

PUBLIC NOTICE
Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
Notice of Intent to Prepare a Programmatic Environmental Assessment
For Dam Safety Projects in the State of Montana

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) announces its intent to prepare a Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) for dam projects that repair, rehabilitate, remove, and replace to mitigate impacts, and improve dam safety within the State of Montana. This notice is being published to fully evaluate and consider the environmental consequences of major federal actions it funds or undertakes in accordance with FEMA's implementation for NEPA compliance under FEMA Instruction 108-1-1 while analyzing applicable environmental laws, including but not limited to the National Historic Preservation Act, Endangered Species Act, Executive Orders 12898 and 14096 (Environmental Justice and Revitalizing Our Nation's Commitment to Environmental Justice for All), Executive Order 11990 (Protection of Wetlands), and Executive Order 11988 (Floodplain Management). These proposed actions have the potential to affect historic, cultural, and archaeological resources; endangered species; low-income and minority populations; floodplains; and wetlands.

The potential dam failure or breach can have substantial consequences to human life, safety, and environmental resources. At assessment, dams are assigned a hazard category: high; significant; or low. High hazard dams are those where failure or mis-operation will cause loss of human life and economic damage. Significant hazard dams are those dams where failure or mis-operation results may cause loss of life and economic damage and low hazard dams are expected to have no significant economic damage or loss of life. As dams age, the potential for listing as a high or significant hazard dam increases within Montana.

The PEA will address the purpose and need for the proposed action, project alternatives considered, affected environment, environmental consequences, and mitigation measures. The proposed action alternatives will include: (1) Repair Alternative: repair of an existing structure back to original design within the existing location, (2) Rehabilitation Alternative: improve overall dam stability and function by incorporating upgrades to a variety of components; (3) Removal Alternative: remove the damaged structure and restore the natural environment through conservation and restoration measures; (4) Replace Alternative: remove and replace dam while including upgrades within the existing footprint. The final alternatives to be considered in the PEA and their extents may be refined based on public comment and further analysis.

In accordance with Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 C.F.R. § 1500.4(k) and 1501.11), the PEA will identify, by project type, the potential adverse and beneficial effects associated with dam repair, replacement, reconstruction, and removal projects. The review of site-specific grant applications may be streamlined by tiering from the PEA to reference summary details regarding project types, alternatives, and effects and to emphasize details specific to a proposed action. The PEA will allow FEMA to focus site-specific reviews on a narrower scope and to eliminate repetitive discussions.

A comment period to solicit input on the scope of the analysis including the purpose and need, alternatives, and potential impacts will remain open for 30 days following publication of this notice. The public; local, state, tribal, and federal agencies; and other interested parties are invited to provide

comments on the purpose and need of the proposed action, alternatives, potential environmental impacts, and measures to reduce those impacts.

To provide comments on the scope of the PEA please contact Richard Myers and Arianna Foster at FEMA Region 8 by email at femar8ehp@fema.dhs.gov and include 'Montana Dam PEA ' in the subject line, or by U.S. Postal Service to Denver Federal Center, Building 710, Box 25267, Denver, Colorado 80225-0267 Attn: Richard Myers.