

Oklahoma Watershed Dam Provides Multiple Benefits

A lake created by an Oklahoma flood control dam has become a popular recreational area for thousands of people in surrounding counties including students from Oklahoma State University. The dam and lake also provides flood control and municipal water supplies.

Stillwater Creek Watershed Dam No. 40M in Payne County Oklahoma was constructed in 1971 as a multi-purpose structure. The dam was constructed by the City of Stillwater and the Noble County Conservation District with the assistance of the USDA Natural Resources

Conservation Service (NRCS) Watershed Program. The dam was designed for flood control, municipal water supply and recreation.



“This is one of many examples of how the NRCS Watershed Program has helped local units of governments solve natural resource problems such as flooding and soil erosion and also provide additional benefits that improve the quality of life for citizens,” said Dan Sebert, Executive Director for the National Watershed Coalition.

The dam provides flood protection for the City of Stillwater (population 48,000), 452 farms and ranches, and 20 major roads and bridges. The lake known as Lake McMurtry provides municipal water for the City of Perry (population 5,000) and has recreational facilities that are utilized by thousands people annually. The lake has 1,200 surface acres of water and there are 3,000 acres of wooded land surrounding the lake that is available for recreational use.

Recreational facilities include fishing and boat docks, picnic and camping areas and 30 miles of hiking and mountain bike trails. Kayak and stand up paddle board are available for rent.



“People from the north central part of the state utilize the lake’s recreational facilities. Because the lake is just eight miles from Stillwater which is the home of Oklahoma State University the number of students utilizing the lake’s facilities continue to increase,” said Dan Lowrance, Executive Director of Lake McMurry Friends who manages the lake for the City of Stillwater. “We recently added facilities such as two disc golf courses which are popular with the OSU students.”



“While the primary purpose of the dam is flood control, the City of Stillwater saw the opportunity to add other much needed benefits when the dam was constructed and contributed additional funds to increase the dam’s water storage capacity for municipal water supply. Because the area didn’t have many water-based recreational areas the City and NRCS added recreational facilities when constructing the dam.” added Lowrance. “Additional facilities have been added by the City since the dam was constructed.”



While many of the 11,800 flood control dams constructed across the nation with assistance of the NRCS Watershed Program are in rural areas and their main purpose is flood control, there are also many dams that were designed as multi-purpose dams like Stillwater Creek Dam 40M to provide municipal and industrial water supply, recreation, sediment reduction and other benefits. “These 11,800 dams provide over \$2.2 billion in annual benefits”, said Sebert.

View a video about Lake McMurry that includes an interview with Dan Lowrance on the National Watershed Coalition Web Page: www.watershedcoalition.org under the video tab entitled: Watershed Projects Provide Multiple Benefits.

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