



## NRCS-Assisted Watershed Projects Cobb Creek Watershed Dam No. 1 Washita County, Oklahoma

There are 2,100 watershed projects in the nation established by local units of government with the assistance of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Watershed Program (Public Law 78-534 and Public Law 83-566). These projects consist of over 11,000 flood control dams and thousands of conservation practices that provide over \$2 billion in annual benefits in flood prevention, water supplies, recreational areas, and other benefits. The following is just one example of how the Watershed Program is benefiting local communities and the nation.

**Cobb Creek Watershed Dam No. 1 in Washita County, Oklahoma**, also known locally as Crowder Lake, is located ten miles south of Weatherford, Oklahoma. The 89-foot tall dam creates a 135 surface acre lake.

While many NRCS-assisted flood control dams are constructed primarily for flood control, this is a good example of how additional features can be added to a project that adds multiple benefits to local communities. This is an even more unique project because of the added educational uses the lake provides to area college students.



The dam was constructed for flood control in 1958 by the Deer Creek Conservation District with the assistance of the Oklahoma Conservation Commission and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Watershed Program.

In 1983 the Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department (OTRD) created a state park around the lake and it became known as Crowder Lake State Park. In 1997 Southwestern Oklahoma State University took over management of the park and in 2003 the OTRD transferred the lake to SWOSU and it became known as Crowder Lake University Park.

Park facilities around the lake include RV sites, picnic tables, camp sites, fishing docks and a one-mile interpretive trail. The lake is a favorite fishing location for many local residents and has been designated a Trophy Bass Lake by the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation.

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SWOSU utilizes the lake in conducting college courses such as a ropes course, wilderness first aid, sailing, canoeing, hiking and climbing.

What started out as a single purpose flood control dam has been turned into a great location for college students to learn skills outside the classroom; a recreational area for university and area citizens and a lake with enhanced fish and wildlife habitat areas.

The dam was originally designed as a low hazard dam and constructed to protect rural agricultural land from flooding. Because of later development downstream the dam was reclassified as high hazard in 2006. This meant the dam no longer met current dam safety standards.

The dam was rehabilitated in 2011 to bring it up to current dam safety criteria and extend its life for another 100 years. Rehabilitation included raising the height of the dam, replacing the principal spillway and widening the auxiliary spillway.

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