

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE  
CONSERVATION PRACTICE SPECIFICATION**

**DAM, DIVERSION**

(No. and acre-ft)  
CODE 402

**SPECIFICATION**

This document is a copy of the New Mexico Conservation Practice Standard entitled “Dam, Floodwater Retarding”, and can be used to develop site specific specifications.

**DEFINITION**

A single-purpose dam designed for temporary storage of floodwater and for its controlled release.

**PURPOSE**

To reduce flood damages downstream by controlling the release rate from flood flows of predetermined frequencies. They may also permit the use of more economical channel modifications or stabilizing structures in the channel downstream and reduce environmental hazards and pollution.

**CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES**

This practice applies only to sites meeting all the following conditions:

- Topographic, geologic, and soils conditions at the proposed site are satisfactory for the development of a feasible dam and reservoir.
- The sediment yield at the site is not excessive.

Special attention shall be given to maintaining habitat for fish and wildlife if applicable.

**DESIGN CRITERIA**

All dams designed under this standard shall meet or exceed the criteria as called for in the Standard for Ponds (378) or in TR-60, as appropriate, except as specifically modified by this standard.

The capacity of the principal spillway shall be adequate to discharge, in 10 days or less, the floodwater storage needed to provide the desired level of protection to the downstream benefited area. Storage primarily for the purpose of reducing the frequency of use of the emergency spillway need not be included in this 10-day drawdown limitation. The capacity must be based on consideration of the benefits that accrue to the reduction in the discharge rate, damages that may result from prolonged storage in the retarding pool, damages that may result from prolonged outflow, and limitations in water rights or other legal requirements. Longer release times may be used if warranted by downstream conditions. Discharge through gated outlets shall not be considered in determining the emptying time of the retarding pool.

The elevation of the crest of the lowest stage of the principal spillway shall be set at the elevation of the sediment pool. For dry dams, the riser shall be designed to permit design discharge at the sediment pool elevation with provisions for discharging water at lower elevations to satisfy the functional requirements of the structure.

All parts of the principal spillway, except attached gates and trash racks, shall have an expected service life equal to or greater than the design life of the structure or provisions made for replacement. Principal spillways shall meet the requirements with respect to materials established in the standard for Pond (378) or in TR-60, as appropriate.

The minimum diameter of the conduit used as a principal spillway shall be 10 in.

Conservation practice standards are reviewed periodically, and updated if needed. To obtain the current version of this standard, contact the Natural Resource Conservation Service.
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The storage volume shall not be less than the expected sediment accumulation during a period equal to the design life.

The retarding storage requirements shall be enough to contain the runoff expected to occur at a frequency consistent with the level of protection to be provided to the downstream benefited area, with proper allowance for discharge through the principal spillway. The retarding storage capacity shall be sufficient to limit the use of the emergency spillway to a permissible frequency and duration based upon consideration of the erosion resistance of the spillway material and vegetative protection to be provided.

### CONSIDERATIONS

Reductions in downstream flow during runoff periods.

Potential total runoff or decrease of evaporation from the reservoir surface and seepage from the pool bottom.

Potential increases in surface water volume during normal low flow periods caused by prolonged duration of reservoir releases.

Increase in deep percolation to the ground water resulting from seepage from the reservoir sides and bottom. The amount of seepage will depend on soils, area covered by the reservoir, and length of time inundated, and measures for reservoir sealing.

Potential for improving downstream surface water quality resulting from trapping of suspended sediments, bed load material, and associated nutrients and pesticides in the pool area.

Instability of downstream banks and channel and their potential to deepen and widen.

Potential for degradation of surface water quality by sediments, fuel, oils, and other chemicals during construction.

Increase in temperature, decrease in dissolved oxygen, and the amount of absorbed nutrients and pesticides in deposited sediments in sediment pools.

Potential changes in downstream water temperatures and dissolved oxygen content that could result from the design of the outlet

structure. Where dissolved oxygen may be reduced by outlet placement, plan some means of causing rapid dissolved oxygen recovery.

Increases in soluble nutrients and pesticides in deep percolating waters caused by seepage in reservoir sides and bottom. Chemicals may originate from those used in the structure and reservoir area, or may be dissolved in waters from the watershed area.

### PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Plans and specifications for installing floodwater retarding dams shall be in keeping with this standard and shall describe the requirements for applying the practice to achieve its intended purpose.

Specifications for construction of floodwater retarding dams shall, as a minimum, be commensurate with those for Pond (378).

Those within the scope of the criteria in TR-60 shall be in accord with the guide specifications contained in the National Engineering Handbook, Section 642.

### OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Provisions shall be made, as necessary, for operations and maintenance requirements and may include a formal plan for larger or more complex designs.

The following actions shall be carried out to ensure the practice functions as intended throughout its expected life. These actions include normal repetitive activities in the application and use of the practice (operation), repair, and upkeep.

The dam, and all of its components, will be inspected periodically, protected, and restored as needed to maintain the intended purpose from adverse impacts such as rodent holes, vehicular traffic, seepage, erosion, or woody vegetation.