

# Introduction to the BC Dam Safety Program

June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2026



# Today's DIM Course Objectives



Overview of the BC Dam Safety Program



Overview of the BC Dam Safety Regulation



Overview of Earthen Dams



Tools and Resources available through BC Dam Safety

# Acknowledgements



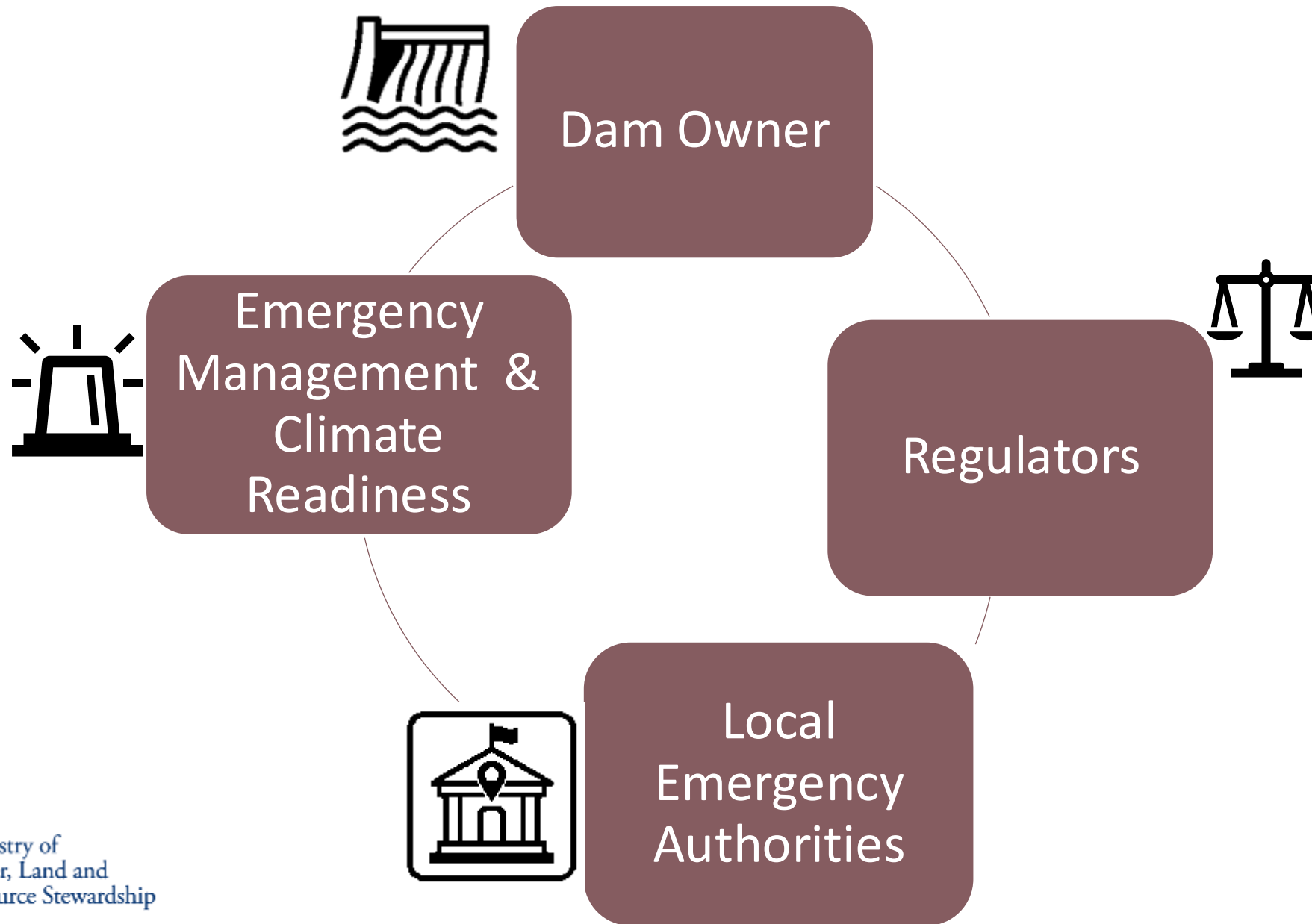
- British Columbia Small Water Systems Online Help Centre
- In no way does the completion of this course or viewing the content presented, provide all the necessary skills or knowledge criteria required to properly inspect and maintain a dam to reasonably safe standards.





# Overview of the BC Dam Safety Program

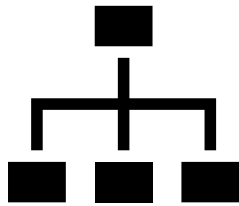
# Involvement and Responsibility



# BC Dam Safety Program



- Follows 4 pillars of dam owner compliance:
  - ✓ Education & Awareness
  - ✓ Prevention
  - ✓ Compliance and Enforcement
  - ✓ Emergency Preparedness and Response



- An authority of approval for various dam review procedures
- Works with EMCR and local governments for emergency response planning



# BC Dam Safety Program – the team

## BC Dam Safety team members

Water Comptroller

Head of Dam Safety

Dam Safety Officers

- Various engineering backgrounds

Safety Specialist

Data & Geometrics Specialist

Compliance Specialist

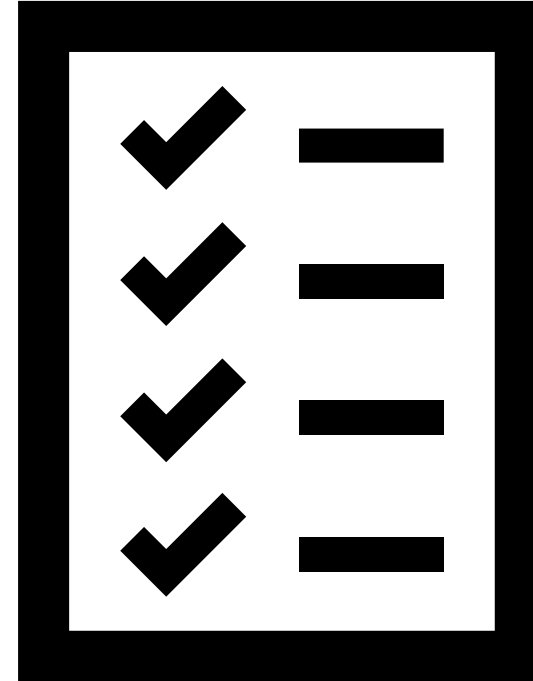
Training Coordinator

[Dam.safety@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Dam.safety@gov.bc.ca)

# BC Dam Safety Program- Audits

An Audit is conducted:

- by a Dam Safety Officer
- to ensure compliance and support dam owners/operators in applying the regulation to their dam
- Conducted regularly



# BC Dam Safety Program – Authority to accept

## Acceptance of following documents:

Dam Emergency Plans

Dam Safety Review Reports

Invasive Investigation Plans

Decommissioning Plans

Operation, Maintenance, and Surveillance Manual

Plans to address potential hazards

Plans for installing, maintaining or replacing instrumentation

Completion reports following works to alter, improve or replace dam components

# BC Dam Safety Program – Registry of BC Dams

The screenshot shows the website for the BC Dam Safety Program. At the top left is the British Columbia logo. The main header reads 'PRODUCTION (HOST - CH)'. Below this is a navigation menu with sections for 'E-Licensing Home', 'WATER MANAGEMENT', 'COMMON FUNCTIONS', and 'RESOURCES'. The 'Dam Safety Program' section is highlighted, featuring three images: a waterfall, a vineyard, and a modern building. Below the images is a 'Searches' section with a list of search criteria. At the bottom left of the page is an 'Exit this e-service' button.

