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Los Alamos Reservoir - Dam Restoration - DPU

Updated: September 2011

Reader Recap: While construction work for the Los Alamos Canyon Dam project began in March 2011 project work has been suspended due to flooding damages. Once this project resumes in the Spring of 2012, DPU will bring the dam to compliance with more stringent safety standards which were activated when governance changed from federal to state agencies following the Cerro Grande Fire in 2000.

Did You Know? The Los Alamos County Council has expressed interest in restoring recreational access and amenities at the La Reservoir once DPU's dam rehabilitation work is completed. DPU's work is ratepayer funded from water rates (along with grants and Cerro Grande monies), and is closely linked to obtaining low cost water from this surface collector system, for our community's needs. Look to Los Alamos County's GRT-based funding for continued development of this asset for recreational purposes.

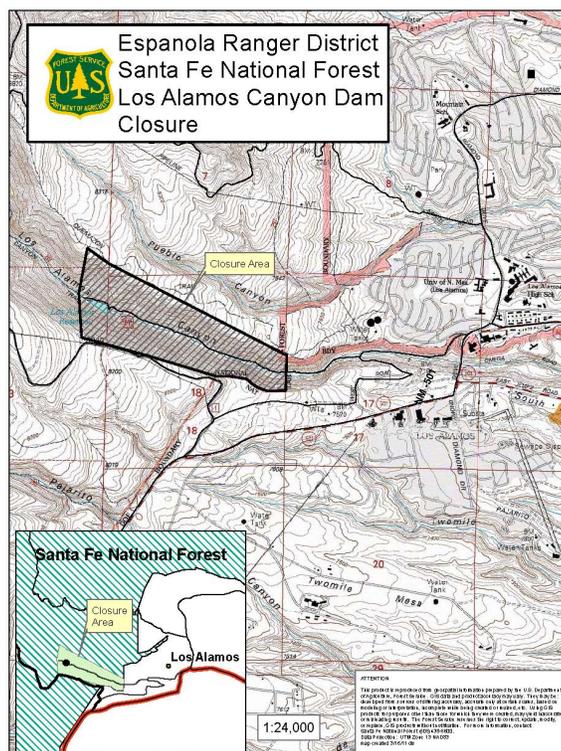
Project Update

As of September 01, 2011 this [project has been suspended until Spring 2012](#). The watershed area that feeds into Los Alamos Canyon was severely burned by the June 26, 2011 Las Conchas fire. As a result, recent rains have flooded the Los Alamos Canyon Dam construction site -- silting up the lake bed, plugging outlet works, washing out the access road, and damaging an emergency by-pass channel that was constructed after the fire for the purpose of diverting water from the dam area.

Reconstruction of the Los Alamos Canyon Dam had begun on March 2011. DPU's selected contractor, Kiewit was given the Notice to Proceed, effective Monday, March 21. Dam reconstruction was progressing through the summer until the Las Conchas fire of June 26, 2011. After the fire, DPU's contractor constructed an emergency by-pass around the dam, to divert any flood waters and prevent the under construction dam from breaching. Project was originally slated for completion on November 15, 2011. More information about the area can be viewed on the [US Forest Service map](#).

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Project Description

Enabling recreation at the Los Alamos Canyon Reservoir is among the County Council's goals for the community, but the dam must be reconstructed to meet revised state standards first. The Dept. of Public Utilities (DPU) is the lead department for the reconstruction effort while the county's Parks and Recreation Division will manage any future recreational projects associated with the area.

Project Background

In 2009 the State Engineer Office, Dam Safety Bureau approved the predesign report for the Los Alamos Canyon dam. This report consisted of storm event hydrology modeling, downstream flood analyses (with both dam breach and overtopping), spillway design capacity determination and stability analyses of the existing dam. The report underwent multiple iterations of review by the State, so securing this approval was a major milestone.

The formal Design Report and construction drawings were submitted to the New Mexico Office of the State Engineer (NMOSE) in the Winter of 2010. NMOSE review is complete and a permit is expected by the end of August 2010.

Because the dam is located on U.S. Forest Service property, environmental review of the project under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is required. An Environmental Assessment (EA) has been completed and a Decision Notice and a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) has been prepared for signature by the Santa Fe National Forest. Subsequent to advertisement of the EA and public comments on the proposed project availability of sites for the batching of the roller-compacted concrete changed. Negotiations with the Forest Service are underway to determine the adequacy of the current EA for the revised concrete batching scenario. Resolution of this issue is expected by the end of August when either the Decision Notice and FONSI will be issued or a revised EA will be advertised for public comment. After the Decision Notice and FONSI are issued a 90-day appeals period will be in effect. Assuming no appeals to the Decision Notice a Forest Service construction permit could then be issued.

The Water Trust Board award supplements funding received from the Federal Emergency Management Agency following the Cerro Grande Fire damage to the area in 2000. Los Alamos County Council has also designated funding for the dam restoration project.

Project Schedule and Budget

As of September, 2011 project work has been suspended until Spring 2012. The watershed area that feeds into Los Alamos Canyon was severely burned by the June 26, 2011 Las Conchas fire. As a result, recent rains have flooded the Los Alamos Canyon Dam construction site -- silting up the lake bed, plugging outlet works, washing out the access road, and damaging an emergency by-pass channel that was constructed after the fire for the purpose of diverting water from the dam area.

Total project budget is currently estimated to be \$3.5 million. Work began in March 2011 and is

currently on hold.

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