



GRETCHEN WHITMER  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
LANSING



M. SCOTT BOWEN  
DIRECTOR

December 5, 2025

The Honorable Michele Hoytenga  
State Senator  
P.O. Box 3006  
Lansing, Michigan 48909-7536

Dear Senator Hoytenga:

Thank you for reaching out regarding Headquarters Lake Dam (Dam ID #583) and the feasibility report that was completed recently. Our standard procedure typically dictates that a report like this should be sought through a FOIA request, however the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is sharing this with your office out of legislative courtesy.

The costs expressed within the accompanying report, which was completed in July of 2024, should be adjusted for inflation to any targeted date for a funding request or for construction estimating. An important note regarding cost estimates is that a feasibility study is the lowest level of engineering analysis that we perform on any given infrastructure item. A feasibility study may also be called "Conceptual Engineering" or a "Phase 100 Study". Cost estimates provided in a feasibility study can vary significantly compared to an engineer's estimate associated with a 100% complete set of plans or from actual bid results. The DNR often utilizes cost estimates associated with these efforts to understand the magnitude of scale of costs between different options, or to receive a baseline understanding of the costs of various options. The DNR's and consultant teams' understanding improves as design and construction is advanced.

The estimates in this report also do not include another factor we must consider for any project, which is ongoing maintenance costs for any repair or replacement option.

Since there is variability in cost accuracy with these efforts the DNR does not solely rely on one engineering report for estimating costs for any project being considered. For dams, the DNR also utilizes the Association of State Dam Safety Officials' (ASDSO) guidance document titled "The Cost of Rehabilitating Dams in the U.S., A Methodology and Estimate, March 2025". It is attached for reference to the email, for reference. Table 3 on page 9 is especially helpful.

As some background, Headquarters Lake Dam was built in 1955 and includes a 60" diameter x 60' long corrugated metal pipe conduit and a 11' x 7' concrete inlet structure which both serve as the dam's principal spillway. The dam has a structural height of 16'. At 70 years old, it appears to not have received any additional capital investment since it was constructed. Corrugated metal pipe conduits have an anticipated life span of 40-50 years, the 70-year-old metal conduit is well beyond its design life. The 350' long earthen embankment is shown on the 1955 plans to have been pre-existing prior to dam

construction as it is identified as “Abandoned M&NE Railroad Grade”, thus it was not designed for use as a dam and does not meet modern dam safety standards.

In 2020, EGLE’s Dam Safety Unit performed a Dam Safety Inspection on the dam and rated its condition “Fair”. However, the Dam Safety Inspection report also called for the DNR to “Evaluate and line or replace culvert pipe by November 1, 2021”. Even though the DNR has 201 dams, of which 53 are in poor or worse condition, the presence of a 70-year-old conduit in a dam, even a dam rated as in “Fair” condition, may merit higher prioritization for the DNR to take some investment action on the dam. It is important to note that there have been no decisions made as to the fate of this dam at this time.

The DNR owns 201 dams, 74% of which are in Fair or better condition. For the DNR to meet its goal of having 90% of its dams in “Fair” or better condition, it would need to invest \$75 million in approximately 35 projects over the next 5 years. The same scale of funding need would likely need to repeat for additional 5-year cycles as the DNR has 47 dams that are in Fair or better condition, yet include significantly aged, corrugated metal pipe conduits (>40 years).

If you have any further questions regarding this matter, please feel free to contact me at 517-643-2033 or [semrinecc@michigan.gov](mailto:semrinecc@michigan.gov).

Sincerely,

Chris Semrinec  
Legislative Liaison  
Department of Natural Resources