
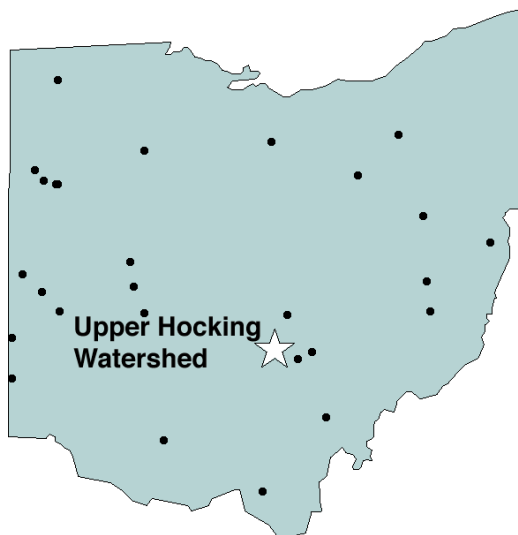


THE CASE FOR REINVESTING IN THE UPPER HOCKING WATERSHED

 **THE SITUATION: PILOT PROJECT DAMS ARE REACHING THE END OF THEIR USEFUL LIFE IN A WATERSHED THAT IS EVOLVING FROM AN AGRICULTURAL USE TO AN URBAN USE.**

When Ohio was first settled, it was largely agriculture based, but quickly evolved into an industrial state. This evolution creates many infrastructure demands.







The structures built in the late 1950's and early 1960's in the Upper Hocking Watershed have the same situation. When the dams were built, the watershed was predominately agriculture with the city of Lancaster near the lower end of the watershed. Over the next 35-40 years the watershed has changed to predominately urban or unincorporated residences. Over the years the dams did the job they were built to do for the time intended. But now they are reaching the end of their useful life. Over time, as many of the dams have filled with sediment, or as their aging steel has corroded and concrete has weakened, they are losing their ability to store floodwaters and control gullies. Not all 30 dams need serious attention, but some need major repairs such as rebuilding the dam to raise it, dredging, constructing new spillway structures or some other method of rehabilitation.






The Upper Hocking Watershed is one of 27 watershed projects in Ohio. Over 55 watershed dams have been built in Ohio, many of them of which will reach the end of their useful life within the next 15 years.



 **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

-  **Size:** 31,418 acres
-  **Number of dams:** 30
-  **Project start:** 1959
-  **Project end:** 1962
-  **Primary purpose:** Control gully erosion, flooding and sediment damages
-  **Population served:** 40,000 people in the local area plus tourists and others for recreation

 **PARTNERS:**

-  Hunters Run Conservancy District
-  Fairfield Soil and Water Conservation District
-  United States Department of Agriculture - Natural Resources Conservation Service

The area around the dams are exceptional non-game habitat providing opportunities for bird watching. The pools provide a quiet alternative for families to fish rather than overcrowded state parks.

Steve Jacks
District Manager, Wildlife District 1

The structures have been a part of the landscape so long that many people have forgotten why they are there. The last disastrous flood to the west side of Lancaster was 1948. Although potentially disastrous rainfall events have occurred since the last structure was completed in 1962, the city of Lancaster was protected.






Ed Rowles
Secretary-Treasurer
Hunters Run Conservancy District



UPPER HOCKING: AN INVESTMENT WORTH PROTECTING

Congress invested \$12 million (current dollars) in construction of the Upper Hocking Watershed Pilot Project. The local sponsors and landowners have matched that \$12 million, in conservation practices, and maintaining the project structures for the past 35-40 years. Local people have spent \$40,000 per year the last several years in repairs and \$10,000 per year to operate and maintain the project from their own tax funds.

The monetary benefits of the project have already exceeded the costs, and in addition have given benefits which impact the community significantly:

-  8 miles of roads and 22 bridges are safer and longer lasting
-  recreation is close to home. 1500 visits are made to 5 of the dams each year for fishing and other recreation.
-  along with other watersheds, the water bodies have benefited both migrating and nesting waterfowl.
-  767 acres have better upland wildlife habitat.
-  20 miles of stream have higher quality water.



NEW OPPORTUNITIES

The Upper Hocking Watershed was undertaken by the local community to reduce damages from flooding and sedimentation. The project has protected farmland, roads, bridges, houses and commercial property. The need to prevent floods, reduce sedimentation, assure safe roads and protect the new development 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 such as more recreation, rural fire protection, cleaner water, protecting and creating wildlife habitat for a more diversified environment in a quickly developing watershed.



1,500 visits are made to 5 of the dams each year for fishing and other recreation.



STATEWIDE PERSPECTIVE ON OHIO'S AGING WATERSHED DAMS

Upper Hocking is one of 27 Ohio watersheds completed or still in construction. The local investment in these projects is \$15 million statewide. The USDA investment through the watershed program is \$52 million.

These projects include 55 dams that were constructed for flood control, gully erosion control, sediment storage, water supply, and recreation. Most were designed with a useful life of 50 years, meaning they were likely to fill with sediment over that period of time.

Only a small number of these dams are in critical need of rebuilding or repair at this time, but many will soon reach their 50-year life. Some of these dams have been reclassified by the state dam safety agency as a result of development downstream and are in need of being upgraded. To meet the upgrades a total of 15 dams would require structural changes at an estimated cost of \$3.75 million. An organized approach is needed, to analyze the extent of repair and rehabilitation needed, to prioritize those with greatest need, and to make necessary repairs or improvements.

This watershed is located in one of the fastest growing counties in the state. The dams have done an excellent job of protecting downstream property from flooding. The area is rapidly changing from largely agriculture to largely urban. This increases our need to keep the dams operating.

Gary Lockwood
President, Hunters Run Conservancy District

February, 1998