

**From:** Kevin.Chambers@dnr.ga.gov,  
**To:** themtnsvoice@aol.com,  
**Subject:** Response from Georgia EPD  
**Date:** Tue, Sep 8, 2020 4:30 pm

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Mr. Hopkins,

This is in response to the open records request and questions/comments sent to the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) via email September 2, 2020. Please attribute the information to Georgia EPD Safe Dams Program Manager Tom Woosley. Thank you.

### **(1) Regarding Honest and Open Facts**

The file for the Petit Lake Category 1 Dam was provided to you in response to your request under the Georgia Open Records Act (GORA). Our document tracking sheet reflects that the only inspection report received in the past few years is the April 2020 report by Geosyntec, which was attached to our emailed response to your GORA request. We have since identified an Emergency Action Plan (EAP), which is kept in a separate file. It is a large file and will be sent to you as soon as possible.

I would also like to know exactly what the current safety rating for the Lake Petit Dam is.

EPD does not assign safety ratings for dams.

### **(2) Regarding the Actual Safety and Maintenance Status of the Dam**

The issue of the Upstream beaching, and rip rap and shore replacement is another issue that has been kicked down the road for over a decade.

In general, wave action erosion is a maintenance issue. The average dam regulated by the Georgia Safe Dams Program is about 35 feet high and has about three feet of freeboard (distance from normal lake level to the top of the dam). The crest, or top of the dam, is often relatively narrow. Therefore, erosion at these dams can lead to more significant issues in a shorter time frame if not addressed. The Lake Petit dam is different from the average dam in that it has a much larger amount of freeboard and larger crest. Consequently, it will take many years before the wave action erosion causes significant issues. The Geosyntec report of April

2020 notes that a report had previously been submitted to EPD and recommends the POA discuss implementation of the proposed plan with EPD. Thus far, the POA has not contacted EPD regarding this matter.

- The issue of the non-functioning lower lake drain is obviously of great concern also. We are talking 48 YEARS of ignoring this issue. Why the hell even have a regulatory requirement if it is going to be ignored – especially for this particular Dam, which I don't need to remind anyone is not just a Category 1, it is a very large one, with a documented history of concerns and stability questions.

The low level drain has not been operated since being installed. Low level drains are beneficial when there is an emergency with the dam and there is a need to lower the reservoir level. The requirement in the Rules is to operate this valve on an annual basis. However, it becomes a difficult issue for dams such as Lake Petit because the valve has not been operated routinely. There are concerns the valve stem or gate may not function, or they might fail and possibly result in a draining of the reservoir. In this scenario the rapid draining of the reservoir could lead to slope failures along the shoreline and thus impact many properties around the lake. Additionally, a failure of the valve stem or gate could result in a tremendous volume of sediment being released downstream likely resulting in environmental damage. Before the low level drain is operated, the dam owner should coordinate with their engineer on the best approach for this dam.

### **(3) Who owns the Damn Dam!?!?!**

The original classification was issued to Big Canoe Corporation in 1979, shortly after the Safe Dams Act was enacted. In February 1988 EPD issued a letter to the POA noting that the POA is now owner of the dam. In July 1988 a permit to operate the dam was issued to the POA and EPD has dealt with the POA ever since.

### **(4) Inspections and Maintenance being done?**

As noted above, the only inspection reports EPD has received over the past several years is the April 2020 report completed by Geosyntec.

It is important to clarify some confusion on inspections. Until 2010, EPD performed an annual inspection on every Category I dam. From 2010 until 2016 EPD shifted to doing half each year. In September 2016 the Rules for Dam Safety were amended to clarify that the responsibility for inspections lies with the dam owner. The Rules require the dam owner to conduct quarterly inspections. EPD developed instructions, a standardized report template and training to assist dam owners with performing these inspections. Some owners chose to have an engineer perform these quarterly inspections. Further, the Rules require dam owners to retain a professional engineer to conduct an inspection every two years beginning as soon as October 2017.

Copies of inspection reports should be sent to EPD but it's not unusual for dam owners and engineering consultants to overlook this requirement.

