

***Q. What is being done to ensure the safety of the residents that live in the islands on Buckeye Lake in the event of a fire or need of evacuation?***

A. Public safety remains ODNR's top priority. To ensure people could be reached, ODNR volunteered to provide keys to two state-owned jet boats to the Millersport Fire Department so they now have complete access to them 24 hours a day. The Millersport Fire Department is comfortable with this agreement as it provides them with access to the islands in the event of a fire.

There are vehicle/boat hybrids that could be helpful to residents with this dilemma that they may want to investigate. We are open to all ideas from the community as long as they do not keep us from our goal to protect the public downstream.

***Q. How are residents who live on an island supposed to get to their homes with the water level low?***

A. It is ODNR's intention to dredge channels from the Liebs Island boat ramps to private islands for private access and public safety purposes.

***Q. What is the current dredge plan for Buckeye Lake? Can ODNR dredge boating lanes around the businesses?***

A. ODNR has already started dredging a main channel 6 feet deep and 35 feet wide from Liebs Island to the deeper middle part of the lake, stretching from roughly Sellers Point and the towpath to a line just west of Cranberry Bog. ODNR will also dredge a main channel back south of Liebs Island with two suction dredges that can operate in shallow water. The plan for the second dredge is to create secondary channels to lake islands as well as the lake-facing businesses. We are looking into all options, including the possibility of working on a public-private partnership.

An issue we are facing is identifying local land to place the dredge material that is being removed from the lake. We are also exploring dredge material dewatering operations in order to aggressively dredge the lake.

***Q. Officials have said that Buckeye Lake will remain at winter pool, but it seems pretty low. Is it lower than expected?***

A. Our target daily elevation is true winter pool, which is 888.75 feet above mean sea level. This is 3 feet below normal (or summer) pool, which is 891.75 feet above mean sea level. This is a standardized number representing the lake surface elevation, not the depth of the pool at any given location. During the past 20 years, the winter pool elevation has been approached but was reached only twice during the winter drawdown. This has caused some confusion even with longtime lake residents.

Because of the urgency of our current situation, we are operating lake drains to reach this elevation in addition to our normal practice of setting the Amil Gate spillway at winter pool levels. We are working to keep the pool level as close as possible to the target daily elevation. There will be normal fluctuations in the lake elevation due to changing hydrologic conditions in the watershed, such as rainfall, base flow and evaporation rates.

***Q. What about the fish with the lake kept at winter pool?***

A. While we would rather not lose any fish, protecting human life on Buckeye Lake takes precedence. Fish can be replaced while people cannot. Additionally, fish "winterkill" happens every spring at Buckeye Lake and other lakes



around Ohio because of seasonal changes in oxygen levels. This is a natural and seasonal occurrence.

Lake fish have been known to become stranded and die in outflow channels below dams. This happens at manmade reservoirs, including Buckeye Lake. ODNR is getting prepared for additional fish mortality because of lower lake levels at Buckeye Lake and is developing a plan to clean up fish kills. This planning is already underway and will be finalized shortly.

***Q. Since Buckeye Lake is lower, more shoreline will be available for Canada geese. How is ODNR planning on dealing with the geese, as well as the health and environmental issues that their excrement produces?***

A. While it is certainly a public nuisance, it is not verified that Canada geese waste is a significant contributor to environmental problems at Buckeye Lake. In the event that geese populations do increase this year, ODNR is working on contingency plans to control the population, such as expanding hunting and nest management programs.

***Q. Will air boats be allowed to be used on Buckeye Lake?***

A. ODNR will soon announce the policy on airboats at Buckeye Lake. Buckeye Lake is one of five inland lakes where air boats are currently permitted, per [Ohio Admin. Code § 1501.47](#).

***Q. How will the public be informed about speed regulations on Buckeye Lake?***

A. Information has been released to the public that a large, deeper portion of the lake is now a designated Speed Zone, while other shallower sections are designated as No Wake Zones. The entire lake will be a No Wake Zone at night, from sunset to sunrise, for all boating operations.

***Q. Where will ODNR post speed/horsepower regulations?***

A. ODNR will communicate new regulations to boaters at the lake through signage at ODNR boat ramps, on buoys in the lake, and via park and watercraft officers.

