



March 3, 2025

To: Diane A. Guthrie, P.E., USDA-NRCS State Conservation Engineer, Athens, GA

From: Howard C. Sewell, P.E., USDA-NRCS Dam O&M Engineer, Athens, GA

Subject: Upper Mulberry River Watershed Structure #08

Participants: Howard Sewell, USDA-NRCS Dam O&M Engineer, Athens, GA  
Justin Robinson, USDA-NRCS Civil Engineer, Athens, GA  
Ralph Cavedo, Hall County Public Works, Gainesville, GA  
A representative of the landowner (Braselton Development Properties, LLC)

The above participants visited the site in Hall County on February 28, 2025, to discuss issues pertaining to this structure and the Middle Oconee – Walnut Creek structures that the County co-sponsors.

Observations:

- The dam has been identified by the Georgia Safe Dams Program (SDP) as a probable Category I structure.
- Their pre-notification of the change was sent out during the summer of 2024. The development that was started adjacent to the auxiliary spillway prior to July 2023, is still unfinished.
- A representative of the property owner was on site as well as a crew was working on erosion control measures.
- The water level in the pond was elevated, while the principal spillway pipe appeared to be flowing about 1/4 full or less.
- The water elevation in the plunge pool appeared to be near normal.
- Most of the embankment has been recently cleared, some larger pieces of woody debris remain on the slopes. There were a few small standing trees on the left downstream slope that had been cut around.
- There were trees on the upstream slope that have not been removed due to the elevation of the water.
- The embankment appeared to be in relatively good condition.

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations:

I explained to the group that with the impending reclassification of the dam to Category I, a permit would be required by the SDP to operate the dam. The dam be evaluated to determine if it meets the current State criteria. If it does, a permit would be relatively straight forward. If not, then an engineering analysis (dam assessment) would be needed to guide their options.

- We discussed the general maintenance that is required by the Sponsor and the flowage easement associated with the structure. This included the assistance of NRCS in the review of developments around watershed structures.

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- The development that altered the auxiliary spillway was not reviewed by NRCS.
- I let them know that if that development eventually starts back up, any plans will need to be routed through this office for review.
- The property owner's representative mentioned that they do plan to build a road across the dam to access a portion of their property. I told him that we would probably not recommend approval of any plan altering the top of the dam for a road. However, if the road were proposed outside the dam's footprint, we wouldn't have as much input.
- Based on the water surface elevation (WSEL) in the pond and the low flow from the pipe, it appears that there may be a blockage at the riser or in the pipe. Mr. Cavado and I discussed possible causes of the elevated water. He suggested slowly lowering the WSEL with a pump or siphon to get a visual observation on the orifice(s) in the riser. If it is debris that can be cleared, he will have it done. If not, further investigation will be required.
- The trees on the upstream slope should be removed while they are relatively small.
- The few remaining trees on the downstream slope should be removed before they get larger.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Howard C. Sewell, P.E.  
NRCS Dam O&M Engineer, GA  
Email: Howard.Sewell@USDA.gov  
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Attachment:

- 2023 Google Earth Aerial with 1966 as-built of the dam and spillway

cc: Terrance Rudolph, USDA-NRCS State Conservationist, Athens, GA  
Gary Hankins, USDA-NRCS Acting Assistant State Conservationist, Athens, GA  
Deena Roberts, USDA-NRCS Area Engineer, Athens, GA  
Eric Harris, USDA-NRCS Watershed Engineer, Athens, GA  
Justin Robinson, USDA-NRCS Civil Engineer, Athens, GA  
Cread Brown, USDA-NRCS District Conservationist, Gainesville, GA  
David Griffin, Georgia Safe Dams Program, Program Manager, Atlanta, GA

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