

# Media and Information Packet for Project Sponsors

Working with the News  
Media to tell the Watershed  
Story

June 2018

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# Suggestions on Ways to Provide Information and Education about Watershed Projects.

There are many good stories that need to be told about individual watershed dams and watershed projects. A few ways to get these stories told are:

1. Develop one-page fact sheets about dams or projects. A fact sheet template is available on the National Watershed Coalition website: [www.watershedcoalition.org](http://www.watershedcoalition.org). Use these fact sheets on tours, special events such as county fair displays, and send them to state legislators, county commissioners, governor, news media and others.
2. Invite your local newspaper to develop a series of articles on a watershed project and the benefits that it provides to the local community. Assist by locating people who worked to organize and plan the project, landowners or city leaders that benefit from the project, and project sponsor leaders.
3. During extreme weather events such as drought or flooding, contact the media and encourage them to develop articles or video stories on the benefits of watershed projects and their benefits during such events.
4. Utilize special events such as the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of a dam or project to plan a tour or dedication. Invite the governor, state legislators, media and others.
5. Utilize the new construction or rehabilitation of a dam to hold a ground breaking event and invite the governor, state legislators, media or others.
6. Post watershed fact sheets, feature stories, etc. on websites, including the state NRCS website and on Facebook.
7. Invite NRCS state public affairs specialist to assist with video interviews and feature articles. They can assist in identifying state-wide media that might utilize the information.
8. Shoot video and post on YouTube.

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## **Check List of Information to Include in News Releases, Feature Articles and Video Interviews about the Watershed Program**

1. Name of Watershed Project Dam and common name if there is one (Stillwater Creek Flood Control Dam No. 1 (known locally as Boomer Lake).
2. Name of project sponsors (Example: The dam was constructed by the Payne County Conservation District, Stillwater Creek Conservancy District and the City of Stillwater with assistance from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). NRCS provided technical and financial assistance through the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program.
3. Watershed projects are organized by local project sponsors (local units of government like conservation districts or cities). The NRCS provides technical and financial assistance in constructing the dams then the dams are turned over to the local sponsors for operation and maintenance.
4. Benefits of Dam (Example: The dam was constructed primary for flood control, but it also provides a water supply for the City of Stillwater with a population of 48,000). Recreational areas around the lake also provide fishing, boating, picnicking and hiking trails for 30,000 people annually. The lake also provides fish and wildlife habitat.
5. Year that the dam was constructed and how many other dams are in the watershed project. (Example: The dam was constructed in 1979 and is one of 15 flood control dams that have been constructed in the Stillwater Creek Watershed Project. Five more dams are planned and are waiting funding.
6. Other benefits provided annually by the dams in the watershed project (annually monetary benefits from reduced flooding, number of bridges protected, number of farms and ranches protected, acres of wetlands created or enhanced, tons of soils saved from erosion, etc. Information is available from the NRCS POINTS data base).
7. Quotes from local residents about how the dam (or watershed project) has benefited them and the area.
8. Might want to note that this is one of (number) watershed projects in the state that include (number of dams). And that there is watershed projects in 47 states that include 11,800 dams. These 11,800 dams make up a \$15 billion infrastructure that provides \$2 billion in annually benefits.

9. Things to avoid and consider:
- a. Dams in watershed projects are referred to by a variety of names by sponsors and NRCS including: flood retarding structures, flood control dams, structures, sites, and watershed dams. Using more than one name in an article to describe the dams may confuse readers or viewers and they may not relate to some terms like “site or structure”. Stick with a more understandable name such as a flood control dam.
  - b. Many people don’t understand how a watershed project works to control flooding and may relate flood control dams to larger Corp of Engineer dams. A simple explanation of how the project works may be needed (A series of small flood control dams are constructed on tributaries to a large stream or river to trap and hold water from heavy rains, slowly releasing it through a principal spillway pipe in the dam over a period of days or weeks to reduce flooding downstream). A fact sheet is available on the National Watershed Coalition website ([www.watershedcoalition.org](http://www.watershedcoalition.org)) that shows a profile of a dam, photos, and explanation of how a watershed project works to reduce flooding.
  - c. When working with reporters, it is often helpful to have a simple media backgrounder paper or fact sheet prepared to provide the basic information about a dam or project. This will help them get the names spelled correctly, the sponsors and NRCS identified and their role in the project defined, and getting the other basic facts correct.