**BRITISH COLUMBIA** PRODUCTION (HOST - CH)

**E-Licensing Home**

**WATER MANAGEMENT**

- [Main Menu](#)
- [Water Licensing](#)
- [Dam Safety](#)
- [Flood Safety](#)
- [Finance](#)
- [Reports](#)

**COMMON FUNCTIONS**

- [Management Reports](#)
- [To Do List](#)
- [My Profile](#)




**RESOURCES**

- [Contact Us](#)

(Organ, Kim  
WLRS:EX)

[Exit this e-service](#)

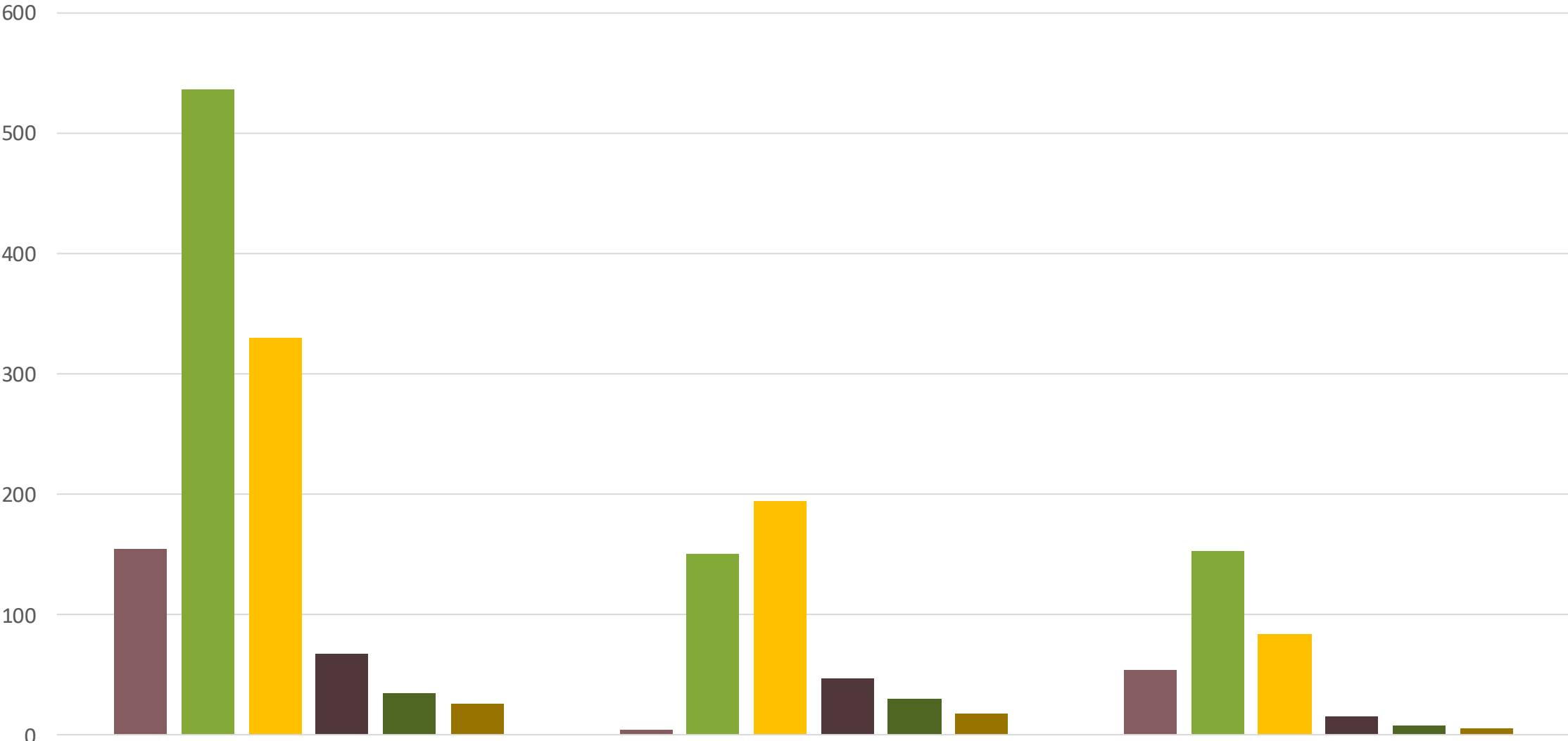
**Dam Safety Program**



**Searches**

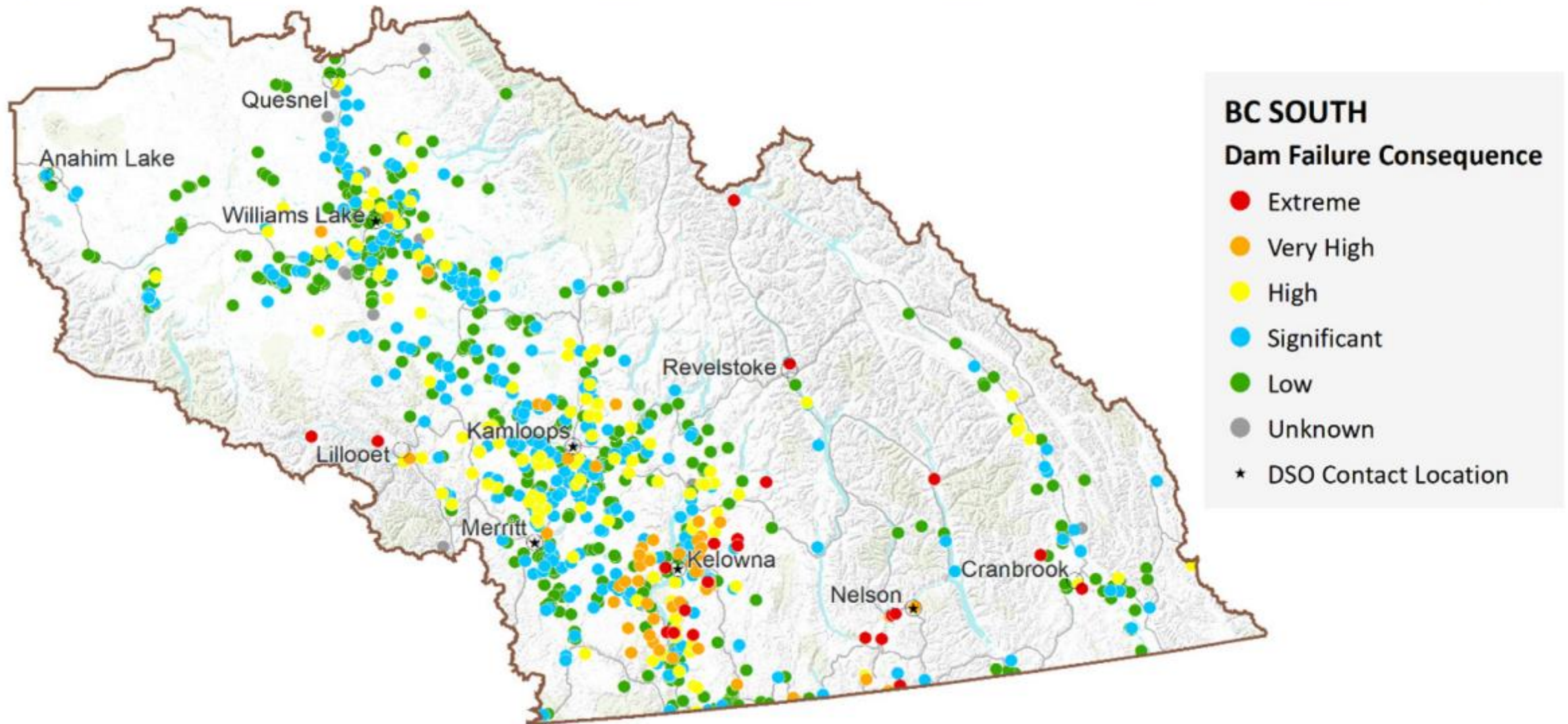
- for Dam
- for Dam Compliance
- for Dam Contacts
- for Dam System
- for Job (Dam Safety)
- for Job (Water Licensing)
- for Licence
- for Local Authority
- for Point of Interest
- for Reservoir
- for Water Client

# Distribution of Regulated Dams in BC by Consequence Classification



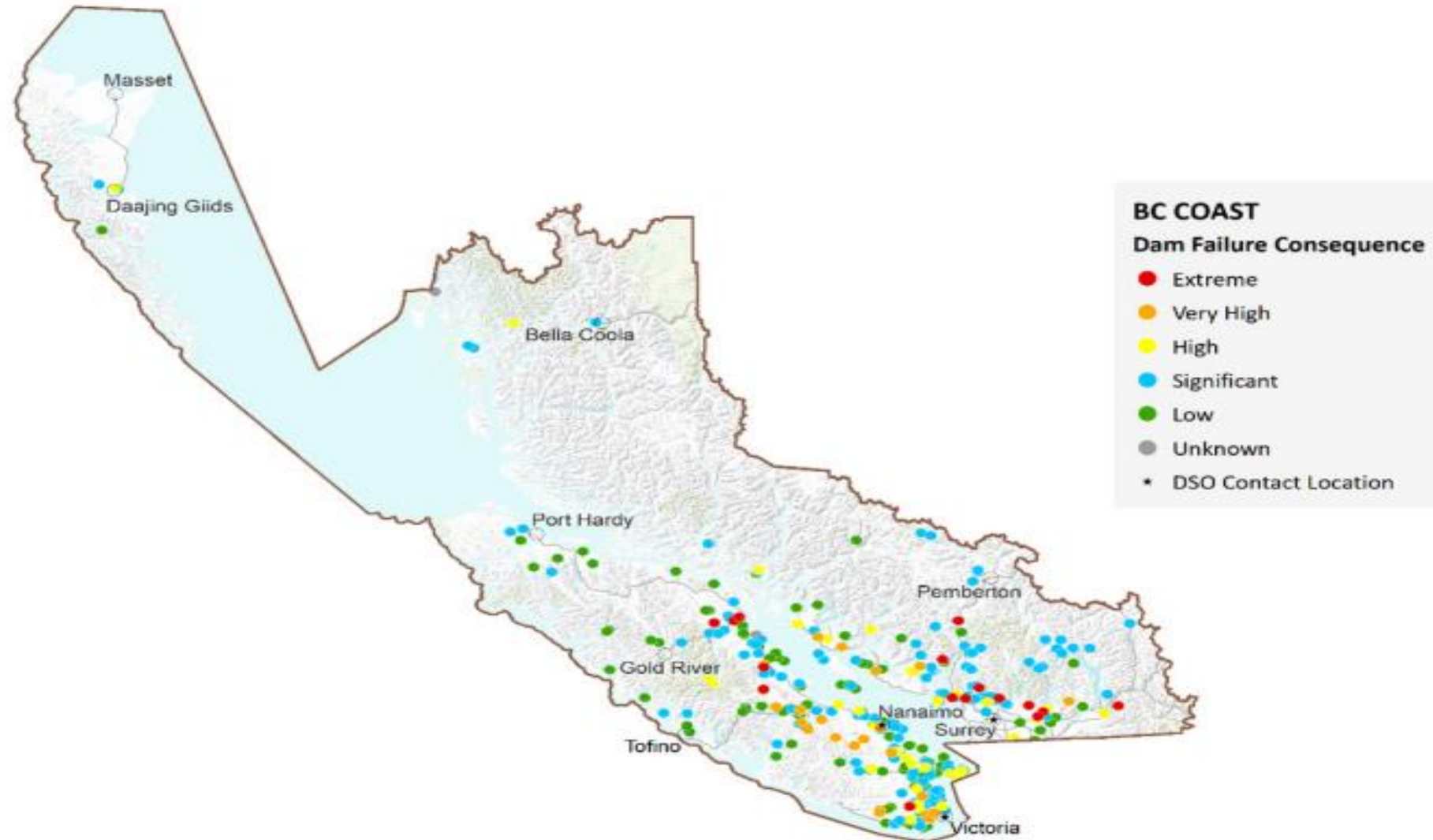
# Southern Distribution of Dams by Consequence Classification

