



# ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



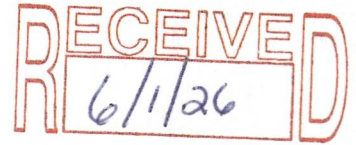
Sarah Huckabee Sanders  
Governor

1 Natural Resources Drive, Little Rock AR 72205  
agriculture.arkansas.gov  
(501) 225-1598

Wes Ward  
Secretary of Agriculture

May 28, 2026

Cherokee Village Suburban Improvement District  
PO Box 840  
Cherokee Village, Arkansas 72525



Dear Commissioners:

The Arkansas Department of Agriculture (Department) appreciated the opportunity to discuss the status of Lake Sequoyah Dam with Commissioner Stallsworth, Council Member Thompson, Governor's Office Representative Rachel Smith, and State Representative Trey Steimel on May 20, 2026.

This letter is intended to provide you with the current status of dams in the Cherokee Village Suburban Development District (CVSID) and clarifies the role of the Department with respect to the Olsson Engineering report titled "CVSID Lake Sequoyah Dam and Spillway Potential Modifications, Existing Conditions Assessment, Conceptual Improvement Codifications, Engineer's Opinion of Probable Cost, Recommendations for Future Action" (herein, Olsson Report).

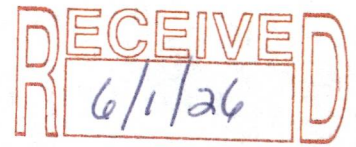
## **Sequoyah Lake Dam**

A study of the existing earthen dam and spillway of the Lake Sequoyah Dam was conducted by Olsson Engineering in 2025 and documented in the January 27, 2026, Olsson Report. As discussed at the May 20<sup>th</sup> meeting, this study was not requested by the Department, nor initiated in response to a regulatory requirement from the Department. Additionally, the analysis is not part of the operation renewal process as the Sequoyah Lake Dam permit is valid through 2033. The Department received a copy of the Olsson report from CVSID Chairman, Brent Hunstad on May 23, 2026.

Please note that the Department did conduct a condition assessment of Sequoyah Lake Dam on June 28, 2024. The structure was inspected as part of an effort to identify high hazard dams most in need of maintenance, repairs, and/or renovations.

During the inspection, the dam appeared to be in poor operational condition:

- There was thick overgrowth on the downstream slope, limiting inspection of the downstream embankment.
- The inlet works were overgrown with vegetation.
- The principal spillway was cracked and overgrown with vegetation.



- The emergency spillway was leaking through timbers, and bare reinforcement wire was exposed. Additionally, the spillway was overgrown with aquatic vegetation.

The overgrowth on the embankment was of particular concern as the density of the vegetation prevented thorough assessment of slumps, cracks, and depressions. Trees on the slope should be removed as possible overturning could lead to partial to full dam failure and the root intrusions provide pathways for seepage failure. **Though deficiencies were identified, a formal engineering review and report was not required.**

### CVSID Dam Permits

There are seven (7) permitted dams in the CVSID. Six (6) of the dams are High Hazard and one is a Significant Hazard dam (see table below). High Hazard dams are classified as having economic damage exceeding \$500,000 and likely loss of human life in the event of dam failure. Whereas Significant Hazard are anticipated to have no loss of human life and anticipated damages between \$100,000 and \$500,000 in the event of dam failure.

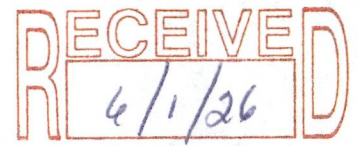
DAM	ARNUM	HAZARD	AGE OF DAM	PERMIT ISSUANCE	PERMIT EXPIRATION	MOST RECENT INSPECTION <sup>1</sup>	MOST RECENT Emergency Action Plan <sup>1</sup>
Lake Chanute Dam	AR00244	High	54	1971	2021	2020	2014
Lake Omaha Dam	AR00245	Significant	56	1975	2025	2019	Not Required
Lake Navajo Dam	AR00247	High	61	1973	2023	2022	2014
Lake Thunderbird Dam	AR00250	High	63	1973	2023	2022	2014
Lake Aztec Dam	AR00243	High	51	1981	2031	2020	2019
Cherokee Lake Dam	AR00248	High	69	1983	2033	2022	2014
Sequoyah Lake Dam	AR00249	High	67	1983	2033	2024	2014

<sup>1</sup> Date refers to date of document provided to the Department. The owner/operator may have a more recent document onsite, but it has not been provided to the Department

### Expired Permits

Four of the dams (Chanute, Omaha, Navajo, and Thunderbird) are operating under expired operation permits. Within 60 days of this letter, the Department will schedule a meeting with the CVSID to discuss the renewal process. The operation permit renewal process provides a framework for assessing the condition and operational safety of older dams and equips dam owners and operators with data to make informed decisions with respect to continued investment in their structures.

