

Hodges Dam Maintenance Project

What is the current maintenance project scheduled for Hodges Dam?

As part of ongoing efforts to maintain and invest in City of San Diego infrastructure, urgent repair work began in May 2022 on Hodges Dam. During a recent inspection, the City identified areas in the upstream face of the dam wall that require immediate repair and need to be sealed to maintain the safety of the dam. In addition, the City's contractor determined that repairs to the upstream face of the dam cannot be made underwater. To access these areas and complete the repairs, the water level of the reservoir needs to be lowered by approximately 18 feet to an elevation of 275 feet. The reservoir may need to be lowered below 275 feet if additional areas needing repair are identified during the project.

How long is the project expected to take?

The critical repair project is expected to continue for an estimated five months. The City is working with its contractor to perform the repairs as quickly as possible so that the water level can be restored and recreation activities can resume.



Why are the repairs being done now?

The City's inspection of the dam revealed the need to make immediate repairs that should not wait until Fall 2022. In addition, by initiating the repairs now, during the dry season, the water level can more easily be lowered and maintained at a lower level so that the repairs can be made.

Is Hodges Dam safe?

Yes. Based on current condition assessments and in consultation with the California Division of Safety of Dams, Hodges Dam remains safe with the water level at 295 feet or lower. Maintaining the reservoir at elevation 295 has a significant effect by relieving the water pressure on the dam and reducing the total volume within the reservoir. This level was selected in 2019 to allow beneficial uses of the water supply while also allowing the City to perform more in-depth evaluations of the structure.

How does work on the dam affect recreational activities at Hodges Reservoir?

As a result of the lower water level, Hodges Reservoir is closed for recreation while the repair project is underway. Recreation activities at the Hodges Reservoir need to be closed because once the water level is lowered, the boat ramp will no longer be accessible, and the exposed shoreline will be deep, slippery mud, making it unsafe for public access. City staff recognizes the closure of recreational activities is disappointing and an inconvenience to many. Visitors are encouraged to explore other City reservoirs and enjoy the many recreational options available. For details, visit www.sandiego.gov/reservoirs-lakes. The San Dieguito River Park trails and facilities around Hodges Reservoir will not be impacted during the water drawdown or construction work on the dam.

What other local boating and fishing options are there?

During the temporary closure of recreation activities at Hodges Reservoir, those interested in fishing, boating, kayaking and other lake recreation activities are encouraged to visit other City reservoirs. The City maintains and operates eight other reservoirs that continue to be open for boating, fishing and other activities. These reservoirs include Barrett, El Capitan, Lower and Upper Otay, Miramar, Murray, San Vicente and Sutherland. For details, visit www.sandiego.gov/reservoirs-lakes.

What is being done to maintain Hodges Dam?

The City continues to work closely with the California Division of Safety of Dams to monitor the dam's condition and perform maintenance as needed. Over the next five years, the City will complete assessments of the dam, perform planned maintenance, ensure adequate funding, and implement a work plan to address the long-term needs of the dam which may include the replacement of the dam.

What has been done to address environmental, business, shareholder or public impacts?

City staff is working closely with state officials, as well as partner water agencies, to educate residents and visitors about this crucial repair project for Hodges Dam. Information has been shared publicly through local news media, posted signage at the reservoir and through social media platforms. Due to the immediacy of the project, the City has accelerated maintenance work so that more severe impacts do not occur.

Are economic impacts to concessions operators being addressed during the project work?

Yes. During this shutdown period the concessionaire will support other City reservoir concessions. This change is allowed under the Concession Lease Agreement, Section 3 Rent, 3.5 Closures.

What impact will this work have on the reservoir's environment, including birds and fish?

Impacts associated with the work are being assessed by City staff for compliance with local, state and federal laws including the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The work is exempt under Section 15269 of the CEQA Guidelines ("Emergency Projects") which includes provisions for repairs to publicly owned facilities necessary to maintain service essential to the public health, safety or welfare. Emergency repairs include those that require a reasonable amount of planning to address an anticipated emergency. The City's contractor has hired a qualified biologist to assist with preparing a scope of work that avoids and minimizes environmental impacts, especially those to biological resources such as birds and fish. City biologists and the San Diego County Water Authority are working closely to monitor grebes (aquatic diving birds) as reservoir levels change during typical reservoir operations. During construction, the contractor will also conduct biological monitoring in accordance with the City's Western and Clark's Grebe Survey Protocol. City staff will be monitoring water oxygen levels, as well as several other water quality parameters weekly to minimize adverse impacts to the reservoir environment and fish habitat.

Will this work have any impact on nearby community wells?

Private wells are not maintained or monitored by the City. The primary function of Hodges Reservoir is to impound water for drinking water purposes, serving the City of San Diego, as well as the San Dieguito Water District, Santa Fe Irrigation District and San Diego County Water Authority. The water level of Hodges fluctuates regularly throughout the year and is subject to change depending upon the season and other factors. Any impacts to wells during the five-month maintenance project will be temporary.

For more information about the California Division of Safety of Dams, visit water.ca.gov/damsafety/.

As more information become available, the City will provide updates online at: sandiego.gov/reservoirs-lakes/hodges-reservoir. Have more questions? Contact City Reservoirs and Recreation staff at 619-668-2050 or lakes@sandiego.gov.

Have more questions? We're here to help. Call us at 619-668-2050 or email us at lakes@sandiego.gov.