

**At a Glance:**  
**Watershed Rehabilitation  
Program**

May 2008

**Overview**

Congress established the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program through the Flood Control Act of 1944 and the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act of 1954 (Public Law 83-566). Under these authorizations, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has assisted watershed project sponsors in the construction of over 11,000 flood control dams in 47 States since 1948.

Many dams today are in a far different setting than when they were constructed. Population has grown; residential and commercial development has occurred upstream and downstream from the dams; land uses have changed; sediment pools have filled; and concrete and metal components have deteriorated. Many structures do not meet current State dam safety regulations that have either been enacted or revised with more stringent requirements than when the dams were first built. Many are also nearing the end of their planned life span of 50 years; some need rehabilitation to ensure they remain safe and continue to function as designed.

Congress passed the Watershed Rehabilitation Amendments of 2000, which amended the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act and authorized NRCS to provide technical and financial assistance to watershed project sponsors in rehabilitating their aging dams.

The purpose of rehabilitation is to extend the service life of the dams and bring them into

compliance with applicable safety and performance standards, or to decommission the dams so they no longer pose a threat to life and property.

Under this program, NRCS provides up to 65 percent of funding for rehabilitation projects, with project sponsors providing the remaining 35 percent.

**Legislative Changes**

The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (2008 Farm Bill) adds \$100 million in funding for rehabilitation through the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) for fiscal year 2009, until expended. The 2008 Farm Bill also adds appropriations authority of \$85 million for each of fiscal years 2008 through 2012.

**More Information**

For more information and updates about the Watershed Rehabilitation Program and other Farm Bill topics, please refer to the U.S. Department of Agriculture Web site <http://www.usda.gov/farmbill> or the Natural Resources Conservation Service Web site <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/WSRehab>