Operation permits are valid for a 50-year period commensurate with the initial date of issuance and in alignment with the industry standard service life for earthen dams. The



process is a four phased collaborative effort, engaging dam owners and operators, engineers, and Department staff. The four phases include:

- Phase 1 Operation Permit Renewal Application: Dam owners notify the Department that they wish to renew their Operation Permit. Applicants are provided a three-year period to bring their dam in compliance with state dam safety regulations and receive a new operation permit.
- Phase 2 Operation Assessment: Dam owners retain the services of an engineer to assess current compliance with state regulations and identify deficiencies including existing deficiencies identified by Department.
- Phase 3 Compliance Certification: An engineer must certify that the dam is in compliance with state regulations and is safe to operate or provide a plan for bringing the dam into compliance.
- Phase 4 Issuance of New Operation Permit: The Department will review submitted documents and either issue a new Operation Permit or provide guidance for dam owners who must repair or renovate their dams to achieve compliance.

This 36-month process provides time for assessment of older structures, technical support and outreach for dam owners and operators, and provisions for awarding renewed permits or decommissioning noncompliant structures.

### **Annual Inspections**

Annual inspection reports are due for all seven dams. Pursuant to 15 CAR § 23-901, at least once per year and after each major storm event, the dam owner must perform a visual inspection of the dam. The inspection results must be summarized on the form supplied by the Department and submitted to the Department within ten (10) days of inspection.

As discussed at the May 20, 2026, meeting, the Department is looking forward to working with the current CVSID maintenance staff to provide hands-on inspection training and ensure that the inspection schedule is brought up to date. The first training opportunity is June 25<sup>th</sup> in Jonesboro during the Dam Owner Workshop.

### **Emergency Action Plans**

With respect to Emergency Action Plans (EAP), a current EAP is required for all High Hazard dams. Implementation of EAPs must include one tabletop exercise per year and one test drill every three years. Per Department records, updated EAPS are required for the six High Hazard dams at the CVSID. Per our May 20<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Department will partner with the CVSID this summer to implement updates to the outdated EAPS.

RECEIVED  
6/1/26

## Next Steps

This summer, the Department will partner with the CVSID to:

- Provide annual inspection training;
- Initiate the operation permit renewal process for Lake Chanute Dam, Lake Omaha Dam, Lake Navajo Dam, and Lake Thunderbird Dam;
- Provide support for the Emergency Action Plan updates; and
- Review the findings of the Olsson report for Sequoyah Lake Dam.

Further, to ensure clear and consistent communication, the Department will provide copies of all dam-related correspondence to all current CVSID commissioners.

The Department looks forward to working with the CVSID to ensure safe and continuing operation of the seven lakes and dams at Cherokee Village.

Regards,



**Whit Montague, PE**

Engineer Supervisor/Expert

Natural Resources Division

Arkansas Department of Agriculture

cc: Brent Hunstad, Chairman, [brent.hunstad@cvsid.org](mailto:brent.hunstad@cvsid.org)  
Susan Jett, Vice Chairperson, [susan.jett@cvsid.org](mailto:susan.jett@cvsid.org)  
Michael Myers, Secretary, [michael.myers@cvsid.org](mailto:michael.myers@cvsid.org)  
Tony Stallsmith, Member at Large, [tony.stallsmith@cvsid.org](mailto:tony.stallsmith@cvsid.org)  
Steven Rorex, Member at large, [steven.rorex@cvsid.org](mailto:steven.rorex@cvsid.org)  
Steven R. Rose, Mayor, [mayor@cherokeevillage.gov](mailto:mayor@cherokeevillage.gov)  
Pamela Rowland, Council Member, [pamela.rowland@cherokeevillage.gov](mailto:pamela.rowland@cherokeevillage.gov)  
Heather Harrison, Council Member, [heather.harrison@cherokeevillage.gov](mailto:heather.harrison@cherokeevillage.gov)  
Jeff Tatum, Council Member, [jeff.tatum@cherokeevillage.gov](mailto:jeff.tatum@cherokeevillage.gov)  
Rachel Tatum, Council Member, [rachel.tatum@cherokeevillage.gov](mailto:rachel.tatum@cherokeevillage.gov)  
Eddie Ishmael, Council Member, [eddie.ishmael@cherokeevillage.gov](mailto:eddie.ishmael@cherokeevillage.gov)  
Steve Thompson, Council Member, [steve.thompson@cherokeevillage.gov](mailto:steve.thompson@cherokeevillage.gov)  
Jason Lowe, Council Member, [jason.lowe@cherokeevillage.gov](mailto:jason.lowe@cherokeevillage.gov)  
Peter Martin, Council Member, [peter.martin@cherokeevillage.gov](mailto:peter.martin@cherokeevillage.gov)  
Representative Trey Steimel, [Trey.Steimel@arkansashouse.org](mailto:Trey.Steimel@arkansashouse.org)  
Rachel Smith, Governor's Office, [Rachel.Smith@governor.arkansas.gov](mailto:Rachel.Smith@governor.arkansas.gov)  
Wes Ward, Secretary, Arkansas Department of Agriculture, [wes.ward@arkansas.gov](mailto:wes.ward@arkansas.gov)