

Watershed Rehabilitation

In 2000, the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act (PL-566) was amended to provide NRCS authorization to assist communities with rehabilitation of their aging dams. The legislation authorizes NRCS to work with local communities and watershed project sponsors to address public health and safety concerns and potential environmental impacts of aging dams. NRCS provides technical and financial assistance in planning, designing, and implementing watershed rehabilitation projects or removal of dams.

Rehabilitation projects may be cost-shared between the federal government and local sponsors. NRCS may provide 65 percent of the total cost of the rehabilitation project. Local sponsors can provide the remaining 35 percent in cash or through “in kind” costs for the value of land rights, project administration, and other planning and implementation costs associated with the project. Federal funds cannot be used for operation and maintenance activities.

Local watershed project sponsors must submit an application—available from the local NRCS office—to request assistance in rehabilitating their dam.

For additional information on watershed structures in Alabama, contact your local NRCS office or the state program director at 334-887-4536.

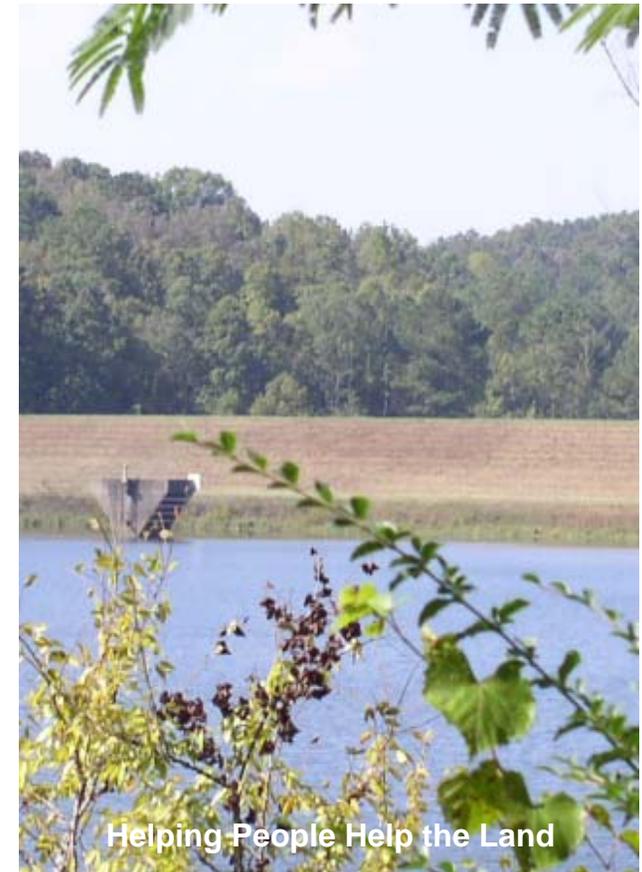
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<https://www.al.nrcs.usda.gov>.

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Aging Watershed Structures

What Sponsors Need To Know



Helping People Help the Land



Trees and shrubs need to be cut off the front slope and riser of this watershed dam.

Operation and Maintenance Non-Compliance Issues

- Human safety (missing access cover)
- Trash rack missing or parts missing
- Trash rack debris blockage
- Principal spillway clogged
- Severe erosion of principal spillway outlet
- Auxiliary spillway without complete dense permanent vegetative cover in the control or exit sections
- Auxiliary spillway blockage
- Severe woody vegetative growth on principal spillway outlet or along permanent pool of dam
- Drain pipe problems
- Severe embankment erosion

Introduction

Over 50 years ago, Congress authorized the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to assist local communities with flood prevention and watershed protection through Public Law 566, Small Watershed Program.

The program, administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), provided technical and financial assistance to local communities. Its success can be attributed to local sponsor support. Sponsors have invested over \$40 million for watershed projects in Alabama. As a result, 107 watershed structures (dams) were constructed in the state between 1960 and 1995. These structures are extremely important to Alabama's rural economy.



A watershed dam creates a scenic reservoir for recreation and water storage.



Who Owns and Maintains Watershed Structures?

Watershed structures are generally located on private property. A local sponsor (usually a county commission or city) obtains a legal easement from the property owner prior to the construction of the dam.

The easement, attached to the deed of the property, allows the local sponsor to have the site constructed and to operate and maintain the structure for its life. In return for the federal dollars received for construction of the watershed dam, the sponsor signed an agreement with NRCS to assume responsibility for operation and maintenance of the dam.

Many of the dams have significant rehabilitation needs and are nearing 50-

years old. Some pose a threat to public safety. Many dams may qualify for Watershed Rehabilitation Assistance.



Fertilizing and mowing vegetation on embankments and spillways is important.