

Business

● Kankakee



Divers from Great Lakes Diving and Salvage, contracted by Aqua Illinois, use a barge and crane at Beckman Park Tuesday afternoon to lift one of Aqua's two river water intakes.

The Daily Journal/Michelle Gannon

City 'straw' dug from sand

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A team of divers has been working in the Kankakee River near Beckman Park this week on an intake renovation project for Aqua Illinois.

Michigan-based Great Lakes

Diving and Salvage was contracted by Aqua to raise the deep intake that has become imbedded in the bottom of the river. The T-shaped pipping, which has a 5-foot diameter and is 30 feet long, has been in place for more than 60 years. But the moving river channel has buried it in the sand.

"When the intake is actually covered with sand, you're not getting as much water in," said Tammy Helling, project manager for Aqua Illinois. "Now, it will be off the bed of the river."

The \$110,000 project is expected to be completed within two weeks, and freezing temperatures should not cause delay. The crew has been using a barge and crane to pull up the intake.

Tom Gouin, project superintendent for Great Lakes Diving and Salvage, said his crew can work through the dropping temperatures as long as the river does not freeze over.

However, cold weather slows the process and takes longer to get the equipment running.

Cold fingers

"Everything is about 15 to 25 percent slower in the winter," he said.

Aqua mostly uses the shore intake, but the deep intake is relied on when the river freezes or when leaves and grass plug the shore intake.

Hellings said they hope there is no need for this type of project in the future, but there is no way to determine if there will be.

"It depends on what changes in the river," she said. "You never know."