

NRCS Assisted Watershed Dams

Overview of O&M, Inspections, & EAPs

Kelly Ramsey, PE

USDA NRCS State Hydraulic Engineer

SWCD Dam Owner Workgroup

April 23, 2009

NRCS & SWCD Relationship on Watershed Dams

- Federally assisted dams that are locally owned (Sponsoring Local Organization)
- O&M Responsibilities
- O&M Agreement
- Project is locally owned
 - Cost share
 - Landrights (easements, etc)
 - Permits
 - O&M

O&M Responsibilities

- NRCS – responsible to protect federal interest, public safety
- Sponsor – Responsible to safely operate and maintain structure (in accordance with the O&M Agreement and Plan) to serve the planned purpose for the program life of the project
 - Sponsor may contract with others to perform O&M but this does not relieve them of legal obligation for O&M

O&M Agreement

- Legal document between NRCS and Sponsor
- O&M Agreement details who is responsible for the operation and maintenance of the dam
- Agreement details responsibilities of NRCS and SLO(s)
- In general
 - NRCS will provide technical assistance if resources are available, no commitment of financial assistance
 - SLO(s) will operate and maintain the structure
- Remember – *Federally assisted project, Locally Owned*

Operation

- The administration, management, and performance of non-maintenance activities necessary to keep a practice safe and functioning as planned.
- Performance of services to keep structures in such a condition that the safety, welfare, enjoyment and health of project users are not compromised.

Maintenance

- The recurring activities necessary to retain or restore a practice in a safe and functioning condition, including the management of vegetation, the repair or replacement of failed components, the prevention or treatment of deterioration, and the repair of damages caused by flooding or vandalism.
- Work and actions required to keep project measures in a condition to function for their intended purposes.

O&M Agreement Compliance

- Agency priority
- Increasing Emphasis on NRCS Responsibilities
- STC performance element
- Monitoring and Enforcing watershed dam O&M agreements with local Sponsors
 - FY09 Special Inspections
 - VA Amendment to national O&M policy

Inspections

- Why?
 - Observe structure conditions
 - Determine the maintenance required
- FY 09 Special Inspections
 - "Baseline" assessment
 - Monitor compliance with O&M agreement
 - "Green" Info Sheet

FY09 Special Inspections

- Description of deficiency
 - Roads in ASW downstream of control section
 - Seeps
- Corrective actions
- Dates for completion
- Failure to perform the required action within the specified time may be a violation of the O&M agreement.
 - "Next level" – will discuss later

FY09 Special Inspections

- Contact the DC request technical assistance.
- Contact SCE with questions regarding the content of the report or required action.
- Does not take the place of State mandated inspections.
 - State dam safety regulations may require you to take additional actions in order to satisfy state regulatory requirements.

Virginia NRCS Amendment to National O&M Policy – Inspections

- Coordination of NRCS policy with Virginia State Dam safety requirements.
- NRCS assistance will not compete with state dam safety inspection requirements
- Owner's Responsibility to comply

Virginia NRCS Amendment to National O&M Policy – Inspections

- DC role in onsite inspections of watershed structures.
 - DC encouraged to participate in annual inspections
 - DC required to participate in annual inspections at least once every 3 years
- DC to review O&M Agreement with Sponsor every 5 years
- Clarification of documentation requirements. (see “Blue” handout)

Emergency Action Plan

- Policy – National Operation & Maintenance Manual, National Engineering Manual
- Required by NRCS on High Hazard dams
- Identifies appropriate responses to minimize risk to life and property with the integrity of the dam may be in jeopardy
- Sample EAP
- <http://policy.nrcs.usda.gov/viewerFS.aspx?hid=21513>

EAP Responsibilities

- NRCS
 - review EAP for all new or rehabbed dams
 - Assistance for preparation and review if resources are available
- Sponsor
 - Prepare and implement EAP
 - Coordinate with emergency official and state dam safety during preparation and implementation
 - Review and revise EAP annually
 - Exercise EAP at least once every 5 years
 - Training of all persons involved in EAP
 - Report Emergency Situation
- Does not take the place of State Dam Safety requirements

Questions?

Thank you!