

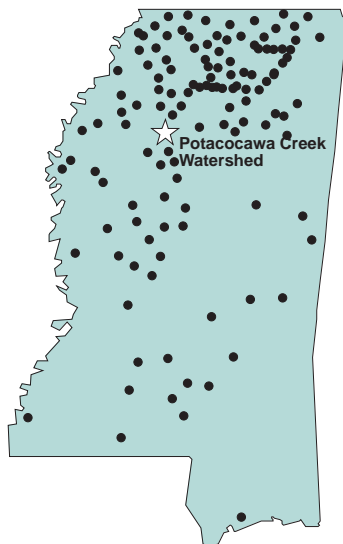
# THE CASE FOR REINVESTING IN THE POTACOCOWA WATERSHED



**THE SITUATION: 30-YEAR-OLD DAMS ARE LOSING THEIR ABILITY TO CONTROL EROSION AND PREVENT FLOODING**

The dams in the Potacocowa Creek Watershed were built from 1962 through 1974. Even though these dams have a life expectancy of 50 years and did the job they were built to do for a large part of the time intended, many are now beginning to deteriorate. Most of the deterioration occurs as sedimentation (such as in the photo to the right), especially in the upper ends of sediment pools. As deterioration of metal pipes, timber headwalls, and concrete risers progresses, the structures are losing their ability to store floodwater and control gullies.

Not all of the 22 dams need immediate attention, but some need major repairs, reworking the dam, removing undesirable tree growth, dredging, or some other method of rehabilitation.



*Potacocowa Creek Watershed is one of 185 Mississippi watersheds completed or still in construction. The shared investment in this program is \$400 million statewide. More than 568 dams have been built, as well as 213 dams remain to be built in these watersheds.*



## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

- Size:** Covers 43,272 acres in Carroll and Grenada Counties.
- Number of dams:** 22
- Project start:** 1962
- Project end:** 1974
- Primary purpose:** To control gully erosion and protect croplands in Mississippi Delta from flooding, erosion and sediment deposition.
- Population served:** 4,000 residents in the local area plus visitors and others for recreation user.



## PARTNERS

- Potacocowa Drainage District
- Carroll County Soil and Water Conservation District
- Grenada County Soil and Water Conservation District
- United States Department of Agriculture-Natural Resources Conservation Service

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*“We lost 12 acres out of one field before the dams were built upstream. It really helped save our best cropland. The water use to get so deep under the bridge on the public road during a big rain, the school bus would not cross with the kids. This bridge had to be repaired from flood damage many times. This doesn’t happen since the lakes were built.”*

**Lamar DeLoach**  
**Potacocowa Creek Watershed Landowner**



### **POTACOCOWA CREEK WATERSHED: AN INVESTMENT WORTH PROTECTING**

Through Public Law 566, Congress invested \$12.9 million (current dollars) in implementation of the Potacocowa Creek Watershed. The monetary benefits of the project have already exceeded the costs. In addition, the community environment has improved significantly. Some of these improvements are:

- 💧 112 miles of roads and 50 bridges and culverts are safer, including 2 state highways within the watershed.
- 💧 Damage from sediment deposition on approximately 925 acres of cropland and the levee system in the Mississippi Delta has been significantly reduced.
- 💧 Frequent and severe floodwater damage reduction on 583 acres of Delta land enclosed by the levee system in the Delta.
- 💧 Frequency and severity of flooding has been reduced on 4,708 acres of valuable land in the Mississippi Delta.
- 💧 An estimated 7,000 acres of upland wildlife habitat has been improved.
- 💧 Water quality has been improved.
- 💧 Recreation is close to home. An estimated 1,400 visits are made to the 22 dams each year.



*Cabins on the lake for summer homes. Recreation is one of the many benefits of maintaining a healthy watershed.*

The local sponsors and landowners have provided matching funds in local sponsored projects, installing conservation practices and maintaining the dams for the past 24 to 36 years. Local people are continuing to use their own funds to operate and maintain the project.



### **NEW OPPORTUNITIES**

The Potacocowa Creek Watershed was undertaken by the local community to reduce damages from erosion, sedimentation, and flooding. The project has protected farmlands, roads, bridges, culverts and other community assets. The need to prevent floods, stop severe gully erosion, make safer, longer lasting roads and bridges and protect other community facilities is as important today as it was 40 years ago.

In addition to continuing to reap these long-standing benefits, a mix of upgrading opportunities could offer new benefits to the community. More recreation, rural fire protection, new water supplies, cleaner water, more wildlife and a more diversified, environmentally healthy countryside.

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*“Since the dams were built, the second bank of the creek has pretty much stabilized and grown up in trees and native vegetation...Tons of sediment have been stopped from reaching the Mississippi Delta. There is no way to explain all the benefits of these dams.”*

**James K. DeLoach**  
**Potacocowa Creek Watershed Landowner**