

The York Water Company
Lake Williams Dam Project Frequently Asked Questions
March 22, 2022

Q: What is the purpose of this project?

We will be permanently removing the existing bridge, roadway, bascule gates, and spillway to rebuild and enhance the dam structure to meet current regulations and dam design safety standards. This work will include demolition of most of the dam structures, followed by construction of a new dam structure and spillway. This is a significant investment in an important water storage facility to help meet the future needs of York Water customers. This investment will incorporate state-of-the-art engineering technology and will add environmental improvements that will be appreciable to the park and our community. This work is an investment that will help meet our needs for the next 100-plus years.

Q: When will you start drawing down and/or draining the Lake?

We began slowly lowering Lake Williams in the Fall of 2021. In 2022 and 2023, the Lake will need to be completely drained for the dam reconstruction work.

Q: Why will Lake Williams be lowered?

In 2022 and 2023, we are required to lower the reservoir (lake) down to almost empty so that York Water and our contractors can safely complete the Lake Williams Dam reconstruction. Reconstruction will include installation of a new spillway, gatehouse, and armoring of the dam to maximize safety and to ensure the facilities can control and moderate the effects of future storm events and weather pattern changes.

Q: Why was an access road constructed?

An access road for heavy construction equipment was constructed on the Jacobus side of the current bridge. This road is needed for safe access to the base of the dam for construction vehicles and workers. Construction of this access road began in early November 2021 and was completed in January 2022. The reconstruction of the dam will then begin in April 2022 and continue through most of 2023.

Q: Why didn't you complete all of this work when you previously drained Lake Williams in 2019?

The 2019 draining was necessitated to install a short-term sluice gate at the dam for public safety purposes. Time was of the essence for that project, and this major dam reconstruction project was not yet funded, nor authorized by the Department of Environmental Protection at that time. York Water has worked to minimize changes to Lake Williams and Lake Redman due to the importance of these resources in our community. However, they are both engineered structures that require periodic and sometimes significant maintenance. Our company will continue to look for ways to minimize the impact on our water supplies, aquatic and aesthetic resources, and our community.

Q: Is the dam in danger of breaking?

No, the dam does not present a danger. The structure is subject to annual inspection and reporting, which documents positive performance and sound maintenance each year. State regulatory requirements and engineering standards related to climate influences necessitate improvements to the original 1912 dam and 66-year-old bridge structure that you see today. These standards exceed federal standards and are highly conservative and protective of both persons and the environment. We are fortunate to have the resources and local professionals who can help with this significant engineering and environmental project that will serve the community and York Water for many generations.

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Q: Will Water Street and the bridge over Lake Williams be closed?

The Water Street bridge has been closed by PennDOT for over 3 years and will remain closed, despite detour signs being removed on March 21, 2022. The Lake Williams entrance and road to the boat launch and picnic area will remain open for public use and enjoyment throughout this access road phase of the project. However, caution is advised and will be posted to ensure people are aware of and look for significant heavy-duty truck traffic on Water Street and South Main Street.

Q: Will the trails around Lake Williams be interrupted?

Construction will interrupt recreation and the trails around the perimeter of Lake Williams. In partnership with York County Parks, we will construct a new 0.25-mile-long interconnecting trail between Trail 2 and 4. The trail is expected to be open after a construction permit from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection is received for the stream crossing. Please stay on the trail network and avoid designated construction zones during construction.

Q: Can I enter the lakebed while the reservoir is empty?

It is imperative that the public stay out of the lakebed and other hazardous areas while the lake is empty. Entering the lakebed is both a safety hazard and environmental threat; previous trespassers have required emergency rescue services and caused habitat disruptions. Anyone trespassing on these posted private property construction locations can be cited by the York County Department of Parks and Recreation Rangers.

Q: Will the water supply be negatively impacted during this process?

No. Our community will continue to receive the same high-quality water that York Water takes pride in providing during the entirety of this project.