

Historic Lake Bennett Dam in Arkansas Repaired with Help from the NRCS Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP)

The dam that creates the historic 40 surface acre Lake Bennett in Faulkner County, Arkansas sustained severe damage during a storm event in April 2017. Water from a ten-inch rain overtopped the dam eroding away the rocks on the back slope.

The dam was constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corp and Work Projects Administration in 1935. The watershed was one of the first soil conservation projects in the nation for the studies of controlling erosion and run off. The dam was named for Hugh Hammond Bennett, who is considered the Father of Soil Conservation and was the first Chief of the Soil Conservation Service (now the Natural Resources Conservation Service - NRCS).



The dam was constructed using manual labor without large equipment and without the engineering experience of dam construction available today. But the 80-year old dam has functioned well and didn't have major issues until the extreme rainfall event caused the over topping of the dam.

Fearing that the damage could lead to the failure of the dam the County requested assistance from the NRCS in repairing the dam. Funds for technical assistance and construction costs were provided through the agency's Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP). The project consisted of stabilizing the back slope of the dam by installing rock riprap and installing a drain fill along the masonry wall of the dam.



The dam is located in the Woolly Hollow State Park and serves as a popular recreation lake for swimming, boating, camping and picnicking.

The EWP Program is a recovery effort program aimed at relieving imminent hazards to life and property caused by floods, fires, windstorms, and other natural occurrences.

Public and private landowners are eligible for assistance, but they must be represented by a project sponsor that is a legal subdivision of the state, such as a city, county, township or conservation district, and American Indian tribes or tribal governments.



NRCS may pay up to 75 percent of the construction cost of emergency measures. The remaining 25 percent must come from local sources and can be in the form of cash or in-kind services.

A video about the EWP project is available under the Video Tab on this web page.