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**“Sample”**  
**Media Backgrounder**  
**(For use at events, tours, etc. in providing basic information about a dam or a watershed project to media representatives)**

**Kickapoo Nations Creek Watershed Dam No. 1M**

1. Kickapoo Nations Creek Watershed Dam No. 1, known locally as “Bell Cow” lake is located three miles northwest of Chandler, Oklahoma.
2. The dam was constructed in 1990 by the City of Chandler and the Lincoln County Conservation District with technical and financial assistance from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). NRCS assistance was provided through the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program.
3. The dam was constructed to provide flood control, water supply for the City of Chandler (population: 3,000) and recreational areas.
4. Recreational areas around the perimeter of the 1,070 surface acre lake include camping sites, RV hookups, restrooms, pavilions, picnic tables and 14.5 miles of equestrian trails.
5. The dam is one of five flood control dams that have been constructed in the Kickapoo Nations Watershed Project. These dams provide an average \$2 million in annual benefits. These benefits include reduced flood damages to rural and urban areas, reduced sedimentation in the lakes, water supply, protection of roads and bridges.
6. If the remaining 15 planned dams in the watershed project were constructed they would provide an additional \$700,000 in annual benefits.
7. The dam is one of 2,107 flood control dams that have been constructed in Oklahoma by local watershed project sponsors utilizing assistance from the NRCS Watershed Program. These 2,107 dams have created a \$2 billion infrastructure that provides \$85 million in annual benefits.
8. Watershed projects are organized by local units of government (conservation districts, cities, etc.) The projects are a great example of how local, state and federal governments work together in a program that provides benefits to people and protects the state’s natural resources.
9. Contacts for more information:  
Lincoln County Conservation District office: 405-----  
Natural Resources Conservation Service, Chandler Field Office: 405 -----
10. For additional information about the Watershed Program and the \_\_\_\_\_ Creek Watershed, go to [www.\\_\\_\\_\\_\\_](http://www._____)

## **“Sample News Release”**

**(Name of Organization and contact information)**

### **News Release**

(date)

Headline – (newspapers like to write their own headlines, but put a working one here. Keep it short. Example: Dams Reduce Damages by \$2 Million During Recent Storms

First Paragraph: Put the most important information in this paragraph. Answer the questions: what, who, when, where and how. This paragraph should tell a complete story with following paragraphs adding details.

Example: The 25 flood control dams in Pontotoc County (where) reduced flood damages by an estimated \$2 million during heavy rainstorms (what) the first week of May (when), according to Henry Stephens, Sooner Conservation District Chairman (who). The dams held back millions of gallons of water in the Sandy Creek Watershed and slowly released it through pipes in the dam over several weeks reducing flooding downstream (how).

Second Paragraph: The flood control dams were constructed by the Sooner Conservation District with the assistance of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The dams were built on private lands through easements obtained by the conservation district. The NRCS provided designs, inspections and funds for construction of the dams. Federal funds come through Congressional Appropriations. The Sooner Conservation District operates and maintains the dams.

Third Paragraph: The dams were built primarily for flood control and provide an estimated \$15 million in annual benefits from reduced flooding. The lakes created by the dams provide fish and wildlife habitat, recreational benefits for landowners, livestock and irrigation water and they trap sediment. “The dams are a valuable resource for the county and the conservation district works to maintain and keep them safe and functioning as designed,” said Stephens.

Additional paragraphs can be added as needed to provide additional details, but resist adding too much and making the release too long. Sometimes less is better.





