

FEMA Dam Removal Funding in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act includes a critical injection of funding to programs that support dam removals. Passage of the Act also demonstrates extraordinary support by Congress and hard work by a collaboration of dam safety groups, river conservation organizations, the hydropower industry, and civil engineers to include dam removal in the Act. These organizations collaborated to find balanced solutions for dam rehabilitation, dam removal, and retrofit of dams for hydropower and worked directly with champions in Congress to secure this funding.

Dam removal, with consent of the owner, can be a cost-effective approach to managing a significant portion of our nation's aging dam infrastructure. Dam removals can improve public safety, restore the natural functions of rivers, help extirpated and endangered fish species, create jobs, protect important environmental and cultural resources, and increase the climate resilience of U.S. rivers.

If used as envisioned, this funding will improve the environmental, safety, and economic benefits of healthy rivers across the country through dam removal, while advancing dam safety and the benefits of hydropower. American Rivers and others worked to secure \$75 million in dam removal funds for the FEMA Rehabilitation of High Hazard Potential Dams grant program. This money is intended to be used for all aspects of dam removal projects, including grants for technical assistance.

What's Funded?

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act funded an important FEMA grant program that can support public safety and river restoration through dam removal:

Rehabilitation of High Hazard Potential Dams Grant Program (HHPD): \$75 million for dam removal to remain available until expended

The High Hazard Potential Dam grant program provides grants for rehabilitation of eligible high hazard potential dams (dams whose failure will cause loss of human life). Seventy-five million dollars have been set aside for the removal of high hazard dams. This funding provides for:

- Removing high hazard dams
- Technical Assistance
- Additional project steps including, but not limited to: engineering, scientific assessment, economic analysis, construction, project management, technical assistance, acquisition, liability insurance, monitoring, regulatory compliance, updating flood hazard mapping as needed for project implementation, project administration, infrastructure protection, and sediment management

IIJA also provided \$658 million for the FEMA National Dam Safety Program grants to states and \$67 million for federal agency dam safety to remain available until expended.

These funds in the infrastructure bill have been provided to FEMA specifically for dam removal projects. These funds are not to be used for the removal, breach, or otherwise alter the operations of a federal hydropower dam.

How does HHPD work?

Proposals must be submitted through a State Administrative Agency (SAA), typically a state dam safety office or state hazard mitigation office. Only states with a dam safety program are eligible. The typical approach is that dam owners or their representatives submit proposals to municipalities to submit to the SAA. Municipalities have additional eligibility requirements with FEMA. Each state then submits one

conglomerate proposal per year to FEMA. Note, however, that Infrastructure funds may be distributed differently. Contact your state dam safety office to discuss potential project proposals and understand your state's process.

Who is eligible?

- Applicants: States or territories with a dam safety program
- Sub-recipients: Non-profits and non-federal governments
 - Sub-recipients limited to the lesser of 12.5% of the total or \$7.5 million

Cost-Share:

- Up to 65% federal/ 35% Non-federal

A Dam Removal Project is Defined as:

A dam removal project means a project to permanently remove the full vertical extent of a dam structure to a minimum horizontal width needed to protect public safety, restore natural river function, and reconnect aquatic species passage, unless site conditions prevent that removal width. Dam removals provide social, economic, and environmental benefits:

- Reconnected important migratory corridors for fish and other aquatic species
- Safety for communities
- Improved climate resilience of rivers for all the species they support
- Recreational opportunities
- Job creation
- Tribal rights to water, fishing, and cultural sites
- Improved fishery and wildlife conditions
- Reduce flood risk
- Improve water quality

How can funding be directed to dam removal projects?

Actions FEMA can take:

- Prioritize dam removal projects to achieve permanent dam safety and aquatic species restoration
- Direct technical assistance funding to support implementation of active dam removal projects

Actions States, Municipalities and River Conservationists can take:

- Identify priority dam removal projects that restore and conserve our nation's aquatic resources
- Establish relationships with USACE Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration staff
- Share information about this funding program with dam owners, particularly those with dams in need of updates and repairs
- Collaborate to address projects at a watershed or reach scale
- Provide technical and administrative support to state fishery and dam safety staff, as well as municipal environmental managers and public works staff

More Information and Additional Restoration and Resilience Funding through IJA:

FEMA [Rehabilitation of High Hazard Potential Dams Grant Program](#); NOAA Community-Based Habitat Restoration; USFWS National Fish Passage Program; USFS Dam Removal; USACE Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Program; NRCS Watershed Rehabilitation Program; DOT National Culvert Replacement; Bureau of Reclamation Western Water Infrastructure; EPA Geographic Programs