Figure 6 – Southern Distribution of Regulated Active Dams by Failure Consequence (note % is of Area Subtotal)



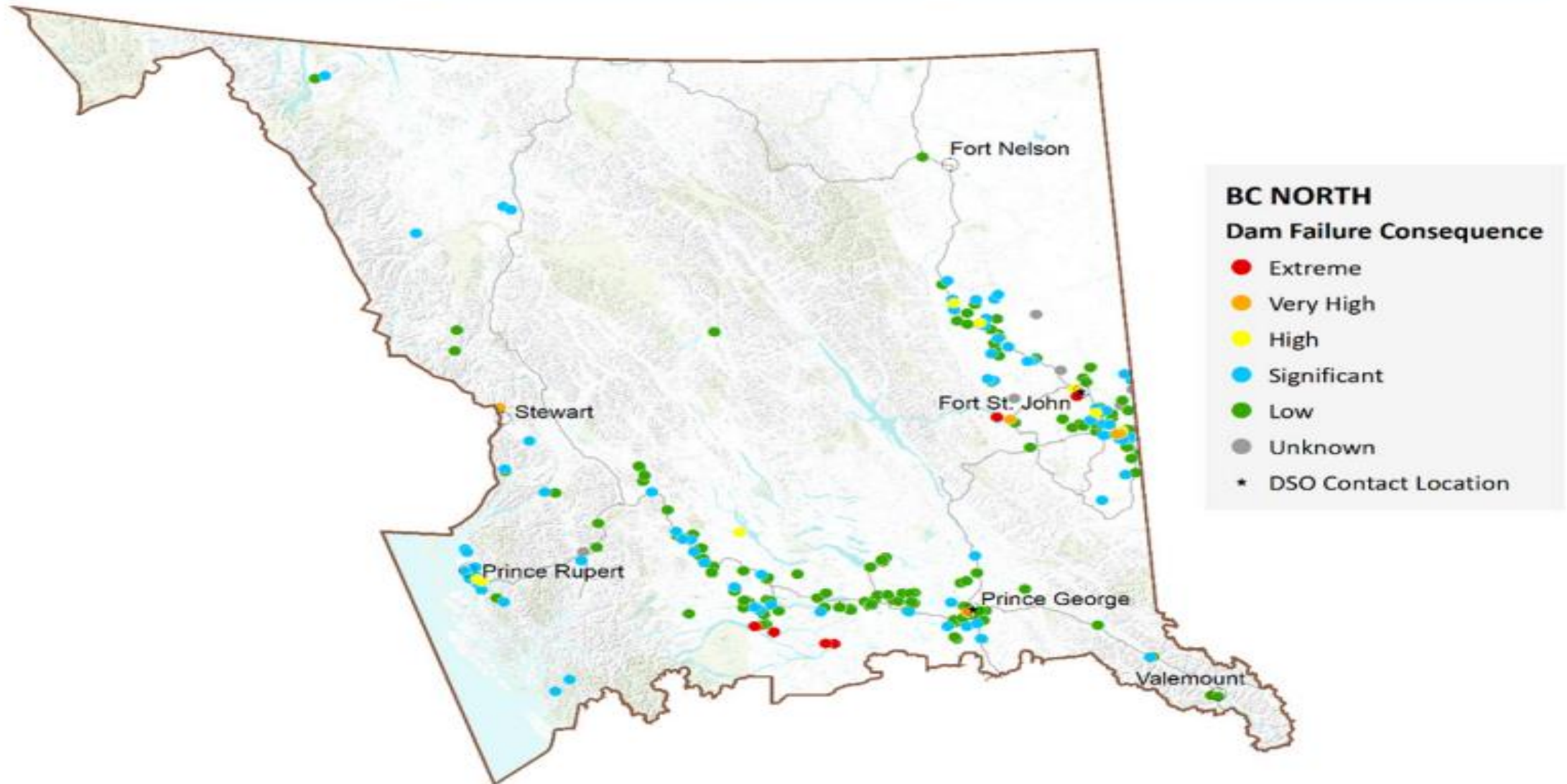
# Southern Distribution of Dams by Consequence Classification

Figure 5 - Coastal Distribution of Active Regulated Dams by Failure Consequence Classification (note % is of Area Subtotal)



# Southern Distribution of Dams by Consequence Classification

Figure 7 - Northern Distribution of Regulated Active Dams by Failure Consequence (note % is of Area Subtotal)





# Overview of the BC Dam Safety Regulation

# BC Dam Safety Regulation



- Enforced under the Water Sustainability Act

- The current version is the [2016 Dam Safety Regulation and updates](#)



