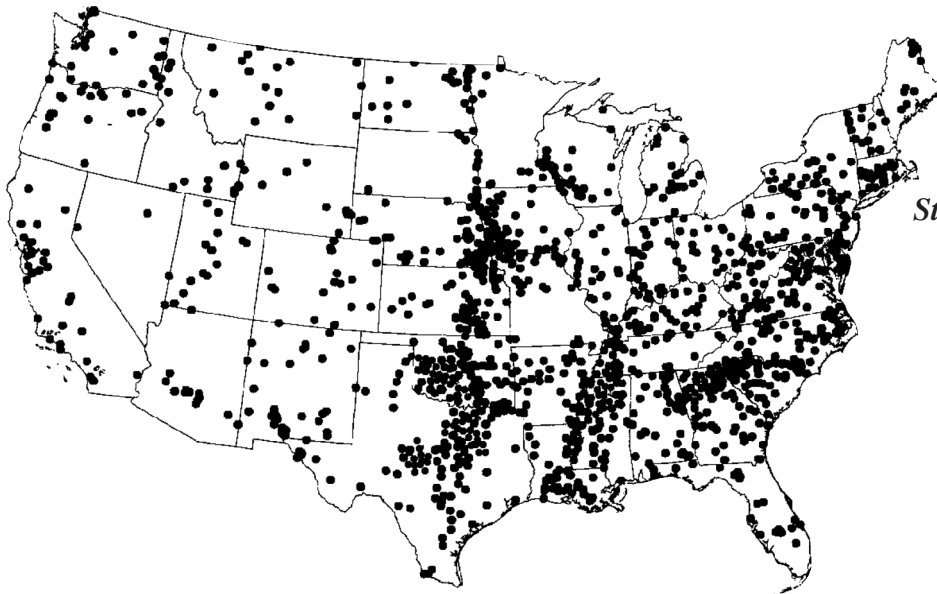


# *Reinvesting in America's Watersheds*



*Watershed projects have helped protect America's communities and natural resources for many years. But, like highways and houses, these projects need to be maintained and improved. We need to begin to reinvest in America's watersheds now.*





*Almost 2,000 small watershed projects have been undertaken in the United States to protect lives, property, infrastructure, and natural resources.*



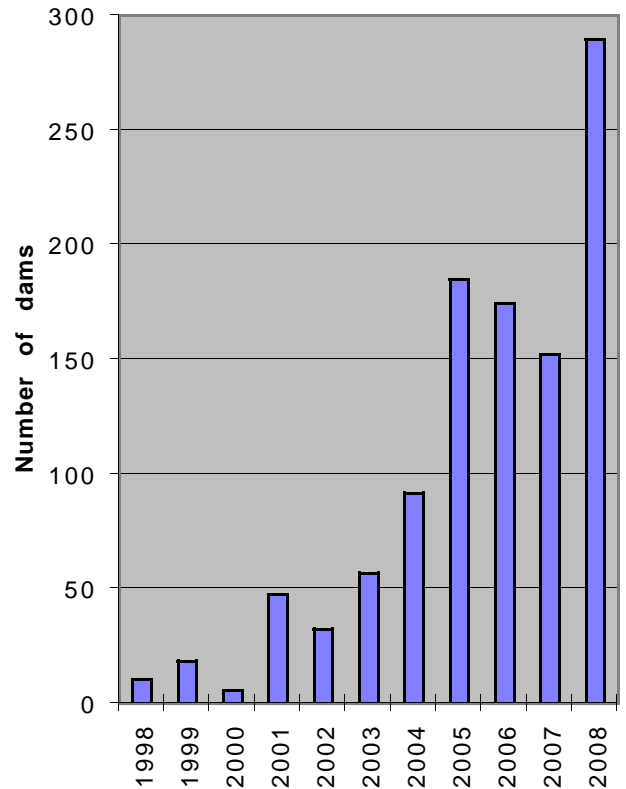
### *A race against time*

The benefits that local people have received for many years from America’s early watershed projects are no longer secure. Some of the projects’ abilities to slow flood waters, control gullies, and otherwise protect communities and natural resources has diminished with time.

While some residents understand the importance and benefits of these projects, many do not. Rural and urban communities, socially disadvantaged groups, and floodplain residents have benefitted from these projects for many years. These projects have become an integral and irreplaceable part of the communities they were designed to protect.

More than half of the 10,400 project dams and thousands of soil and water conservation practices constructed in these projects are more than 30 years old. Many are approaching the end of their 50-year life.

