being taken by IDNR and the contractors working at the facility," said **State Representative Dave Severin (R – Benton).** "I set a goal of getting Rend Lake Resort back open to the public, and we are making progress toward that goal every day. This is an impressive renovation. Quite simply, IDNR is doing this right, and the people of Southern Illinois will eventually have access to a world-class facility where they can gather for special events and make memories that last a lifetime."

The 3,300-acre Wayne Fitzgerrell State Recreation Area is operated by IDNR on the shore of Rend Lake in Franklin and Jefferson counties. The park's popular Rend Lake Resort originally opened in May 1991 but was shuttered in 2016 after mold was discovered in several buildings, requiring extensive remediation. At the height of its operation, the resort drew 2.4 million visitors annually, employed up to 125 staff members, and had an estimated economic impact of nearly \$245 million in 2010.

The project is currently scheduled for substantial completion in spring 2026, except for the Flagship Boatel.