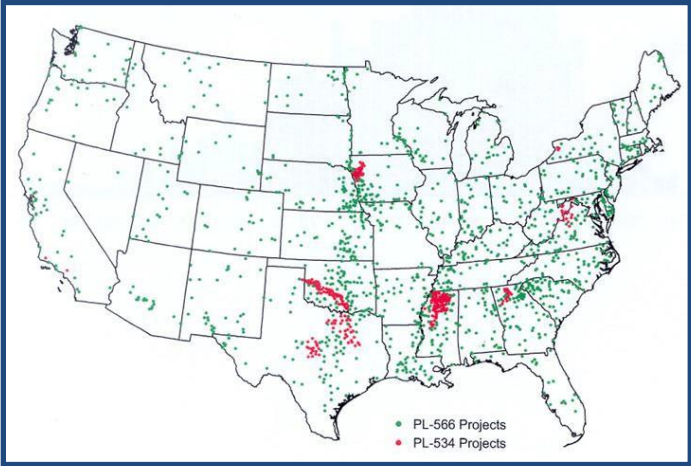
### Watershed Projects in Every State

There are over 1,300 Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) assisted watershed projects in the United States. Most projects provide flood control, while others provide conservation practices that address a myriad of natural resource needs such as water quality improvement, soil erosion control, animal waste management, irrigation, water supply development, and recreation enhancement.

Whatever the primary purpose, watershed projects provide multiple community benefits. Many projects have provided benefits for decades, but people are often unaware that the projects even exist.

### Local, State, Federal Conservation Partnership

Watershed projects are planned and implemented by local people who serve as project sponsors with assistance from NRCS. The projects are authorized and funded through the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act of 1954 (Public Law 83-566) and the Flood Control Act of 1944 (Public Law 78-534). The program is a partnership between local units of government, state government, the federal government, and landowners.



There are over 1,300 completed or active projects in 47 states.

The Watershed Program has been utilized by communities for over 60 years and the success stories can be found on the landscapes across 47 states and Puerto Rico. The authorizing legislation has been amended several times to address a broader range of natural resource and environmental issues and today the program offers communities the tools and assistance to address almost any kind of environmental and natural resource issue.



Over 11,800 watershed dams have been constructed by local project sponsors with assistance from NRCS since 1948.

Annual Watershed Program Benefits of the 11,800 Watershed Dams	
Agricultural flood damage reduction	\$347,155,692
Non-agricultural flood damage reduction	\$455,339,673
Agricultural benefits (non-flood)	\$434,794,185
Non-agricultural benefits (non-flood)	\$943,113,440
<b>Total monetary benefits</b>	<b>\$2,180,402,990</b>
Number of bridges benefited	61,702
Number of farms and ranches benefited	181,551
Number of businesses benefited	46,586
Number of public facilities benefited	3,663
Acres of wetlands created or enhanced	279,375
Miles of streams with improved water quality	47,513
Number of domestic water supplies benefited	27,874
Reduced soil erosion (tons/year)	89,677,702
Water conserved (acre feet/year)	1,846,147
Tons of animal waste properly managed	4,801,640
Reduced sedimentation (tons/year)	59,803,699



## Managing Agricultural Water in Hawaii



The Lower Hamakua Ditch Watershed Project on the island of Hawaii is help rebuild and repair a water distribution system that had been built by sugar companies from 1900 to 1910. The 15 miles of open ditch and 10 miles of tunnel provide irrigation water distribution to 8,000 acres of agricultural lands. This flume replaced an existing one that had deteriorated.

## Managing Animal Waste



The Middle Suwannee River Watershed Project in Florida has helped dairy and poultry farmers apply conservation practices that reduced the amount of animal nutrients that flowed into the river. Financial incentives were offered to landowners in the watershed project to help them build animal waste storage facilities and properly apply the waste to the land, thus improving water quality.

## Controlling Soil Erosion and Sedimentation



Conservation practices are a vital part of watershed projects. Practices such as terraces, waterways, grass buffers and grass plantings in this Tama County, Iowa watershed are preventing soil erosion, reducing sediment in streams and rivers, improving water quality and providing wildlife habitat.

## Flood Control. Water Supply, Recreational Areas



Communities are using watershed projects to help create and manage agricultural, municipal and industrial water supplies. The lake formed by this dam in the Deer Creek Watershed in Pottawatomie County, Oklahoma, provides municipal water for thousands of people, in addition to providing flood control and recreational areas.

