



United States Department of Agriculture

Pohick's Short Story:

In the 1960s, Fairfax County requested assistance from USDA NRCS (then the Soil Conservation Service) to construct several flood-control dams in the 23,000-acre Pohick Creek Watershed. Six dams were built between 1969 and 1985, including Huntsman Lake in 1973.

In 1985, the dams protected residents from flooding during Hurricane Juan. When floodwaters deluged the Nation's Capital in 2006, Pohick dams again held back millions of gallons of water.

Fairfax County has been nationally recognized for operating and maintaining these dams. With the aging of these structures, the county again called upon NRCS to help with rehabilitating them.

The County rehabilitated Lake Braddock using local funds. USDA NRCS provided federal funds to help rehabilitate Royal Lake in 2009, Woodglen Lake in 2010, Lake Barton in 2011, and Huntsman Lake in 2014. Mercer Lake, the sixth dam, did not need rehabilitation.



Huntsman Lake prior to rehabilitation

April 2015

Dam Rehabilitation Fact Sheet

Huntsman Lake Dam, Pohick Creek Watershed



Wildlife have returned to the Huntsman Lake Dam after the lake was drained in the summer of 2014. The lake has also been restocked for local fishing. (Photo courtesy of Fairfax County)

Huntsman Lake was the final dam rehabilitated in Pohick Creek Watershed to reduce flood risks downstream, comply with current dam design and safety standards, and maintain the present level of flood control and recreation benefits.

The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors and Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District entered into a project agreement with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to share costs to upgrade the dam spillway. NRCS provided \$1,964,706 and the sponsors covered the remaining \$1,057,919 of the \$3,022,625 project.

The rehabilitation project included:

- Realigning the auxiliary spillway to protect the sanitary sewer;
- Armoring the auxiliary spillway and training dikes with articulated concrete blocks;
- Extending the training dikes to the valley floor to protect the dam embankment; and
- Replacing the principal spillway riser.

Finalized in September 2011, the project plan required the lake to be drained for eight months. One short section of the top of the dam was raised about 0.6 feet and some trees were removed below the dam.

To prevent erosion, the auxiliary spillway and the inside of the training dikes were lined with articulated concrete blocks that are cabled together. These blocks were completely covered with soil and vegetated with grass. After construction, the areas not covered with grass were planted with trees.

Fairfax County's Department of Public Works and Environmental Services oversaw construction on the project, which commenced in January 2014 and concluded in September of the same year. The county made every effort to maintain pedestrian access to the lake throughout the project.

Benefits of this partnership project include:

- Reducing threat to loss of life and property for about 13,800 people who live/work downstream of the dam;
- Protecting 13 single family homes and town houses;
- Protecting three roads used by 10,600 vehicles per day and four utilities; and
- Providing \$110,000 in monetary benefits/year for 75 years after construction.



These articulated concrete blocks installed during construction are no longer visible to residents who walk the trails near the dam site.



The open spillway riser (above) was replaced to improve public safety and prevent clogging from floating debris.



The NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to watershed project sponsors in the planning and installation of flood control and other conservation measures in approved watershed projects.

Between 1954 and 2001, the NRCS helped local sponsors build 150 dams in 35 watersheds in 27 Virginia counties. As of 2015, NRCS has completed rehabilitation on nine dams and has six more in progress.

For more information on Virginia watershed projects, visit www.va.nrcs.usda.gov/.

www.nrcs.usda.gov

Natural Resources Conservation Service

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