

# Reinvesting in America's Watersheds: A Special Report

## DAMS IN DANGER PEOPLE AT RISK?

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**F**or 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 Mississippi, 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.

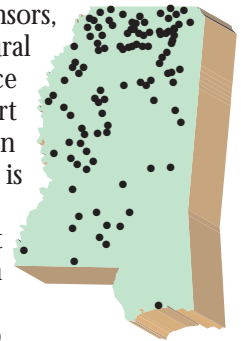


Small watershed projects

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 Mississippi...

In Mississippi, local project sponsors, with the assistance of the Natural Resources Conservation Service built 578 flood-control dams as part of small watershed projects between 1956 and 1971. The situation today is as follows:

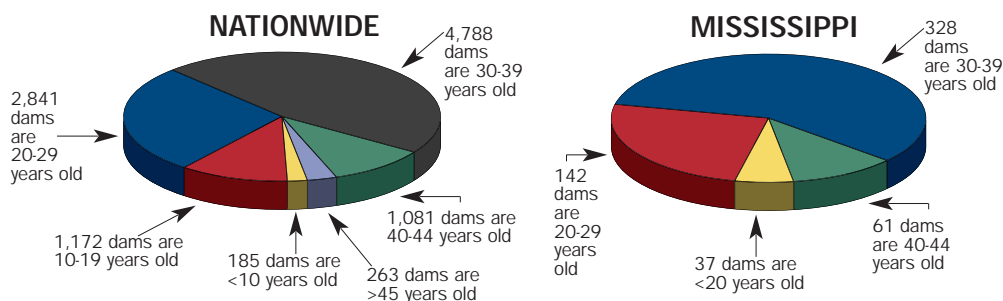


Mississippi's small watershed projects with dams

- Thirty dams need to be rebuilt to protect life and property in downstream areas.
- About 54 dams need repairs to safeguard municipal water supplies and streams, provide flood control, and protect natural resources.
- Approximately \$30 million is needed to rehabilitate the dams to protect people and natural resources.

Although Mississippi's watershed projects were designed to protect agricultural land, many homes and industries have been built downstream. Protecting people and property requires a more stringent design than is used for protecting agricultural land. The local conservation districts do not have the funds to rebuild the dams.

## Our Aging Dams



# DAMS IN DANGER

## PEOPLE AT RISK?

### Two Case Studies...

In the central and western parts of Mississippi's Lee, Pontotoc, Union, and Prentiss counties, the Town Creek Watershed is in need of rehabilitation. Some of the problems are:

- Deterioration of corrugated metal pipes.
- Gullies in dams.
- Sliding earth slopes.
- Severe leakage of the principal spillway pipe.

The watershed protects 66,000 residents and visitors, 150 industries and businesses, and more than 250,000 acres.

The Town Creek Master Water Management District and the Northeast Soil Conservation District are the local sponsors of the project. With the assistance of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), they built 21 flood-control dams in the watershed between 1963 and 1999. They also assumed operation and maintenance of the dams after construction. This project was done under the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act of 1953 (Public Law 83-566).



In the northern part of Mississippi's Benton County, the Oaklimeter Creek Watershed needs rehabilitation. The problems include:

- The secondary spillways need major repairs.
- Severe leakage of the principal spillway pipe.
- Severe erosion problems on the dam.
- Sediment has filled the lakes and has reduced the flood control.

The watershed protects 1,200 residents and visitors, and more than 63,000 acres. Local sponsors of the project are the Oaklimeter Drainage District, Benton County Soil and Water Conservation District, and Marshall County Soil and Water Conservation District.



**THE PROBLEMS.** Erosion on a spillway is the culprit, above, while debris causes problems with an outlet pipe, left, at a Lee County site. These and other problems must be corrected to ensure the dams continue to provide flood control.



**WHY REPAIR THE DAMS?** Clean water is vital to communities. The current situation poses a threat to people, towns, and natural resources.

## A Call to Action in Mississippi

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**54**

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**\$30 million**

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