

# Watershed Dams Provide Municipal Water Supply and Recreational Areas for Oklahoma and Texas Towns



If a person drove through Lincoln County, Oklahoma and stopped for a cup of coffee in the Town of Sparks (population 169) and then drove 12 miles to Chandler (population 3,100) and had lunch and then drove 15 miles to Meeker (population 1,145) and stopped for a glass of ice tea they would find these towns have one thing in common. The water for the coffee, water used in preparation of the meal and water for the ice tea all came from small flood control dams constructed by those local communities with the assistance of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program.

“I doubt if many of the Lincoln County citizens realize how important the lakes formed by the flood control dams are to these communities,” said Dan Sebert, Executive Director for the National Watershed Coalition. “While the dams were constructed primarily for flood control the water supply aspect is critical to those communities.”

Many communities across the nation that depend on surface water for city and rural water districts can't afford the cost of construction of a dam large enough for a water supply. Utilizing the flexibility of the NRCS Watershed Program local units of governments like towns and cities can partner with NRCS and fund the cost of additional water storage above that needed for flood control. NRCS provides the technical assistance and funds for construction for the flood control portion of the dams.

Water-based recreational areas can also be added to a watershed project which is the case of Kickapoo Nations Creek Watershed Dam No. 1M, known as Bell Cow Lake, located three miles northwest of Chandler. This is the dam that provides a water supply for the City of Chandler. The recreational areas around the perimeter of the 1,070 surface acre lake include camp sites, RV hookups, restrooms, pavilions, picnic tables and 14.5 miles of equestrian trails.



Bell Cow Lake

“Besides providing a large percentage of the region’s water supply, Bell Cow Lake increases the quality of life by providing multiple avenues for recreation and leisure. The lake also attracts thousands of visitors each year which helps boost the local economy.” said James Melson, Chandler City Manager.

Wildhorse Creek Watershed Dam No. 22, known as Lake Humphreys was the first multi-purpose dam build in the nation under the NRCS Watershed Program. The dam was constructed in 1957 by the City of Duncan, Oklahoma, and the Stephens County Conservation District with the assistance of NRCS. The dam was built for flood control, municipal water supply and recreation. Since that time 40 other dams had been constructed in Oklahoma as multi-purpose dams.

There are also multipurpose watershed dams in other states that either include municipal water supplies or recreation or both providing essential resources to local communities. One other good example is the 17 multipurpose watershed dams in Texas:

- Fork 19MP (Muenster Lake), municipal water supply, Cooke County (near the city of Muenster, constructed in 2006.
- Attoyac Bayou 23A (Lake Naconiche), recreation, Nacogdoches County (near the city of Nacogdoches), constructed in 2006
- Cedar Creek 87A (Terrell City Lake), municipal water supply, Kaufman County (near the city of Terrell), constructed in 1969.
- Brady Creek Dam (Brady Lake), municipal water supply, McCulloch County (near city of Brady), constructed in 1963.



“Reliable affordable water supply is central to sustaining many communities across Texas”, according to Rex Isom, Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board Executive Director. “The USDA Watershed Program has offered Texas Soil and Water Conservation Districts and their community partners the opportunity to create important water resource infrastructure. The flood prevention dams listed above are just few that not only provide flood protection, but also provide much needed water supplies and recreational areas which are a boost to the local economy and are important to the quality of life for citizens in the surrounding areas.”

“NRCS’s Watershed Rehabilitation Program offers a second opportunity for communities to add a water supply to an already constructed NRCS assisted flood control dam,” said Sebert. When dams are approved for rehabilitation by NRCS there is often an opportunity to increase the water storage for municipal water supplies and recreational areas.

Additional information about the NRCS Watershed Program is available on the NRCS web page: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov>

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