West Fork Kickapoo/Coon Creek Watershed Planning Meeting
Discussion with Cooperating Agencies on Dam Decommissioning
1/27/2022
12PM Mountain/1PM Central

Attended:

Name	Company/Organization
PLANNING TEAM	
Pete David	Sundance Consulting, Inc.
Kelsey Patterson	Sundance Consulting, Inc.
Rob Lutz	EA Engineering, Science, and Technology Inc.
Tim Haakenstad	EA Engineering, Science, and Technology Inc.
Megan Lush	EA Engineering, Science, and Technology Inc.
Jimmy Moore	M&E Consultants, LLC
Steve Becker	NRCS, Madison WI
AGENCY ATTENDEES	
Ben Wojahn	Vernon County
Bob Micheel	Monroe County
Cari Redington	Vernon County
Steven Flottmeyer	DOT
Barton Chapman	DATCP
Heidi Kueler	USFWS
Kirk Olson	DNR
Kyle Zibung	USACE
Mark Erickson	Vernon County
Matt Hanewall	La Crosse County
Megan Duffy	DNR
Liz Pelloso	EPA
Adam Mednick	DNR
Robert Hemling	La Crosse County
Rod Ofte	Vernon County
Uriah Monday	DNR

Steve Becker-

Introduction to the dam decommissioning options:

1. Remove part of the dam, create a notch to be able to pass 100-yr storms

2. Completely restore the natural floodplain

There is the issue of what to do with sediment, there are some contaminants (PFAS, phosphorous and other nutrients) but nothing too concerning or non-compliant with EPA.

Rob Lutz-

Presentation on Dam Decommissioning Design—Notch

1. Excavate a notch in the dam to pass 100-yr storm

-Generally it would be in the center of those not already failed; with the others where the failure has created a notch at the abutment, moving it to the center would increase costs.

2. Grade slopes to a 2:1 slope

-Need to figure out operation and maintenance requirements.

3. Embankment not removed completely

4. Remove riser and outlet then grout pipe shut (fully filled) and leave in place

5. No sediment removal included

Annual Watershed Sediment Produced

WFK basing=91k tons

CC basin=98k tons

Total sediment accumulated behind Jersey Valley=122k tons

Average sediment accumulated behind other structures=12k tons

Open Discussion, Questions and Comments-

Q: Would the notch be put in in phases, or all at once? A: Would be all at once.

Q: How deep are sediment pools? A: Varies. If they are deep, they will need to be stabilized. Would need to be pretty heavy duty to hold up to how aggressive the valleys are, and the intensity of flood events.

C: Sediment washout is not anticipated to be in one episode, but rather would gradually reduce over time.

Q: Where would excavated material go? A: Downstream slope of the embankment, higher up on the valley floor outside of any wetland areas as close as possible to valley wall.

Q: Have multiple approaches to decommissioning been looked at? Material is not conducive for growing vegetation…what about leaving the pipes in situ…what about full removal? A: Costs for full removal would be high, but have not been calculated yet. These narrow valleys would need the material to be fully removed and transported out.

C: Fisheries concern- three dams in WFK act as barriers to protect brook trout (Seas Branch, Maple Dale [been working on brown trout removal since 2019], and Jersey Valley). If flow is restored, then brook trout would be impacted by downstream brown trout. R: Benefit of notch compared to full removal is that you can add in a barrier to prevent fish passage to mitigate impacts to native brook trout.

C: Dam decommissioning seems to be increasing costs and changing cost-benefit ratio. Need to revisit this.

Q: What is the fate of the land once dams are decommissioned? They are easements now. Need to know if the easements will be maintained, or if the land will go back to the landowner. Landowners would likely want to use for grazing. A: Counties would like to see landowner rights restored.

C: Timing of decommissioning of dams that have not breached will be up to the counties. The NRCS Plan-PEIS is not intended to provide a detailed timeline for this, but will provide costs and environmental consequences for removal if that is decided. If these are built into this plan, then federal funding can be obtained, but the timing will ultimately be up to the sponsors.

C: Counties want Plan-PEIS to incorporate as much flexibility as possible.

C: Locations of sediment work and disposal of soil will be required in the plan. Current land use will determine how sediment removal would take place. The preferred alternative would include on site deposition. If the material would need to leave the valley, the Plan-PEIS can estimate what the costs would be but cannot determine where it would go.

Q: Will there be project specific NEPA analysis after this programmatic approach? A: The PEIS will act as an umbrella for NRCS and Sponsors to pursue funding for all the dams, so they should all be covered under this. However, there may be a need to do a simple EA for specific dams or at least an ER review with DNR.

C: Need to make a distinction in the plan between dams that have failed and those that have not.

Q: Should complete removal even be looked at? A: It seems too cost prohibitive.

C: Need to keep in mind what structures will look like and what land use can occur after decommissioning. Need to be concerned about public use around the dam site, and if operation and maintenance would be needed once the decommissioning is done.

C: Counties want an end product from this planning process that they can walk away from, and not have an O&M agreement on something not providing any flood control benefits. Counties would prefer to notch near the center (for dams that have not failed), grade and stabilize slopes to 3:1, revegetate, and restore landowner rights.

C: Not all breaches should be moved to the center in the failed dams. Preference would be to stabilize the breach, it doesn't make sense to do earthwork where bedrock is exposed.

C: EA Engineering will make a fact sheet for each of the failed dams, with design details, to circulate for county and agency comments. NRCS needs to get a preferred method from each county in writing.

Q: What is cost share ratio? A: Between 65-75%. So whatever action counties take, they will have between 25-35% of the costs. Can look to state grants as well.

C: Wetland permits would be needed for stream bank stabilization and earth work around the dams.

C: Vernon County is moving forward with decommissioning MLSNA, and is applying for DNR grants.