

Reinvesting in America's Watersheds: A Special Report

DAMS IN DANGER PEOPLE AT RISK?

NEW MEXICO NEW MEXICO

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For 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 New Mexico, 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.

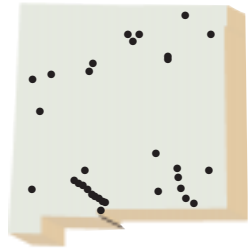


Small watershed projects

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 New Mexico...

New Mexico has 32 small watershed projects built under the Public Law 566 Small Watershed Program. The total investment in these projects is approximately \$130 million.



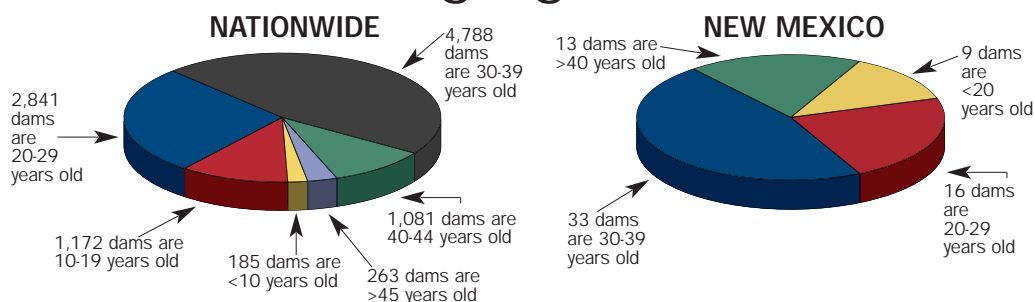
New Mexico has 32 small watershed projects

Seventy-one flood-control dams and 41 miles of diversions have been constructed under this program since 1957. Some of these structures will soon reach or surpass their design life. Many will need rehabilitation to extend their life and benefits or to address dam safety concerns. By 2010, 20 flood-control dams will be in this situation. Eight additional flood-control dams currently need attention to address structural deterioration, excess sediment accumulation, and other problems.

In addition, at least nine flood-control dams have had significant downstream development and improvements since original construction of the dams. These dams need to be upgraded to meet current state dam safety laws. Continuance of benefits from these dams far out-

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Our Aging Dams



DAMS IN DANGER

PEOPLE AT RISK?

Continued from front

weigh the costs of rehabilitating or upgrading them. If funds are not available and action is not taken, there could be significant adverse impacts to 40,000 people, destruction of property, water quality deterioration, adverse environmental impacts, agricultural production losses, and other damages, including loss of vital public facilities and potential loss of life. At jeopardy are nearly \$9 million in annual benefits to New Mexico's local communities.

Also at risk are numerous infrastructure improvements that are of high value to local communities such as roads, bridges, schools, hospitals, government and private businesses, water and sewage treatment plants, water supply systems, and parks which are protected by these projects.

A Case Study...

The Tortugas Arroyo Watershed project near Las Cruces, New Mexico, included two earthfill flood-control dams that were constructed in the 1960s to protect farmland from flash flooding. Prior to the project, the local economy was almost entirely agricultural. No one envisioned extensive downstream developments. Forty years later, major downstream changes and improvements are also being protected by the project. The downstream protected population has grown to 1,200, and U.S. Highway 80 and a branch line of the Santa Fe Railway has been located in the downstream protected area. In addition, numerous new roads, bridges, businesses, and other improvements have been put in place, which are now receiving protection from these flood-control dams.

The average annual benefits of the downstream protection afforded by these two dams is now an estimated \$1 million a year. Due to the significant growth, these dams need to be upgraded to meet current dam safety laws to properly continue their benefits and protection of the watershed and the people and improvements in the downstream area.



THE PROBLEMS. Downstream development has resulted in the need for the dams to be upgraded to meet current dam safety laws and ensure continued protection of the watershed and lives of people living and working downstream. This photo is taken from the top of the dam, Tortugas Site 1. The high rise building on the left edge of the photo is Memorial Medical Center.



WHY REPAIR THE DAMS? Clean water is vital to children, adults and whole communities. The current situation poses a safety and health threat to people, communities, and natural resources.

A Call to Action in New Mexico

9

dams need to be rebuilt and upgraded to protect life and property in downstream areas

8

dams need repairs to safeguard municipal water supplies, water treatment systems, provide flood control, and protect natural resources

\$23 million

is needed to rehabilitate those dams to protect people and natural resources