- The Testalinden Dam Failure motivated the change





# BC Dam Safety Regulation

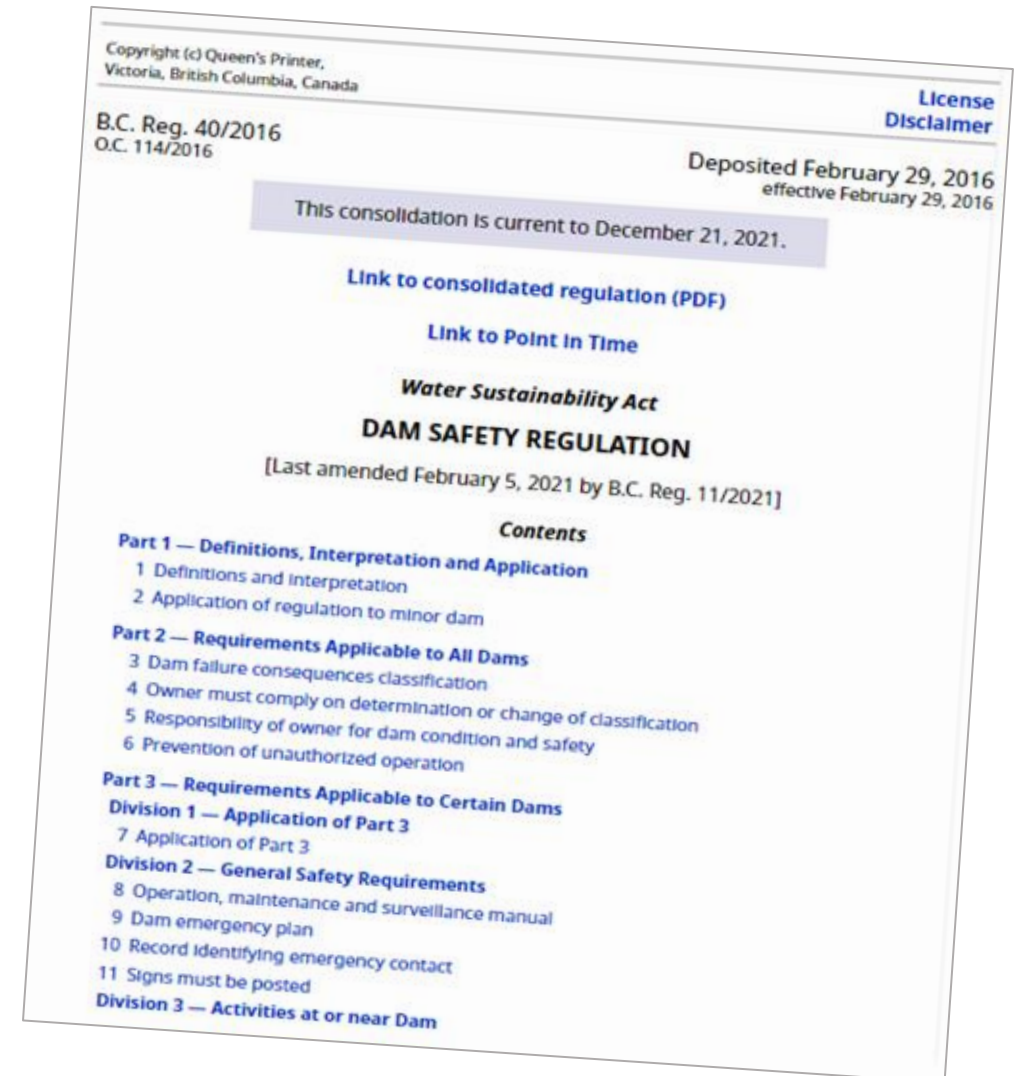


- New 2016 guidelines reflected the Canadian Dam Association Guidelines and strengthened public safety
- The Dam Safety Regulation outlines the responsibilities of BC dam owners



# Dam Safety Regulation Purpose

- Sets requirements and best practices
- All aspects of dam design, construction, operation, maintenance, removal and decommissioning of dams
- February 29, 2016



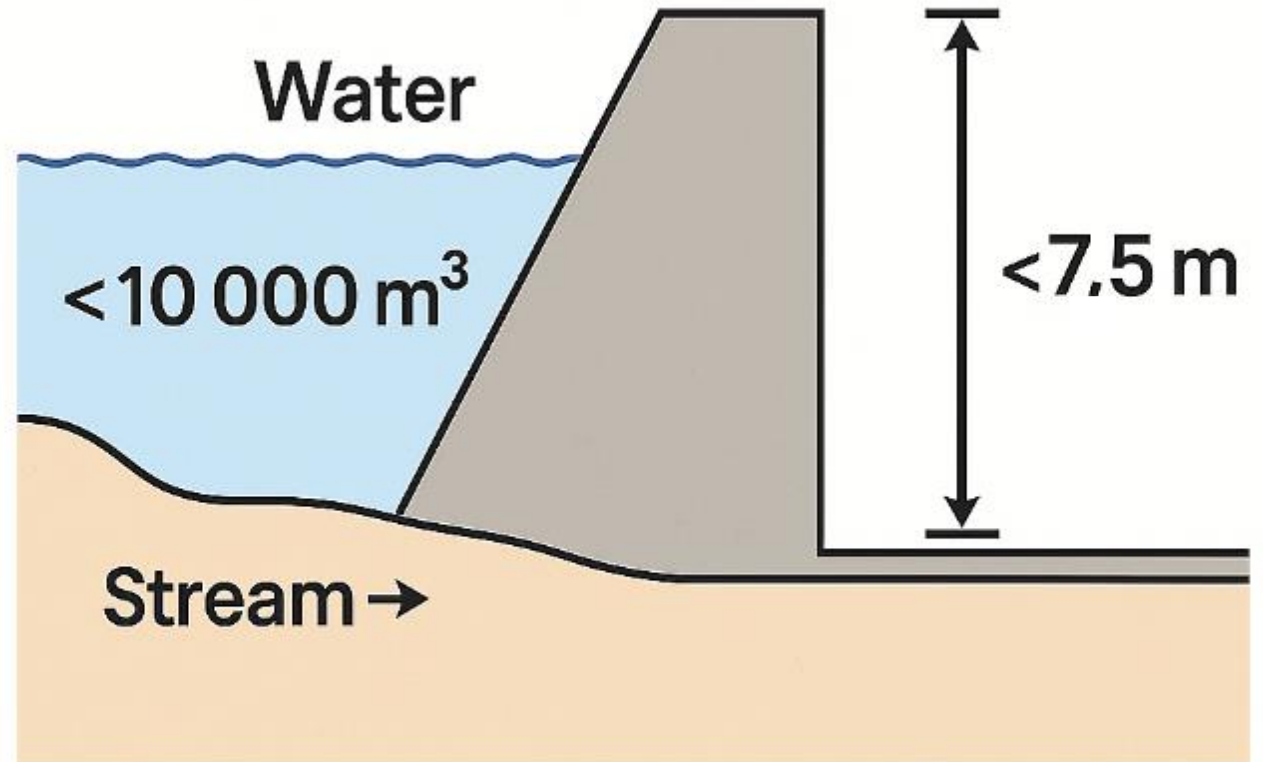
# Regulation – Part 1 – Definitions, Interpretation and Application

## Part 1 – Definitions, Interpretation and Application

2 (1) Unless otherwise ordered under subsection (2), this regulation does not apply to a dam that meets both of the following criteria:

- a) the dam is less than 7.5 m in height;
- b) the dam is capable of impounding at full supply level a maximum total storage volume of water in the reservoir of the dam of 10 000 m<sup>3</sup> or less.
- c) (2) Subject to section 7 [*application of Part 3*], the comptroller or a water manager may order that this regulation applies to a dam described in subsection (1) of this section if the comptroller or water manager is satisfied that the dam is or may become potentially hazardous to
  - (a) public safety, (b) the environment, or (c) land or other property.

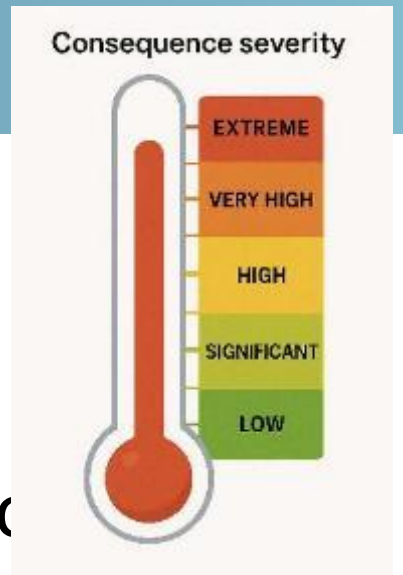
Note, if a small dam has *consequences*, the dam may still be regulated!  
(more on consequences later)



# Regulation Part 2 Requirements

Dam owners have five main obligations directly related to the failure consequence classification:

1. Determine the dam failure consequence classification
2. Annually review the consequence classification
  - a) Document the review
  - b) Make any revisions
  - c) Submit to DSO if necessary
3. Comply with all applicable parts of the regulation



# Regulation Part 2 Requirements – con't

Dam owners have obligations continued

4. Ensure proper operating condition
  - a) Surveillance and inspections
  - b) Maintenance
  - c) Repairs
5. Prevent unauthorized operation of the dam



# Regulation Part 3 Requirements

## Operations

Prepare, review, and update the **OMS** plan and **DEP**.

Submit dam information to local emergency authorities

Identify an emergency contact

Place proper signage on dam areas

# Regulation Part 3 Requirements

## Construction and Rehabilitation

***Obtain authorization***  
when requiring alterations

***Obtain authorization***  
before dam removal

# Section 17 - Removing, Decommissioning, Deactivating and Stopping Dam Operations

## Before beginning work:

- Give minimum 120 days notice to a DSO
- Submit plan to DSO minimum of 90 days before work begins
- Receive DSO approval for notice and plan

## After completing work:

- submit a report of work performed within 60 days of completion

# Regulation Part 3 Requirements

## Emergency response

Prepare DEP to  
address all  
hazardous  
situations

Respond to  
hazardous  
conditions

# Regulation Part 3 Requirements

## Maintenance and Surveillance

Conduct **site surveillance** of dam on a routine basis

**Test** all mechanical components

Install **instrumentation** as needed

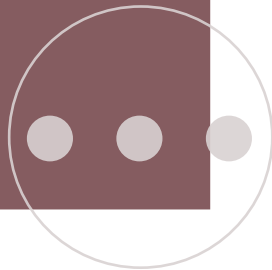
Conduct **dam safety reviews**

Submit all required records

# Regulation – Parts 4 & 5

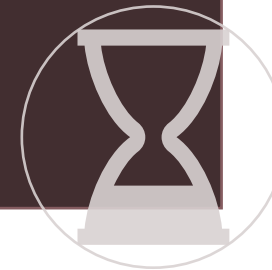
- Division 1 – Dams with Multiple Owners
- Division 2 – Records Managements
- Division 3 – Advice from Independent Expert
- Division 4 – Offences

## Part 4



- Clarifies details of dams undergoing transitions such as construction or changes to classifications

