

August 2021

Ashuelot Pond Dam Update

Update: High Lake Level from Rain

On Thursday 29 July - Friday 30 July we received 4.62 inches of rain in an 8-10 hour period. This downpour caused Lake Ashuelot to rise quickly. There are, from what I am told 8 ponds and streams that empty into Lake Ashuelot, needless to say we received more water from these sources other than the rainfall. Gary Mahaffy and I rode over to the dam on Friday and met with Washington and Marlow fires chiefs. We noticed that the lake level had risen to a few inches below the top of the dam; however the water level did not crest over the dam itself. Washington and Marlow fire chiefs decided in an abundance of caution to activate the emergency evacuation plan. The state Dam bureau was also notified and responded to the dam location. After conversation later in the day with DES (department of environmental services) we were informed the dam was holding as designed but there was small sink hole on top of the dam that needed to be corrected ASAP. It was suggested that we place sandbags around the sink hole in the event that water crested the dam and would be diverted away from the sink hole. Bob Carter NHMS LLC was notified and was in contact with NH Bureau of dams, It was explained to Bob what the situation was and that lake level had started to recede approximately 2 inches by late afternoon on Friday. Bob and DES agreed that the sink hole could be corrected on Saturday morning. I went over to the dam at 7:00AM on Saturday morning and found that Bob Carter was on site and the sink hole issue was corrected. DES was notified and satisfied that the problem was corrected. At this point the lake level had dropped several inches. The majority of the water at LAE marina has subsided and I expect that the entire marina will be accessible over the next 2 days. I am happy that the dam held up with the amount of water that emptied into Lake Ashuelot. If we had not rebuilt the dam 2 years ago we most likely would have had a breach. It should be noted that the 2 spillways functioned as designed. In the past it has been almost impossible to get any qualified Dam contractors to our site. The dam is not easily accessible by vehicle and it's location has been a problem. Most of the contacts we had are out of state and don't want to travel to our location, not to mention added travel cost for time and equipment. Bob Carter has been on the Dam project from the start and always responds to any problems immediately. Bob is a local engineer experienced in dam construction and water impoundment, he works with the state and is familiar with state rules and regulations RE: water impoundment. I don't want to go on about the importance of the dam and Lake Ashuelot but, historically dam repairs have been done on a volunteer basis sometimes using local excavators. The repairs need to be done using engineers versed in water impoundment. In short there is more than just piling dirt and rocks to create a dam. Again I am happy the dam held as designed. Mother nature can throw a curve now and then.

Joe Belcastro