## Watershed Rehabilitation Amendments of 2000



Some high hazard dams are being rehabilitated to bring them up to current dam safety criteria. This will ensure that the dams remain safe and continue to provide benefits for another 50 to 100 years.

Many dams today are in a far different setting than when they were constructed. Population has grown; residential and commercial development has occurred upstream and downstream from the dams; land uses have changed; sediment pools have filled; and concrete and metal components have deteriorated.

Some dams do not meet current state dam safety regulations that have been enacted and revised with more stringent requirements than when the dams were built. Congress passed the Watershed Rehabilitation Amendments of 2000 that amended the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act (Public Law 83-566) and authorized the Natural Resources Conservation Service to provide technical and financial assistance to watershed project sponsors in rehabilitating their aging dams.

The NRCS provides technical assistance and 65 percent cost share on approved rehabilitation projects. This funding comes from Congressional appropriations as authorized through the Farm Bills.

As of February 2016, there are 283 approved rehabilitation projects in 30 states. One hundred and thirty-two of these projects in 21 states have been completed; 62 projects in 16 states are being implemented (either in design or construction phase); and 89 projects in 23 states are in the planning stage.





# *How a Watershed Dam Works*

## Flood Control and More

The Watershed Program (Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act, Public Law 83- 566) and Flood Control Act of 1944, Public Law 78- 534) helps communities and rural areas reduce flooding and sedimentation, provides waters supplies and recreational areas and creates thousands of acres of wildlife habitat. There are watershed projects in all 50 states and the Caribbean. Since 1948, 2,000 watershed projects, covering 160 million acres, have been organized by local project sponsors with assistance from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Eleven thousand watershed dams have been built in 47 states. Watershed projects make up a \$15 billion national infrastructure that provides \$2 billion in annual benefits to over 47 million people.



Watershed lakes average from about 5 to 25 acres in surface area. A few are larger, up to several hundred acres and some are designed as dry structures with no permanent water.

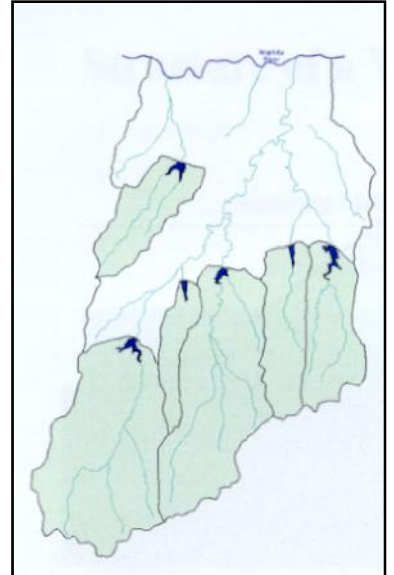
## How Watershed Dams Reduce Flooding

The concept of watershed projects is simple. A series of watershed dams are built across small tributaries to larger streams. The dams temporarily store flood water after rain storms and slowly release it over a period of several days through a pipe in the dam. This reduces the amount of water that reaches the main water course after a rain, reducing flooding.

Land treatment programs in the watershed help control erosion, which reduces the sediment that flows into the streams and lakes.

Watershed projects

usually consist of earthen dams constructed on tributaries to a river. The number of dams in a watershed varies depending on the size of the watershed. Some projects do not have dams, but use other conservation methods to meet the needs in a watershed such as erosion control, animal waste management, and water quality practices.