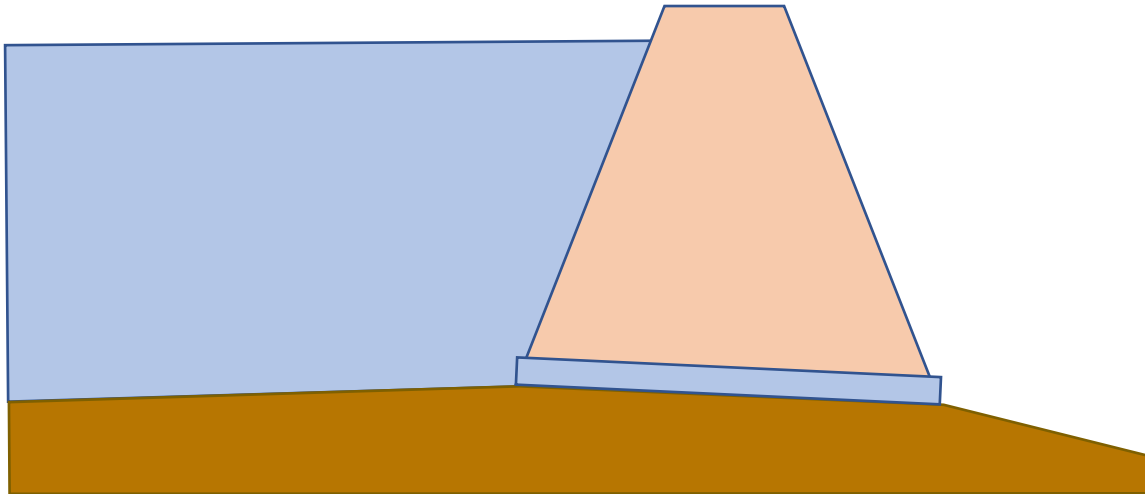
## Part 5



# Consequence Classification– 2 factors

Two factors are used to determine how the regulation applies to your dam:

## 1. Dam dimensions



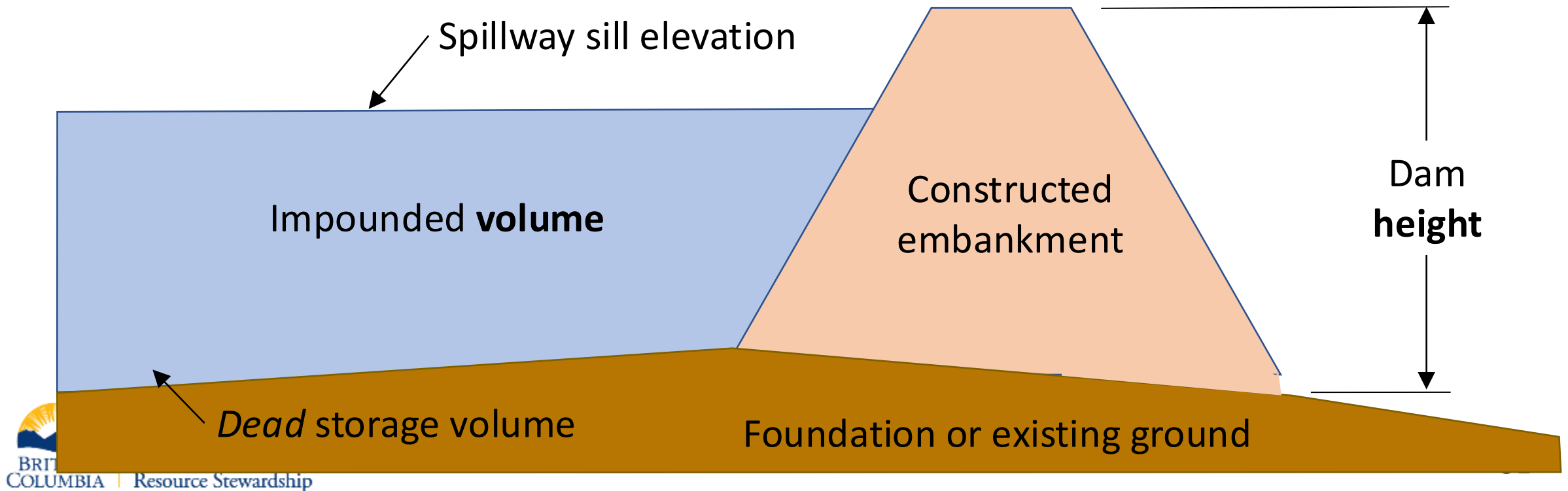
## 2. Dam failure consequences



# Dam Safety Regulation - Dimensions

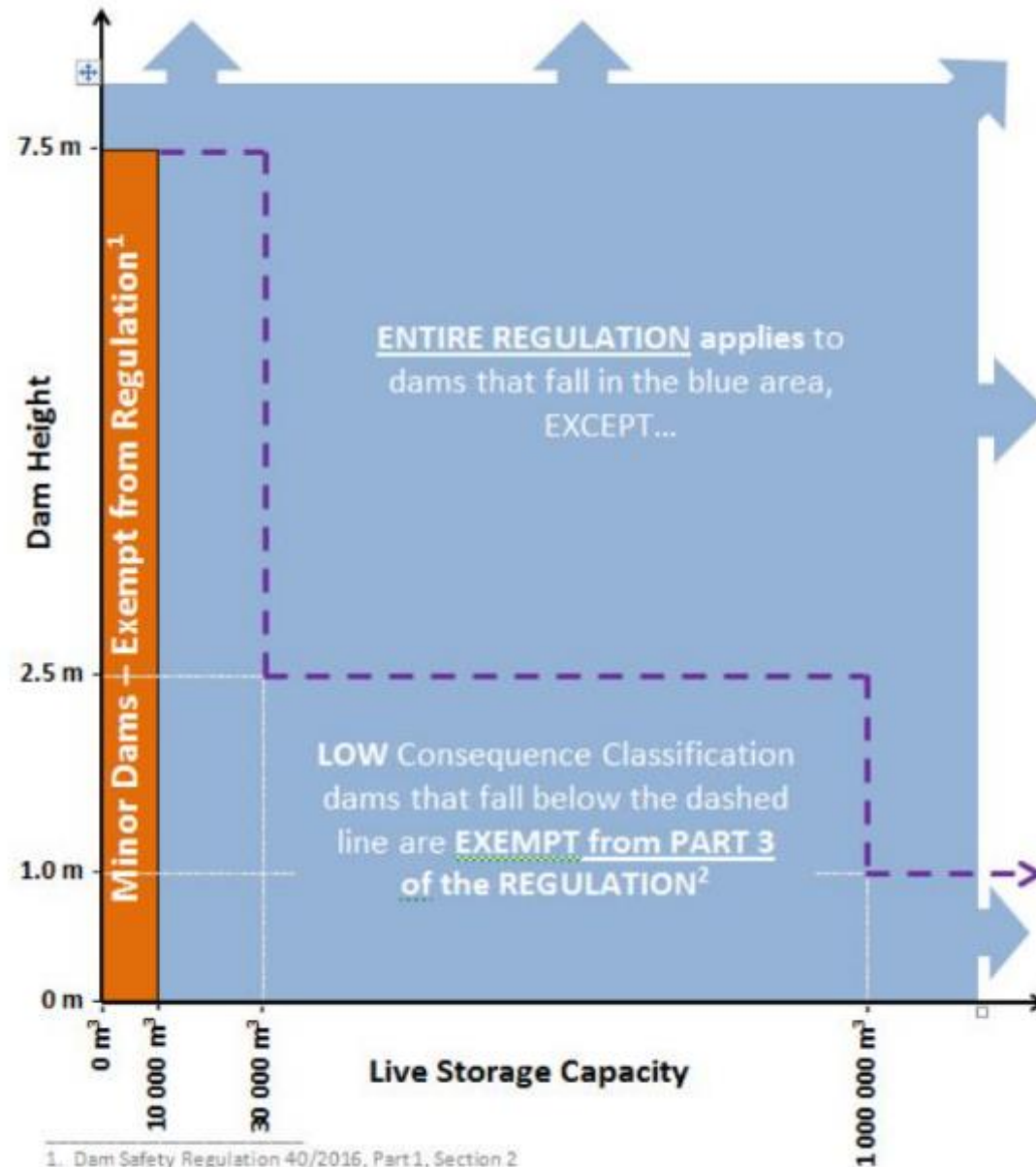
The following dimensions are required to determine *if* the regulation applies and whether Part 3 applies:

- Dam **height**
- Impounded **volume** (*live volume*)



# Visual Graph & Representation

- Dam height vs. the dam storage capacity helps determine if the regulation applies
- Must consider the context of the dam's location, inundation and size