***Q. How will ODNR control speed around Cranberry Bog?***

A. The area around Cranberry Bog is designated as a No Wake Zone.

***Q. Acton Lake at Hueston Woods State Park had its dam worked on without a drawdown. How was this accomplished when Buckeye Lake has to be drawn down?***

A. Buckeye Lake Dam is unlike any other dam in the country. This particular dam represents the most complex set of challenges of all the dams ODNR owns and operates in the state. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers recommended the Buckeye Lake reservoir level be drawn down to winter pool or lower based on the high probability of dam failure at normal pool elevation. The lowering reduces the water pressure on the dam, adds storage capacity in the event of heavy rainfall events, and reduces the amount of water that would flood the community in the event of a dam break.

A drawdown is a widely practiced interim risk reduction measure for dams at risk of failure. There are examples of this strategy being used to reduce risk at dams across the country. The work at Acton Lake was on the spillway, not on the entire dam, and required a coffer dam be built instead of a lowering of the lake level.

***Q. What is the timeframe for the project? Can we shorten the time frame to complete the dam project? What can we do to speed the project along as quickly as possible?***

A. We will work as quickly as we can on the comprehensive risk reduction portion of this project, but we will not cut corners on quality or safety. The timeframe for this project is yet to be determined, but we can make some good estimates. The entire process can take up to five years according to a conventional schedule, but we aim to shorten that significantly.

The first part of the process, which has already started, is the Request for Qualifications -- to find a consulting engineer to do project design. Our target date is to have design services for Phase 1 procured by July 2015. This represents a significantly expedited schedule.

The following step will be project design. We will work on Phase 1 and Phase 2 design concurrently, with the Phase 1 final design expected to be completed by April 2016. This date also represents a significantly expedited schedule.

Finally, we will put the project out through a competitive bid process and start construction. We will expedite these final portions of the process as well. We are open to reasonable ideas to further speed up the process, as long as the suggestions conform to state law and established dam safety standards.

The time is past for short-term fixes to this dam. As the report from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers states, no part of the dam is in good condition. There are serious safety defects throughout this dam, and a catastrophic breach could happen at a number of locations for a number of reasons.

Our dam safety engineers say that riprap slope protection would not provide adequate erosion control for this dam. The presence of homes on and in this dam have made it impossible to properly monitor and maintain the dam, in its current state, in a way that meets acceptable dam safety standards. Therefore, we will be moving forward expeditiously, but we will not compromise the safety of the residents of Buckeye Lake because they are our top priority.

***Q. How long will it take to secure bonds for the project? Will bonds be sold as the project goes along, or are the bonds sold all at once? What assurances do we have that the funds will be available in future administrations and general assemblies?***

A. The financing of this project, such as issuing bonds, will be handled by the Office of Budget and Management and Treasurer of State. Questions about this part of the project should be directed there. The decision on if and how to fund a comprehensive risk reduction project will be made by the Ohio General Assembly.

***Q. Can we fix the weakest, most vulnerable parts of the dam so we can increase lake level sooner as the less vulnerable sections are fixed?***

A. Unfortunately, fixing the dam piece by piece and refilling the lake is not an option. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has said that no part of the dam is in good condition. The safety of Buckeye Lake residents is our top priority, and filling up the lake without regard to the increased risk it could pose would be going completely against what the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has recommended to protect the public.

***Q. I have heard from an engineer that the cost was much less in the 1990s—why is there such an increase in the price?***

A. We cannot speak to cost estimates for previous proposals. The cost estimate for our comprehensive risk reduction project will come from our project design.

***Q. What is the overall long-term plan for Buckeye Lake State Park and the dam? Short-term plan?***

A. Our current focus is on implementing interim risk reduction measures and enhanced operation and maintenance measures as recommended by the U.S Army Corps of Engineers in their report. We are also beginning our consideration and selection of comprehensive risk reduction alternatives as outlined by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The final design has not yet been determined. Our long-term goal is to fix the 4.1-mile earthen dam to allow Buckeye Lake residents and park visitors to enjoy the lake and the surrounding areas without risk of dam failure.

