

Reinvesting in America's Watersheds: A Special Report

DAMS IN DANGER

PEOPLE AT RISK?

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For 50 years, America's small upstream dams have provided for flood protection, municipal water supplies, wildlife habitat, water for livestock, and recreational opportunities. But time has taken its toll. Many of the nation's dams, including those in Illinois, are in desperate need of repair. If problems are not corrected, the consequences are grave—to both people and the environment. Funding is needed, and now is the time to act.



Across the Nation...

More than 600 dams need to be rebuilt and upgraded to ensure the safety and health of those downstream. In addition, another 1,500 dams need repairs so they can continue to provide flood control, municipal water supplies, recreational activities, water for livestock, and wildlife habitat. An estimated \$540 million is needed to rehabilitate these dams.



Small watershed projects

Ten thousand dams built under Small Watershed Programs make up a \$9 billion infrastructure. These dams provide more than \$800 million in benefits annually. The majority of these dams were built for a 50-year lifespan and some have already or soon will reach that mark. Funds for building these dams have come from four programs: Flood Control Act of 1944 (PL-78-534); Pilot Watershed Program; Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act of 1953 (PL 83-566); and Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D).

In Illinois...

The Old Tom watershed in Henderson County included the first upstream flood-control dam built in Illinois. It, along with many other dams, needs major rehabilitation.

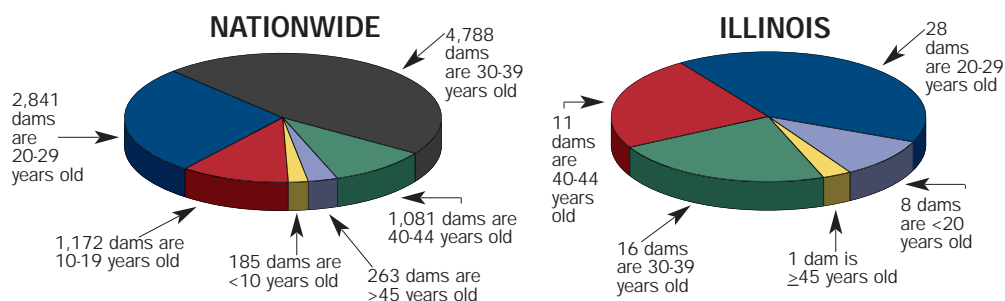
Consider this:

- There are 64 upstream flood-control dams in 14 watersheds. These dams provide flood control and protect many communities and more than 645,000 acres of land.
- The dams make up an \$18 million infrastructure.
- Four dams that were built to protect agricultural lands now have homes or other structures built downstream. Now the dams need to be rebuilt to protect the people and their property.
- Thirty-two dams need repairs that, if not corrected, will have significant and adverse environmental, economic, and social impacts.
- It's estimated that it will take more than \$10 million to rehabilitate these dams.



Illinois has 64 upstream flood-control dams in 14 watershed projects

Our Aging Dams



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A Case Study...

In the south-central part of Illinois' Bureau County, the Tiskilwa Watershed is in need of rehabilitation. The problems include:

- Inadequate spillway capacity during large storms.
- Deteriorating pipe joints, causing leakage in the principal spillway pipe.
- Cracks in the concrete principal spillway riser base.

The 3,300-acre watershed encompasses most of the drainage area above the Village of Tiskilwa, which has about 900 residents. Four flood-control dams were built in 1960 to protect the village from floods and sediment damage. The Village of Tiskilwa, through a cooperative agreement with the Bureau County Soil and Water Conservation District, is responsible for operating and maintaining the four dams.

The local sponsors, with assistance from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), built four flood-control dams as part of the watershed project. The dams were constructed under the Watershed and Flood Control Act of 1953 (PL-83-566).

The village has completed routine maintenance on the dams over the years. However, they do not have the funds to make major repairs and modifications.

These structures were designed as high hazard dams, but since their construction, state dam safety laws have changed. The emergency spillways are now inadequate to handle the flow from large storms, and must be rebuilt.



TOP: The Tiskilwa Watershed needs rehabilitation due to deteriorating pipe joints, cracks in the concrete principal spillway riser base, and inadequate spillway capacity during large storms. MIDDLE: Roads to homes below the dams are protected from flooding. Major county roads are also protected from flooding. LEFT: Among other things, the dams provide clean drinking water for entire communities. The aging dams, if not fixed, pose a safety and health threat to people, towns, and natural resources.

A Call to Action in Illinois

4

dams need to be rebuilt and upgraded to protect life and property in downstream areas

32

dams need repairs to safeguard municipal water supplies, provide flood control, and protect natural resources

\$10 million

is needed to rehabilitate those dams to protect people and natural resources