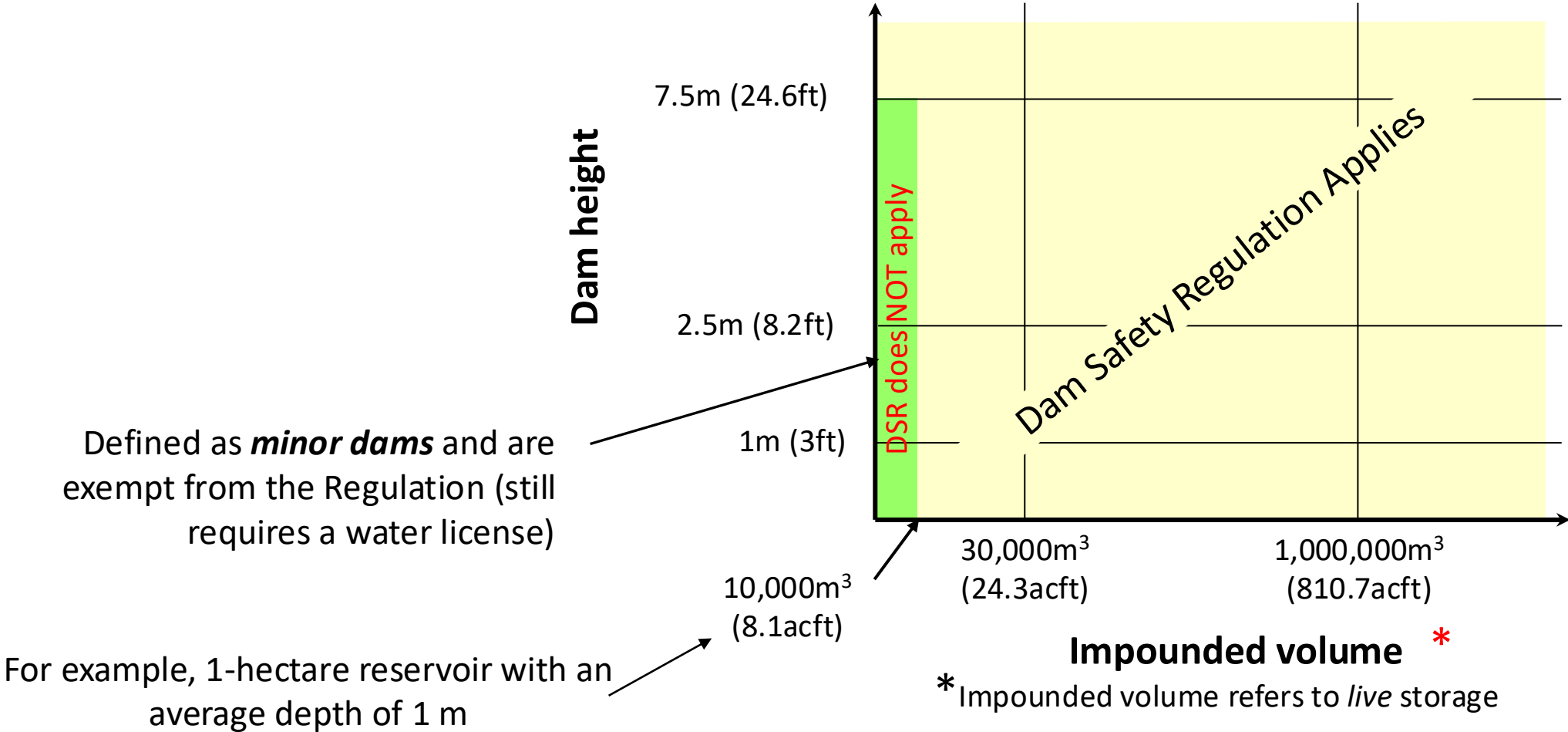


1. Dam Safety Regulation 40/2016, Part 1, Section 2

2. Dam Safety Regulation 40/2016, Part 3, Section 7

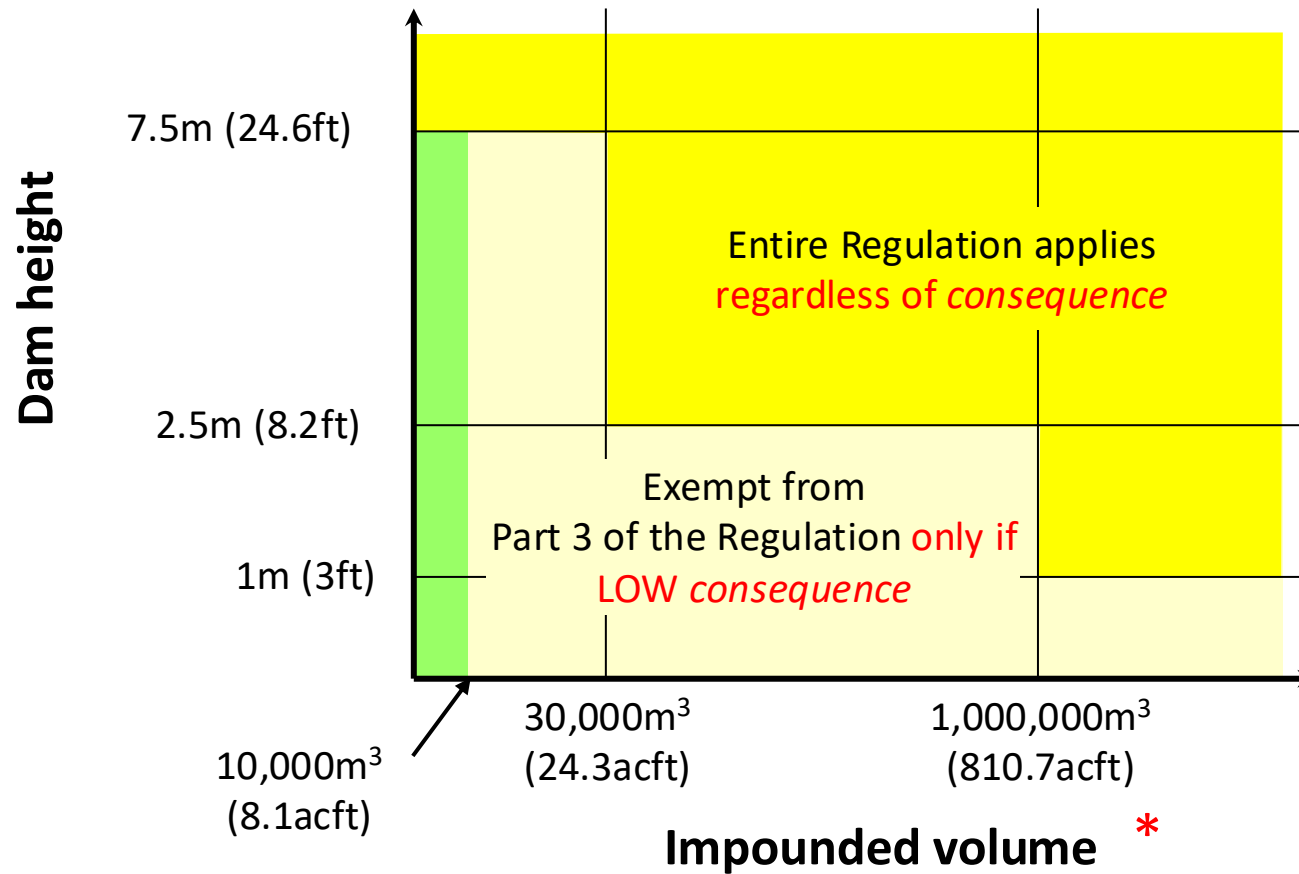
# Dam Safety Regulation - Unregulated

Per the regulation, a dam is generally **NOT** regulated if it less than 7.5 m AND 10 000 m<sup>3</sup> or less



# Dam Safety Regulation – determining Part 3

The regulations applicable for a dam include Part 3 if: 1 000 000 m<sup>3</sup> and 1m or 30 000 and 2.5 m or >7.5 m

