



ASSOCIATION OF STATE DAM SAFETY OFFICIALS

Working to improve dam safety in the USA

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April 27, 2016

The Honorable Jim Inhofe
Chairman
Committee on Environment and Public Works
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
Committee on Environment and Public Works
Ranking Member
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Inhofe and Ranking Member Boxer:

The Association of State Dam Safety Officials (ASDSO) strongly supports the establishment of a national program for the rehabilitation and repair of non-federal, high hazard potential dams. The current draft WRDA legislation includes language to create this program. Funding that will be authorized in this program will go to important safety upgrades at state, locally owned or private dams. Although included within WRDA, this is not funding for US Army Corps of Engineers dams. The language authorizes FEMA to administer this program as an important addition and logical enhancement to the National Dam Safety Program.

There are over 87,000 dams in the National Inventory of Dams (NID) and over 14,000 of those dams are high hazard potential, dams whose failure would cause loss of human life. The large majority of these dams are non-federally owned or operated. ASDSO estimates that \$53 billion is needed to rehabilitate all dams across the nation, and \$18.2 billion is needed over the next 10 years to address the most critical dams, high hazard potential dams, both public and private. The draft WRDA legislation authorizes \$445 million over 10 years in grants (65% federal share 35% local share) that will address the rehabilitation of the most critical of these dams.

The number of high-hazard potential dams in the nation is increasing dramatically. Since 1998, the number of high-hazard-potential dams has increased from over 9,000 to over 14,000. As downstream land development has increased, so has the number of high-hazard potential dams. Even more alarming, states presently report more than 1,600 high hazard potential dams which have deficiencies that leave them more susceptible to failure. (Many state agencies have not yet reported statistics on dams in need of repair to the NID; therefore the actual number is potentially much higher.)

The combined effect of rapid downstream development, aging/non-compliant structures and inadequate past design practices, coupled with a predicted increase in extreme events, demands fully funded and staffed state dam safety programs, as well as substantial and proactive funding for dam repairs.

ASDSO monitors and assists state dam safety programs nationwide. In recent years we have observed the consequences of failed dams where life and economic losses created a terrible aftermath. The American Society of Civil Engineers gave dams a grade of "D" in their 2013 Infrastructure Report Card. Dams and reservoirs provide benefits that are critical for public safety and well-being. The nation's many dams are a significant economic asset, providing an abundant water supply, recreation and development opportunities for all citizens; but benefits and risks go together. Failure to adequately inspect dams, correct deficiencies, and provide for emergency preparedness can lead to disastrous consequences and loss of the intended, vital purposes for dams.

Please contact me if you have questions or if I can be of assistance.

Lori C. Spragens
Executive Director