Watershed Dams In McCurtain County

Oklahoma has 129 USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) assisted watershed projects in 64 counties. Over 2,100 watershed dams have been built in the state with financial and technical assistance from NRCS authorized through Public Law 78-534, Flood Control Act of 1944 (Washita River Watershed) and Public Law 83-566 Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program.

Watershed projects address a myriad of natural resource issues such as flooding, soil erosion, water quality, animal waste management, irrigation water management, water supply, wetland development or enhancement, fish and wildlife habitat and recreation. Many of these watershed projects also include conservation practices such as terraces, waterways, ponds, gully control, and pasture and rangeland plantings.

Operation and Maintenance of Watershed Projects

The annual operation and maintenance of dams and their components is a major responsibility for project sponsors (local units of governments, usually conservation districts, conservancy districts, or city or county governments).

Operation and maintenance of watershed dams can be expensive and labor intensive, but is necessary to ensure the dams function as designed and remain safe. Maintenance work includes clearing trees from dams and spillway, repairing soil erosion damage, repairing damage to the spillway and dams after heavy rainstorms, and keeping the inlet towers cleared of debris.

Operation and Maintenance Needs

$11.7 million is needed to meet operation and maintenance needs on all watershed dams in the state for fiscal years 2009-2012.

Rehabilitation of Aging Dams

Oklahoma has 321 watershed dams that will exceed their 50-year design life in 2009 and that number increases to 806 by 2013 and 1,435 by 2019. McCurtain County has five dams that will exceed their 50-year design life by 2010 and that number increases to 9 dams by 2013.

Some dams will need rehabilitation to remain safe and protect the people that live or work downstream. It is estimated that $30 million will be needed to rehabilitate the highest priority of these dams during the next five years. Oklahoma currently has several rehabilitation projects in various stages of planning, design, or construction.

NRCS assistance is available to rehabilitate aging watershed dams with 65 percent federal cost-share. Local project sponsors provide 35 percent of the rehabilitation costs.

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Annual Watershed Benefits

Watershed Name	Dams in Watershed	Dams in McCurtain Co.	*Monetary Benefits	Farms / Ranches Benefited	Bridges Benefited	Wetlands Enhanced/Created (acres)	Reduced Sedimentation (tons of soil)
Waterfall-Gilford Ck.	11	11	$100,289	215	47	167	21,768
Whitegrass-Waterhole	9	9	$1,244,985	148	9	191	24,581
Total	**20**	**20**	**$1,345,274**	**363**	**56**	**358**	**46,349**

*Monetary benefits include reduction in flood damages and may include other benefits such as soil erosion control, recreational areas, irrigation water, municipal and industrial water supply, and wildlife habitat. (Price Base 2007). December 2008