



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers**  
Pittsburgh District

# News Release

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## **Corps Contractor Begins Seepage Investigation at East Branch Dam**

ELK COUNTY, Pa. – A contractor hired by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will begin mapping seepage paths within the East Branch Dam embankment next week as part of a dam safety initiative. The Corps' Pittsburgh District implemented the initiative to ensure the dam is operated at a safe level while experts investigate seepage-related concerns and the condition of a 1957 seepage-repair site.

Draper, Utah-based Willowstick Technologies Inc. will use a low voltage electric current to energize underground and surface water sources and indicate possible seepage paths within the survey area. Instruments placed at the dam's ground surface detect the electric current as magnetic fields which are then plotted on a flow path map. The minimally invasive, environmentally benign procedure will not impact recreation activities at the lake. Willowstick is a sub-contractor for Ground Technology, Inc. DBA D'Appolonia, Monroeville, Pa.

"This is just one of many technologies and methods we're using to help us understand what's going on within, around and underneath the dam," says Mike Rattay, project manager for the dam safety initiative. "We're still early into an investigation that may last two or more years."

The collected data will help investigators determine the need and location of follow-up geotechnical drilling and may influence decisions regarding reservoir operations and levels. The Corps is already operating the reservoir 20 feet from its normal summer levels to relieve pressure on the dam during the investigation. The lowered reservoir is part of a number of interim risk reduction measures that are in various stages of implementation. Included are implementing twenty-four hour, seven-days-a-week staffing; repositioning emergency contracts, equipment and materials; updating emergency action plans; and increasing instrument monitoring and visual inspections of the dam.

Corps officials expect Willowstick to complete its data collection in early June, contingent on weather and other unforeseen circumstances. Compiling the collected data into a report is expected to take an additional two months to complete.

In 2004, the Corps began using a risked-informed screening process that considers a dam's current behavior and how well it meets current design criteria as well as potential consequences of a failure. Our screening process at East Branch Dam identified confirmed and unconfirmed issues which categorize the dam as "high risk" and "potentially unsafe" and which merit further analysis and evaluation. The recently implemented risk reduction measures are short-term actions that allow the Corps to operate the dam to meet public safety objectives while further investigating concerns and pursuing long-term repairs, if necessary.

The Corps' number one priority is protecting people's lives and property. Corps officials recognize that recreation, water supply, hydropower and the environment may be impacted and are committed to keeping the public informed and involved.

For more information on East Branch Dam, visit: <http://www.lrp.usace.army.mil/rec/lakes/eastbran.htm>

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