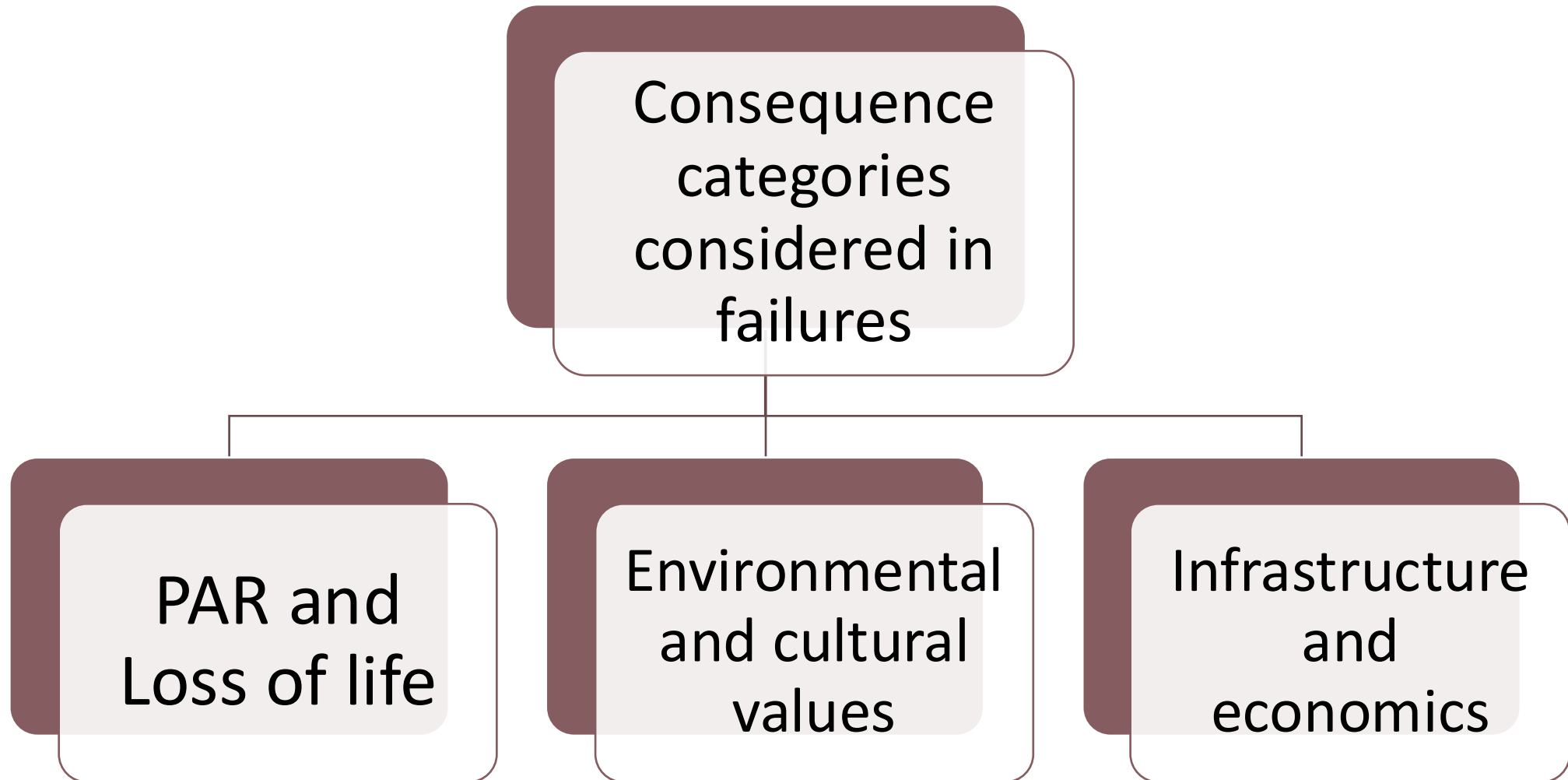


\* Impounded volume refers to *live storage*

# Consequence classification drives owner activities

Schedule 2	Low	Significant	High	Very High	Extreme
Redetermination		Annually			
Site surveillance	Quarterly	Monthly	Weekly		
Inspections		Annually			Semi-annually
Test operations		Annually			
DEP contacts review	NA	Annually			
Review emergency contact list	Annually	NA			
OMS & DEP review	NA	10 years	10 years	7 years	7 years
Dam safety review	NA	NA	10 years	10 years	7 years

# Dam Safety Regulation - Consequences



# Dam Safety Regulation – Consequences of failure

The term “consequences of failure” is defined in the Dam Safety Regulation and the CDA Guidelines as follows:

“Consequences of failure” means losses or damages that are caused by a failure of a dam

“Failure” in relation to a dam, means an uncontrolled release of all or part of the water impounded by the dam, whether caused by a collapse of the dam or not

Need to consider impacts on the downstream or upstream area of a dam resulting from a failure of the dam or its appurtenances

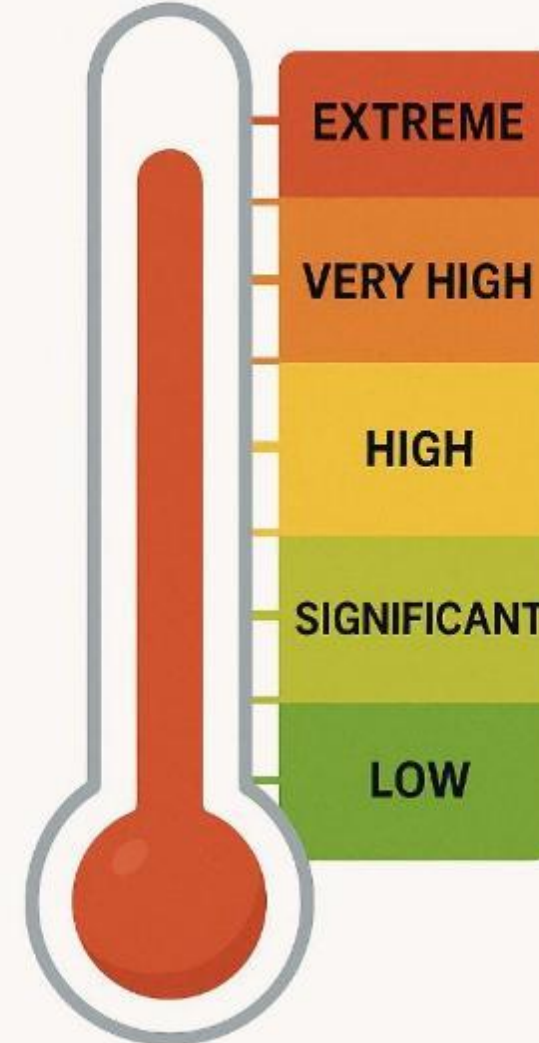
The term ‘consequences’ refers to the damage exceeding that which would have occurred in the same natural event or conditions had the dam not failed; these may also be called incremental consequences of failure

# Dam Safety Regulation – Consequence severity

The “severity” of these consequences correspond to classifications defined by the Regulation as:

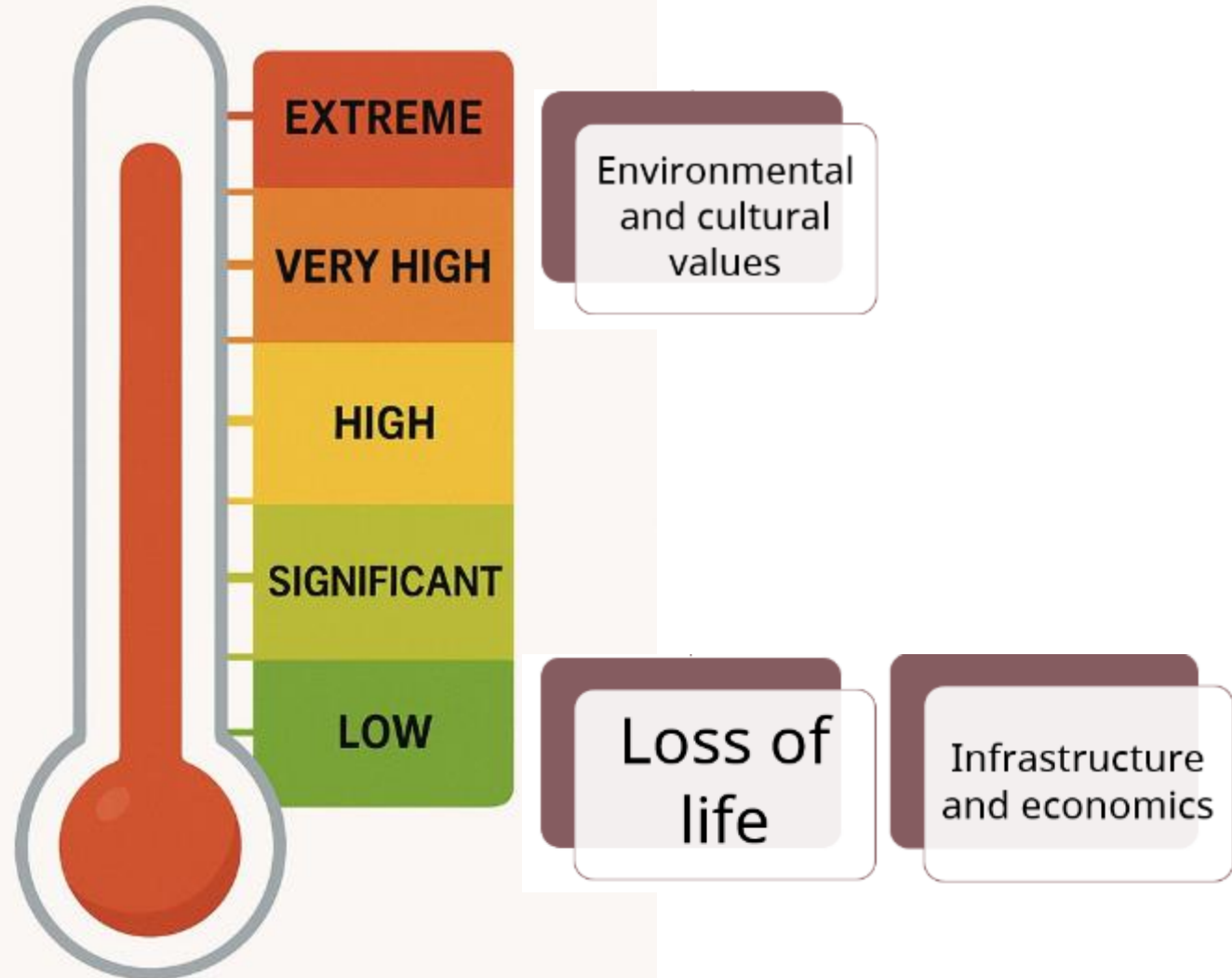
- Extreme
- Very high
- High
- Significant
- Low

