

Guest Opinion: Reclamation Explains Security Role for Dams

By David Achterberg
Director of Safety, Security and Law Enforcement
Bureau of Reclamation

Across 17 western states, the Bureau of Reclamation has been focused on a major initiative to reduce security risks at our water and power facilities. Since the dark day of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Reclamation has worked diligently to sharply reduce the vulnerability of our dams and other facilities — dedicating more than \$84 million to security fortifications.

Of course, when these types of measures are applied locally, they can have a direct impact on the public — ultimately limiting or even restricting access. Reclamation employees have first-hand awareness of these potential impacts and are working to keep disruptions to a minimum.

In Idaho, for example, Reclamation is developing security measures to limit vehicle access at three facilities — Palisades Dam, Anderson Ranch Dam and the lower embankment of Deer Flat Dams. Security and safety reviews pointed out significant risk at these facilities but we are determined and have a responsibility to quickly curtail that risk.

The first step, announced in July of this year, is to install new security gates. Under normal circumstances, the gates will remain open for traffic to pass but can quickly close in the event of an impending threat. The gates will remain in place and citizens will still be able to use the roadways over the next few years until secure, alternative routes for vehicles have been established.

Reclamation is committed to implement corrective actions for security and safety with minimal impact to local communities. We will work with affected local communities and governments, the U.S. Forest Service, and other affected agencies to develop long-term measures to permanently address the identified security risks. Most importantly, we are sensitive to the concerns of the public and the need for public input as we establish these security enhancements.

The National Research Council (NRC) of the National Academies of Science supported an aggressive approach to strengthening security at our facilities earlier this month, in a report of its independent and scientific review of our security, law enforcement, and emergency management programs. You can view this security assessment on the Internet by searching “Reclamation” at www.nap.edu.

August 29, 2008

Mr. Achterberg is responsible for a variety of risk management programs throughout Reclamation which include Dam Safety, Building Seismic Safety, Safety, Security, Law Enforcement, Continuity of Operations, Emergency Operations, and Emergency Disaster Recovery.