



NRCS-Assisted Watershed Projects Millsite Dam Rehabilitation Project Emery County, Utah

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.

Some of the dams are over 50 years old and need to be rehabilitated to bring them up to current dam safety standards and extend their protection and benefits. This is an example of a dam that has been rehabilitated to extend its multiple benefits to thousands of citizens in Utah.

Millsite Dam Rehabilitation Project

The recent completion of the rehabilitation of the Millsite Dam, located three miles above Ferron, Utah, in Emery County, is an amazing achievement with significant implications for Utah's agriculture, irrigation, recreation, and environmental conservation efforts, according to Norm Evenstad, Assistant State Conservationist for the Utah Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

The plan to rehabilitate the dam originally constructed in 1971 began in 2006 with a sediment survey of the reservoir. The installation of various measures, including downstream toe excavation and stability berm for seismic protection, zoned internal drains and pipes for seepage control, dam crest raise for increased storage capacity, reinforced concrete labyrinth weir spillway for overtopping protection, and modernized outlet works ensures the dam's long-term stability, safety, and functionality.



The auxiliary spillway at the Millsite Dam shown here on, June 20, 2023 shows a complete reconfiguration of the auxiliary spillway.

The dam is owned and operated by the Ferron Reservoir and Canal Company (FRCC). The project involved a partnership between multiple entities, including the FRCC, Emery County Commission, Utah Division of Water Resources, Utah State Dam Safety office, Millsite State Park, Millsite Golf Course, Bureau of Land Management, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and other stakeholders.

The upgraded dam infrastructure ensures a reliable, resilient, and sustainable water supply for farmers and irrigators, enabling them to continue growing crops on 11,000+ acres and supporting the local economy. The Hunter Power Plant receives part of its water needs through a pipeline from the reservoir. Annual benefits of the dam is estimated to be \$1,643,000.

By modernizing the dam's structural integrity and improving its flood control capabilities, the rehabilitation work safeguards agricultural lands against potential water-related hazards, securing the livelihoods of farmers in the region.

The successful completion of the rehabilitation work for Millsite Dam required the expertise of several talented engineers who designed and executed the rehabilitation work, according to Evenstad,

Information for this article came partly from an article written by *Norm Evenstad, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist, Salt Lake City, Utah* on the NRCS web page.

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