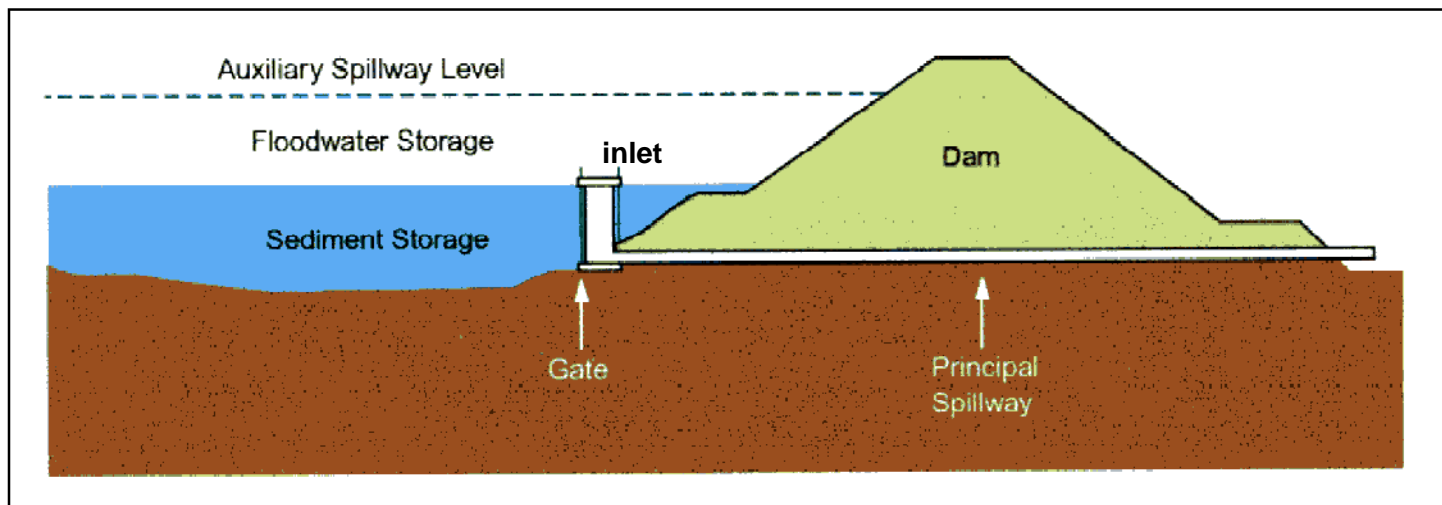
A concrete inlet tower (might be metal on older dams) connected to a pipe extending through the dam serves as a principal spillway for dams, controlling the water level. A slide gate at the bottom of the inlet can be opened to lower the water level for maintenance and repair.



Water is released through a pipe in the dam for several days after a heavy rainstorm.



# Cross Section of a Watershed Dam



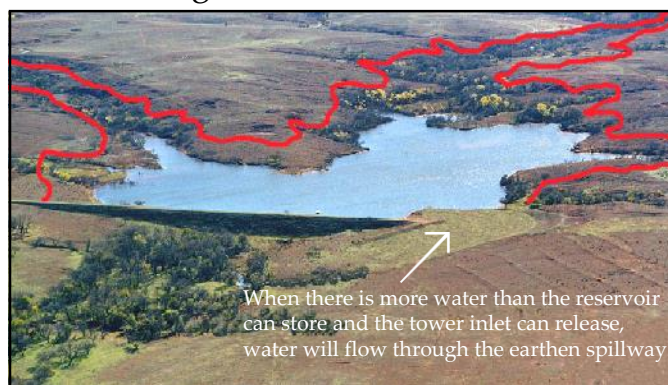
This cross section of a dam shows the concrete inlet in front of the dam connected to the principal spillway pipe (extending through the dam). When water reaches the opening at the top of the inlet it spills over and goes through the pipe controlling the level of water in the lake. Some inlets also have openings in the side of the tower.

A slide gate, located at the bottom of the inlet tower, can be open to lower the water level for maintenance and repairs.

The diagram also shows the auxiliary spillway level. Water will flow through the earthen spillway at the end of the dam to safely convey large flows to avoid water going over the top of the dam, which could cause dam failure.

The sediment storage area on the cross section is what makes up the permanent pool of water. Over the life time of the dam this area will usually fill with sediment (usually 50 to 100 years).

## Flood Storage



The red line on this photo indicates the extent that water can back up in the flood pool upstream before it starts flowing through the earthen spillway. This is where flood water is stored while it is slowly released through the principal spillway pipe.

It is important to keep the inlet tower clear of debris and to keep the earthen spillway clear of any structures such as fences and buildings. Disrupting the flow of the spillway could result in dam failure.

