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Repair to dam to be cheaper, faster

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By Eric Lyttle *THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH*

The state's new estimate to replace the Buckeye Lake dam is \$40 million cheaper and significantly faster than originally anticipated.

The new estimates appear in a request for construction bids issued today by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, which includes an estimated total project cost for engineering and construction of \$110 million, down from the \$150 million announced in March. The state also is seeking a completion date for the first phase of the project of March 2017, putting it on track to be finished much sooner than the five-year estimate issued only four months ago.

ODNR Director Jim Zehringer declared a state of exigency for the project, which speeds up the selection and construction process.

The exigency clause could have allowed the state to pick a construction company immediately and eliminate open bidding altogether. But department spokesman Matt Eiselstein said that the state saw value in the bidding process for this project.

"We received a very innovative design from Gannett Fleming in the bid (for engineering services)," Eiselstein said. "We wanted to provide the same opportunity in the construction phase. There are a lot of companies in Ohio that should have the opportunity to do the job."

Construction bids are due to the department by 4 p.m. on Aug. 20.

The state anticipates a two-phase process. Phase I includes construction of interim measures to reduce the risk to public safety, while Phase II is completion of the new 4.1-mile dam.

According to the state's schedule, a construction company will be selected by Sept. 23 with work to begin by Oct. 20.

The estimated construction cost for Phase I is \$35 million, with an additional \$65 million earmarked for Phase II.

Zehringer announced last week that the state had selected Gannett Fleming's concrete deep-soil mixing design for the new Buckeye Lake dam. The process creates an earthen bank fortified by a grid of concrete and soil mix drilled into the embankment, constructed in front of the existing, nearly 190-year-old dam.

The new, reinforced embankment could be 20 to 30 feet wide and would be topped by a stability berm, which not only provides a concrete cap to strengthen the dam but also an access road for construction vehicles and equipment.

The state's Controlling Board approved the \$8.4 million contract with Gannett Fleming on Monday.

Steve Berezansky, lead engineer and chief of projects for ODNR, said the selected design stands out for its durability, with an estimated 100-year lifespan, its ability to resist water seepage and its cost-effectiveness.

The construction-management services requested include development of access points to the dam from state-owned or state-leased properties, as well as development of areas for equipment on state park property at Lieb's Island and state-owned property at a boat launch and parking lot adjacent to Rt. 79 and Crane Lake.

Other services could include dredging and the removal of existing dock and marina structures. "The proposed work is immediately adjacent to approximately 370 private residences," the state said in its request for bidders. "Public information and public involvement matters must be closely coordinated throughout the duration of this project." elyttle@dispatch.com

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