**Dams that will reach the end of their evaluated life within the next 10 years**



*Over time, as they have filled with sediment and otherwise deteriorated, a number of America’s watershed dams are losing their effectiveness. In the next 10 years, almost 1,000 of them will reach the end of their evaluated life span.*





## *1940s act leads the way*

The United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS) has provided technical and financial assistance to local sponsors in the development of water resources since the 1940s. This assistance has been provided primarily through the following four programs: Flood Control Act of 1944 (PL78-534); Pilot Watershed Program 1953/54; Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act of 1953 (PL 83-566); and the Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Program.

These programs have authorized almost 2,000 projects covering more than 140 million acres in every state, Puerto Rico and the Pacific Basin.

The flood dams and conservation practices in these projects have become a part of the landscape and, although unknown by many residents, they have reduced flooding to prime farmlands, highways, homes, and businesses for many years.

These projects have also provided many other positive impacts that are hard to measure but are still very important to communities. These include safer roads and bridges, improved water quality, improved habitat for threatened and endangered species, eagles wintering near the lakes, stream corridors, fishing, hunting, hiking, bird watching, and other local recreation opportunities.

Some of these projects can function indefinitely with continued maintenance. In other cases, rehabilitation of the dams may be needed to address public dam safety concerns or to allow them to continue provid-

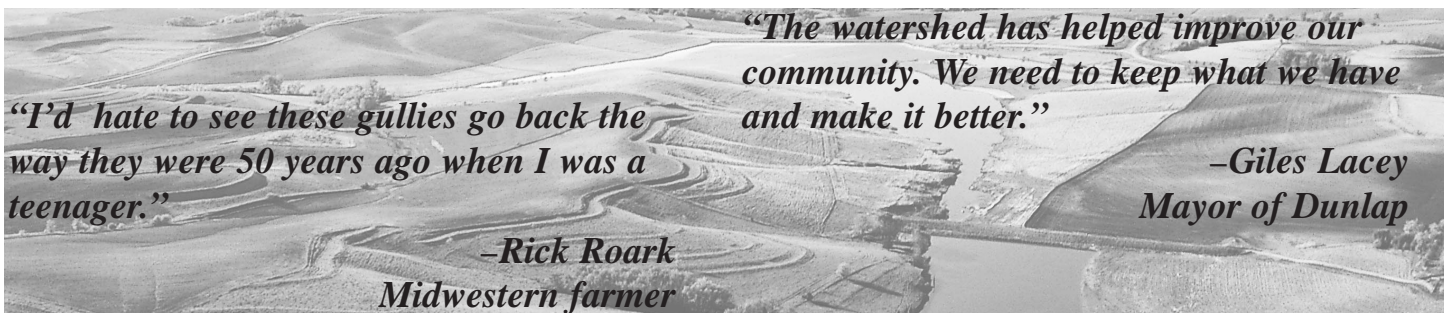


***Sedimentation is a major problem in many older dams. As they have filled with sediment, they have lost their ability to hold back flood waters. Some could fail as a result.***

ing their intended functions as well as address future natural resource needs.

Some of the issues that must be addressed for these aging projects include:

- 💧 replacing deteriorating components
- 💧 dealing with unanticipated urban development below or near the dams, which increases the potential for loss of life and economic damage
- 💧 dealing with the sediment that has accumulated in reservoirs to the point that the dams can no longer properly function
- 💧 upgrades to meet current state dam safety regulations
- 💧 meeting natural resource needs not previously addressed, such as water quality, wetland restoration and wildlife habitat



***“I’d hate to see these gullies go back the way they were 50 years ago when I was a teenager.”***

***–Rick Roark  
Midwestern farmer***

***“The watershed has helped improve our community. We need to keep what we have and make it better.”***

***–Giles Lacey  
Mayor of Dunlap***



*More recent conservation efforts, such as conservation farming, wildlife habitat improvement, and wetland restoration will address many additional natural resource needs in aging watershed projects.*



## *A new opportunity*

There are many new opportunities for improving the environment and local economy while addressing the many needs in these aging projects:

- 💧 new water supplies
- 💧 rural fire protection
- 💧 wetland restoration
- 💧 improved grazing lands
- 💧 protection of trout streams
- 💧 improved wildlife habitat and stream corridors
- 💧 local recreation
- 💧 community pride



## *With cooperation, the challenge can be met*

It will be a huge challenge to embrace America's watershed conservation needs. A similar challenge was met more than 40 years ago to plan and develop the original projects. That challenge was met by everyone working together. Now, to keep the benefits alive that both rural and urban residents have enjoyed for years, this challenge must be met again.

We need to work together to find a solution. There is a need for all the involved groups to step up to the table and protect this investment. We need to raise awareness, encourage debate, find funding and develop new partnerships.

### **Partners working together to make America's watershed projects work include:**

**County boards of supervisors  
Soil and Water Conservation Districts  
City governments  
State governments  
Federal agencies  
Environmental groups  
Hunting and fishing groups  
Conservation groups**