



ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT CABINET
Department for Environmental Protection
DIVISION OF WATER
Kentucky Dam Maintenance Requirements

DEP 4_030_5

Rev. 8/2026

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Section 1. Vegetation Maintenance and Cover

1. Establish and maintain a dense cover of perennial grasses, rip rap, concrete, or other surface treatment that prevents erosion on all exposed surfaces of an embankment dam and earthen spillways;
2. Maintain any vegetated area so that grass and other vegetation remain less than or equal to six (6) inches in height;
3. Establish a twenty-five (25) foot buffer zone around the dam and its appurtenances that shall be visible and free of trees, brush, vines, and other vegetation with deep root systems that can obscure the embankment surface or provide concealment for burrowing animals;
4. Remove trees with a trunk diameter of more than or equal to four (4) inches in diameter by grinding, grubbing, or excavation under the supervision of a professional engineer;
5. Backfill, compact, and seed any area disturbed by tree removal in a manner that restores the surface integrity of the dam and its appurtenances;

Section 2. Access Restrictions

1. Prevent livestock from encroaching on vegetated dam surfaces, embankments, or appurtenances;
2. Limit vehicle access to a dam and its appurtenances to during maintenance and inspection purposes, as appropriate;
3. Restrict unauthorized access to a dam and its appurtenances;



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Section 3. Wildlife Management

1. Remove any burrowing animals;
 - a. Repair animal burrows with a compact, impervious material.
 - b. If the extent of burrowing animals places the integrity of the dam at risk of failure or results in water flowing through burrows:
 - i. Retain a professional engineer to develop plans and specifications for repair; and
 - ii. Apply for a dam construction permit to modify an existing dam as established in 401 KAR

Section 4. Maintaining Appurtenances

1. Keep spillways and drawdown devices free and clear of debris and blockages at all times;
2. Maintain drawdown facilities in operable condition;
3. Test drawdown facilities for functionality at least once every six (6) months;
 - a. On an annual basis, submit written certification that the required drawdown test has been performed as established in this subsection;
 - b. If a drawdown facility is damaged, deteriorating, or lacks proper maintenance, retain a professional engineer as established in 401 KAR 4:030 to develop plans and specifications for repair and apply for a permit to modify an existing dam as established in 401 KAR 4:030

Section 5. Structural Maintenance

1. A dam owner may grade the surface of an embankment, crest, or spillway to eliminate potholes



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and provide proper drainage, provided that the freeboard is not reduced; and approved grade elevations are maintained.

2. Material placed on the dam crest to restore the design freeboard shall be compacted to a minimum of ninety-five percent (95%) Standard Proctor density.
3. A dam owner shall not allow any structure that penetrates the surface or compromises the integrity of the dam embankment to be constructed or located on the dam embankment, or in the spillway flow section, without prior written cabinet authorization.