## National Watershed Coalition

The National Watershed Coalition is a nonprofit organization composed of national, regional, state and local associations, organizations and individuals who advocate using watersheds as the planning and implementation unit when dealing with natural resource problems. Visit our website at: [www.watershedcoalition.org](http://www.watershedcoalition.org)

# (Insert Watershed Name) Creek

## Watershed Dam No. \_\_\_\_

### (Common Name of Lake)

State Map showing  
location of watershed

Protecting Our People - Protecting Our Natural Resources

*This is one of \_\_\_\_\*  
examples of how  
local, state and  
federal government  
agencies have  
worked together to  
utilize the Natural  
Resources  
Conservation  
Service (NRCS)  
Watershed Program  
to address natural  
resource needs and  
improve the quality  
of life for thousands  
of \_\_\_\_*

*The \_\_\_\_ is the  
primary sponsor for  
the \_\_\_\_  
Creek Watershed  
Dam No. \_\_\_\_.*

*Ten additional dams  
are included in the  
project, but have not  
been constructed.*

The lake formed by Watershed Dam No. \_\_\_\_, known locally as \_\_\_\_ Lake, is located \_\_\_\_ miles (direction) from \_\_\_\_\_. The dam and the lake it creates provide multiple benefits for the citizens of \_\_\_\_ County and surrounding area.

The dam was constructed in (year) by (name of sponsors) with the assistance of the (state conservation agency name) and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program.

The dam was constructed to provide (list purposes like flood control, water supply, etc.) The recreational areas around the perimeter of the \_\_\_\_ surface acre lake include \_\_\_\_ camp sites, \_\_\_\_ RV hookups, restrooms, \_\_\_\_ pavilions, picnic tables and \_\_\_\_ miles of equestrian trails.

The dam is one of \_\_\_\_ flood control dams that have been constructed in the \_\_\_\_ Creek Watershed. Before the watershed project was implemented, flooding and severe soil erosion occurred in the watershed.

These \_\_\_\_ dams provide \$ \_\_\_\_ million in average annual benefits. Benefits include reduced urban and rural flood damages, reduced sedimentation in streams and rivers, recreational benefits, water supplies and protection of roads and bridges.

If the remaining \_\_\_\_ planned dams in the watershed project were constructed, they would provide an additional \$ \_\_\_\_ in annual benefits.

Thousands of conservation practices have been installed in the watershed as part of the project to reduce soil erosion and sedimentation of the lakes.

Photo of dam

*(Include quote from someone about the benefits of the dam or watershed project.*

The \_\_\_\_ Creek Watershed Project is one of \_\_\_\_ watershed projects in (state) that have been planned and implemented by local people with assistance from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and the (state conservation agency).

\* \_\_\_\_ flood control dams have been constructed in \_\_\_\_ counties in the state and they provide over \$ \_\_\_\_ million in average annual benefits.

For additional information about watershed projects in the state visit the (state or district) website at: \_\_\_\_\_ or visit your local conservation district and NRCS office.

(Name, address and phone number of sponsor such as conservation district)

(date)

# Caney Coon Watershed Dam No. 2 Rehabilitation Project Coal County, Oklahoma

**Fact Sheet**  
January 2014

## ***History of the Dam:***

Caney Coon Creek Watershed Dam No. 2M, known locally as Coalgate Reservoir, is located two miles north of Coalgate, Oklahoma. The dam was constructed in 1965 by the City of Coalgate and the Coal County Conservation District with the assistance of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program.

The dam provides flood control and municipal water for the City of Coalgate as well as recreational areas.

When the Caney Coon Creek Watershed Project was developed in 1958 the population of Coalgate was 2,300 and growing. Thirteen water wells had been drilled between 1910 and 1953, but only five wells were still producing and they were only providing 160,000 gallons per day. Because wells were not going to be an option in the future Caney Coon Watershed Dam No. 2M was planned as a multipurpose structure. The City paid for adding an additional 3,000 acre feet of water storage beyond what was needed for flood control to serve as a water supply.

The dam is one of three dams in the Caney Coon Watershed project, all in Coal County. These dams provide over \$357,000 in average annual benefits providing flood protection for 53 farms and ranches as well as Highways 3 and 21 along with numerous county roads and bridges.