***Q. Is a state-built or state-owned marina or lodge any part of this Buckeye Lake Dam project?***

A. The Buckeye Lake Dam project will be focused on long-term risk reduction for this dam and will not include a marina or lodge.

***Q. Did the State buy Smitty's? If so, what is the plan for the property?***

A. The Smitty's property was acquired to improve access to the dam. Primarily, it will provide better access for ODNR in the event of a dam emergency and for construction. The property will also improve access for anglers.

***Q. What is the Army Corps of Engineers' role in the Buckeye Lake Dam rehabilitation project? Why are they renting trailers to hold up to 40 people?***

A. The question about trailers is a rumor, and it is false. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers asked us to caution the community to be wary of people fraudulently posing as representatives of the Corps. We are cautioning people to resist trading rumors and speculation with others, and instead, to seek out accurate and reliable sources of information, like our website at [engineering.ohiodnr.gov/buckeyelake](http://engineering.ohiodnr.gov/buckeyelake). The Corps is a dam safety consultant to ODNR.

***Q. What plans exist for removal and replacement of private docks?***

A. Planning and discussion continues regarding how and when docks are to be removed, and who will be

responsible. A key interim risk reduction measure recommended by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is to enhance our monitoring of this dam for additional safety defects and potential safety problems. A technical inspection of all docks along the dam by engineers was added to our enhanced monitoring activities and conducted in May.

The docks are rated in three basic categories according to their level of risk to the dam:

- *Hazardous docks* should be removed from the dam as soon as possible due to the safety threat they pose.
- Docks that are designated as *potentially hazardous* may not need to be ordered removed immediately, but they will not be permitted by ODNR.
- Docks that are designated as clearly *not hazardous* will be permitted by ODNR for 2015.

All docks will need to be removed eventually to make way for major construction beginning in 2016.

**Q: How can people share their ideas and be a part of the process?**

A. The people of Buckeye Lake have been active in the process by participating in discussions with ODNR in public meetings, phone calls and emails. Your views and concerns have also been expressed through the local, state, and federal legislators and the news media. Your comments are heard, and they are part of the discussion that continues to take place as ODNR moves forward with this project.

Through these initial efforts, we have communicated directly with hundreds of area residents and stakeholders on this issue. We intend to continue these efforts. ODNR has received numerous requests and comments in various forms, and we ask for people to be patient as we intend to reply to all of the people who shared their views.

Please take the opportunity to email us at [damriskreduction@dnr.state.oh.us](mailto:damriskreduction@dnr.state.oh.us) with any additional questions you may have as we move forward with this project. ODNR has added a link to [ohiodnr.gov](http://ohiodnr.gov) to assist people in finding the most recent updates on Buckeye Lake.

We will look at additional ways to interact with the public that can provide productive and constructive dialogue on all aspects of this project over the next few years. We hope to work with members of the community to identify opportunities that will help ease some of the burden this project may place on area businesses and residents.

**Q. Is the lake office going to be open year round?**

A. Buckeye Lake State Park is being operated under extraordinary conditions and will be for the foreseeable future. The park and lake remain open.

**Q. Where do the dock fees go?**

A. Buckeye Lake dock fees go to the State Parks Fund by state law. Money from this fund goes to operate all state parks across the state. ODNR will not assess dock fees this year at Buckeye Lake.

**Q. Are there subsidies available to landowners who would like to designate a portion of their land as dredge material relocation areas (DMRAs) to assist ODNR in the storage of dredge materials?**

A. ODNR pays owners for utilizing eligible lands as DMRAs. For example, we pay market value for leasing farmland.

**Q. Why did ODNR not look at any previous economic and environmental studies before lowering the lake level?**

A. The drawdown was recommended by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as an interim risk reduction measure to be implemented immediately. A drawdown is a widely practiced interim risk reduction measure for dams at risk of failure.

We understand the hardships caused by this situation, which made this drawdown a difficult decision. However, safeguarding the public against a catastrophic dam failure is the most important goal, which made this drawdown the right decision.

**Q. What if I want to fix up my own private property along the dam, including making improvements that could strengthen the dam?**

A. Any improvements to your property that could impact the dam require prior written approval by the Director of ODNR. In some cases, we may require you to hire a geotechnical engineer and submit detailed plans for our review.