



# Ohio Department of Natural Resources

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## **Re: Notice of Rerouting Private Drainage and Utility Conduits Away from the Dam**

Dear Buckeye Lake Resident:

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) is actively moving forward to finish dam improvements at Buckeye Lake. We announced earlier this week that water levels will now be allowed to rise for the upcoming boating season, that construction will resume soon, and that the project will be completed by late 2018.

Safety and urgency have been two hallmarks of this project. The new seepage barrier and embankment stability berm now in place were planned and substantially completed in just 15 months. The higher level of safety made possible by this first phase of construction means we can allow the water level to rise to one foot below summer pool for the 2017 boating season. We will work to actively manage the lake level to keep it at this point. Now nearing the completion of detailed design work which has been ongoing since June, the second of two construction phases is set to begin in April. The lake will be allowed to return to normal water levels after construction is finalized in the fall of 2018.

Keeping the public informed is important to us. Since the start, we have directly engaged with stakeholders to explain the project's need, purpose and timing. We have also worked hard to understand stakeholders' concerns and to request their patience and cooperation when needed to help the project go smoothly. To that end, this letter explains a specific set of dam defects outlined in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' (Corps) report on the dam issued in March 2015 and the risk reduction measures ODNR is taking to correct them:

**Dam Defects Related to Residence Drainage and Utility Features.** The Corps' report on Buckeye Lake Dam included observations of numerous potentially dangerous embankment defects and urged the state to correct them to reduce the risk of catastrophic dam failure. Among the defects were scores of longstanding, unauthorized penetrations through the dam embankment to accommodate water drain pipes and electrical conduits serving individual private properties along the length of the dam. In a few cases on the West Bank, storm water was being collected from multiple private properties and pumped through the embankment to the reservoir via pipes at three locations. The Corps' report noted such defects contribute to internal erosion and increase the likelihood of dam failure. The report recommended two specific risk reduction measures: 1) "reroute residence drainage and utility features away from the embankment crest and backfill excavations with compacted impervious materials" and 2) "to the extent allowable, prevent additional construction of residences and appurtenant structures ... within the embankment."

**Risk Reduction Measures to Correct These Defects.** In light of the Corps' recommendations, ODNR is reducing to an absolute minimum non-dam-related penetrations through Buckeye Lake Dam. We have adopted a two-phase approach. As part of Phase 1 construction in 2016, ODNR temporarily accommodated approximately 100 water drainage conduits by allowing their discharge over the top of the new embankment stability berm. ODNR also terminated scores of electrical connections through the dam, temporarily enclosing wires in an estimated 278 outdoor electrical boxes placed along the crest of the dam.

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As part of Phase 2 construction in 2017, and adhering to dam design principles we publicized last August that included “avoid penetrations and other modifications that could weaken the dam,” we will finish these risk reduction measures by permanently capping unauthorized water drainage conduits so that they no longer discharge water through or over state property. ODNR will also move the electrical boxes from state property onto adjacent private properties for the property owners to manage from that point. ODNR’s work on this will begin as early as July of this year. It will be up to the affected property owners along the dam to decide what they have to do, if anything, to accommodate these necessary risk reduction measures. We are providing this notification now so residents have ample time to prepare. We do not believe major infrastructure improvements will be needed to accommodate the vast majority of them. For the privately installed water collection and pumping systems operating on the West Bank, ODNR will allow affected private property owners to reroute their storm water to the reservoir feeder canal several hundred feet away, but performing or paying for this work or any other private engineering solution is beyond the scope of this construction project and ODNR.

We understand many citizens will have questions about this notification and other aspects of this dam improvement project. Here’s how to get the latest, accurate information: To sign up for regular email updates about the dam project, go to <http://engineering.ohiodnr.gov/dam-risk-reduction-program/current-projects/buckeye-lake-dam/update-signup>. If you have a question or comment, we welcome your emails to us at [damriskreduction@dnr.state.oh.us](mailto:damriskreduction@dnr.state.oh.us), or you may call the ODNR Dam Risk Reduction Project information line at (614) 265-6755. For the latest general project information, you may visit our project website at <http://engineering.ohiodnr.gov/buckeyelake>.

Also, ODNR will host listening sessions on March 8 and 9 to share information with stakeholders about the project. We will be joined by representatives of the engineering firm Gannett Fleming, which will provide final design and construction administration for the project, and ASI Constructors, the project’s construction manager. The March 8 session will be from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at Lakewood High School, 9331 Lancer Rd SE, Hebron. The March 9 session will be from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at Millersport Elementary School, 11850 Lancaster St., Millersport.

Our most important mission is ensuring the safety of the community. ODNR will take every reasonable measure available to protect the structural integrity of the dam and minimize adverse impacts from the project. We appreciate your desire to get the dam fixed as soon as possible and your understanding and patience as we work to preserve Buckeye Lake for generations to come. Thank you for your continued cooperation.

Respectfully,



Michael D. Bailey, Chief  
Division of Parks and Watercraft