A roller compacted concrete spillway was installed over the top of the dam during rehabilitation of Dam No. 2M to serve as an auxiliary spillway.

## ***Why Rehabilitate the Dam?***

The dam was originally designed as a low hazard dam with a 50-year design life. It was reclassified as a high hazard dam due to development downstream. The dam's age and its current high hazard safety criteria triggered its rehabilitation in 2012-2013.

## ***Rehabilitation Plan Details:***

Rehabilitation included removing and disposing of the existing concrete principal spillway, constructing a new concrete principal spillway to meet current NRCS requirements and constructing a 300-foot-wide roller compacted concrete (RCC) auxiliary spillway over the top of the dam.

## ***Project Cost:***

The NRCS provided technical and financial assistance with the rehabilitation project funding 65 percent of the construction cost. Local project sponsors provided 35 percent of the funds through State appropriations to the Oklahoma Conservation Commission Watershed Rehabilitation Program.

Rehabilitation of the dam cost \$4.7 million. The higher cost of the dam rehabilitation project was due to the necessity of installing the RCC overtopping spillway. The RCC spillway was the only feasible option available to provide the needed auxiliary spillway capacity.

## ***Benefits:***

Rehabilitation of the dam extends the life of the dam for another 100 years. The lake will continue to provide a quality water supply for over 80 percent of Coal County's population and it will continue to provide flood protection for the City of Coalgate, agricultural land and roads and bridges.

## ***Partners:***

- City of Coalgate
- Coal County Conservation District
- Oklahoma Conservation Commission
- Natural Resources Conservation Service

## ***For More Information Contact:***

Bill Porter, NRCS Assistant State Conservation  
Stillwater, Oklahoma  
405-742-1206 email: [bill.porter.ok.usda.gov](mailto:bill.porter.ok.usda.gov)



This fact sheet was developed for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service by the National Watershed Coalition. USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.





# Kickapoo Nations Creek Watershed Dam No. 1 Bell Cow Lake

Protecting Our People - Protecting Our Natural Resources



*This is one of 2,107\* examples of how local, state and federal government agencies have worked together to utilize the Natural Resources Conservation Service Watershed Program to address resource needs and improve the quality of life for thousands of Oklahomans.*

## Kickapoo Nations Creek Watershed Dam No. 1M Lincoln County, Oklahoma

Kickapoo Nations Creek Watershed Dam No. 1M, known as Bell Cow Lake, is located three miles northwest of Chandler, Oklahoma. The dam, one of 2,107 flood control dams in the state, provides multiple benefits for the citizens of Lincoln County and surrounding area.

The dam was constructed in 1990 by the City of Chandler and the Lincoln County Conservation District with the assistance of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program.

The dam was constructed to provide flood protection, a water supply for the City of Chandler and recreational areas. 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.

The dam is one of five flood control dams that have been constructed in the Kickapoo Nations Creek Watershed. These dams provide an average of \$2 million in average annual benefits. Benefits include reduced urban and rural flood damages, reduced sedimentation in streams and rivers, recreational benefits, water supplies and protection of roads and bridges. If the remaining 15 planned dams in the watershed project were constructed, they would provide an additional \$700,000 in annual benefits.

Before the watershed project was implemented, flooding and severe soil erosion occurred in the watershed. Thousands of conservation practices were also installed in the watershed to reduce soil erosion and sedimentation of the lakes.



*"Bell Cow Lake is one of Chandler's most valuable assets; contributing in many ways to the growth and development of the City of Chandler and neighboring communities. 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." James Melson, Chandler City Manager*

The Kickapoo Nations Creek Watershed Project is one of 129 watershed projects in Oklahoma that have been planned and implemented by local people with assistance from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Oklahoma Conservation Commission.

\*2,107 NRCS-assisted flood control dams have been constructed in 61 counties in the state and they provide over \$81 million in annual benefits.

For additional information about watershed projects in the state visit the Oklahoma Conservation Commission website at: <http://conservation.ok.gov> or visit your local conservation district and NRCS office.