## Consequence severity



# Dam Safety Regulation – Consequence categories

## Consequence severity



# Consequence Classification – Regulation Table



Dam class	Population at risk	Incremental losses		
		Loss of life	Environmental and cultural values	Infrastructure and economics
Low	None <sup>1</sup>	No possibility of loss or life other than unforeseeable misadventure	Minimal short-term loss or deterioration and no long-term loss or deterioration of (a) fisheries habitat or wildlife habitat, (b) rare or endangered species, (c) unique landscapes, or (d) sites having significant cultural value	Minimal economic losses mostly limited to the dam owner's property, with virtually no pre-existing potential for development within the dam inundation zone
<i>If small, Part 3 DOES NOT apply</i>		<hr/>		
Significant	Temporary only <sup>2</sup>	Low potential for multiple loss of life	No significant loss or deterioration of (a) important fisheries habitat or important wildlife habitat, (b) rare or endangered species, (c) unique landscapes, or (d) sites having significant cultural value, and restoration or compensation in kind is highly possible	Low economic losses affecting limited infrastructure and residential buildings, public transportation or services or commercial facilities, or some destruction of or damage to locations used occasionally and irregularly for temporary purposes
<i>Does NOT require Dam Safety Reviews</i>		<hr/>		
High	Permanent <sup>3</sup>	10 or fewer	Significant loss or deterioration of (a) important fisheries habitat or important wildlife habitat, (b) rare or endangered species, (c) unique landscapes, or (d) sites having significant cultural value, and restoration or compensation in kind is highly possible	High economic losses affecting infrastructure, public transportation or services or commercial facilities, or some destruction of or some severe damage to scattered residential buildings
<i>Requires Dam Safety Reviews</i>		<hr/>		

Table cont'd

# Consequence Classification – Regulation Table continued



Dam class	Population at risk	Incremental losses		
		Loss of life	Environmental and cultural values	Infrastructure and economics
Very High	Permanent <sup>3</sup>	100 or fewer	Significant loss or deterioration of (a) critical fisheries habitat or critical wildlife habitat, (b) rare or endangered species, (c) unique landscapes, or (d) sites having significant cultural value, and restoration or compensation in kind is possible but impractical	Very high economic losses affecting important infrastructure, public transportation or services or commercial facilities, or some destruction of or some severe damage to residential areas
Extreme	Permanent <sup>3</sup>	More than 100	Major loss or deterioration of (a) critical fisheries habitat or critical wildlife habitat, (b) rare or endangered species, (c) unique landscapes, or (d) sites having significant cultural value, and restoration or compensation in kind is impossible	Extremely high economic losses affecting critical infrastructure, public transportation or services or commercial facilities, or some destruction of or some severe damage to residential areas

- 1 There is no identifiable population at risk
- 2 People are only occasionally and irregularly in the dam-breach inundation zone, for example stopping temporarily, passing through on transportation routes or participating in recreational activities.
- 3 The population at risk is ordinarily or regularly located in the dam-breach inundation zone, whether to live, work or recreate

Consequence classification determination is the responsibility of the owner

Completed by consultants on behalf of the dam owner:

- Submit to DSO for acceptance
- Dam break or inundation study is required

# Annual Redetermination of the Consequence Classification



- Completed by dam owners or consultants during Dam Safety Reviews or inspections.
  - Only submitted if changed
  - Record the re-determination with a clear rationale/justification

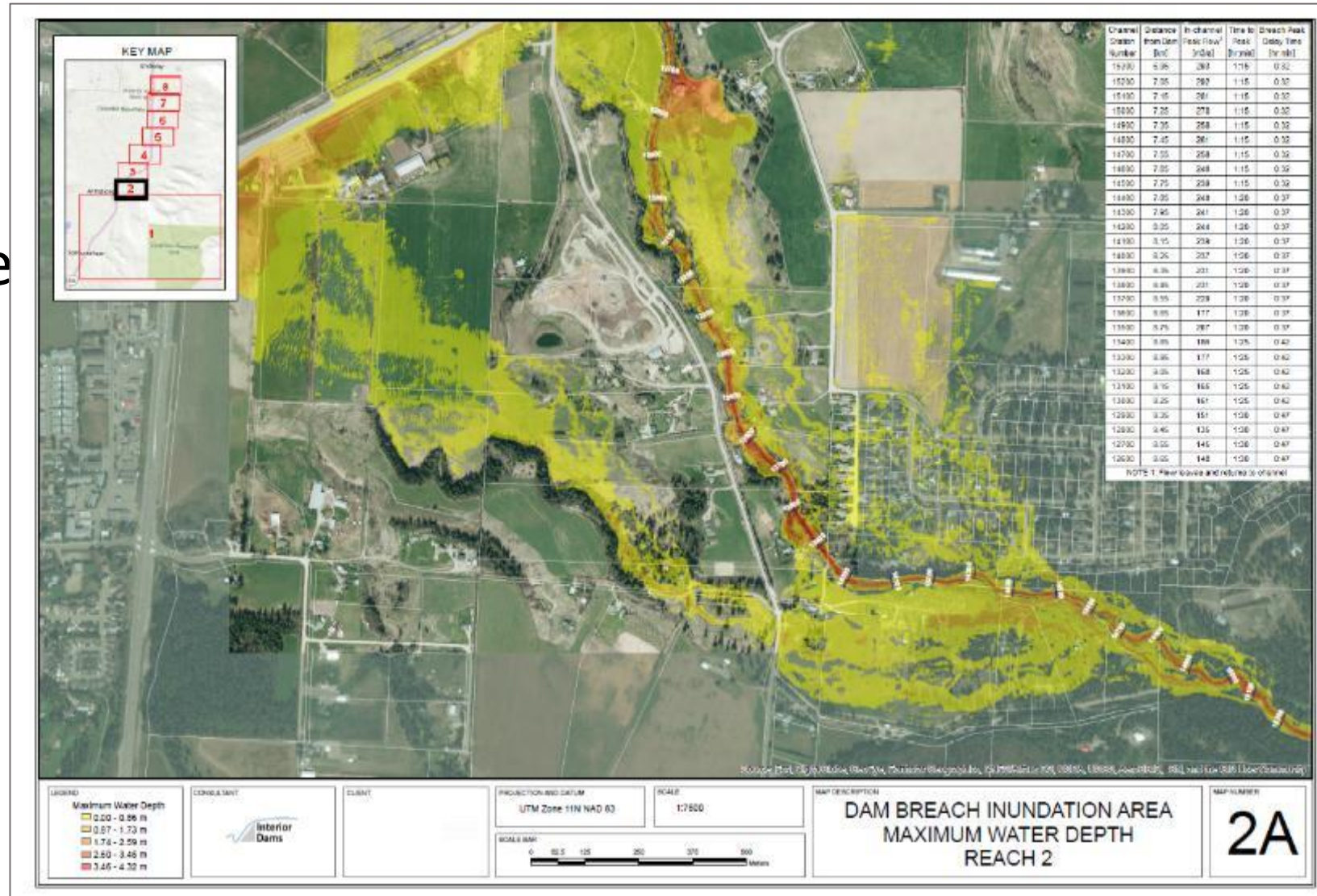
\*The DSO may order the consequence classification to be reviewed by a qualified professional if the consequence classification has become out-of-date or appears to be inappropriate

# Consequence Classification- record of initial determination

A record of the initial determination with:

- Breach flow estimate
- Flood mapping
- Clear rationale/ justification

Example water maximum depth map from a “flood-induced” failure (2016)



# Consequence Classification – failure types

“The initial hydrologic conditions for a dam breach are categorized as flood induced failure and sunny day failure”



# Some Factors To Consider



Consequences  
compound in  
extreme events

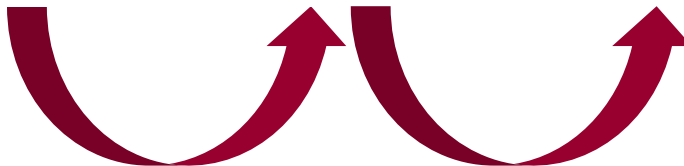


# Other Rules of Thumb – Infrastructure and Economics



# Consequence Creep

Schedule 2	Low	Significant	High	Very High	Extreme
Redetermination		Annually			
Site surveillance	Quarterly	Monthly	Weekly		
Inspections		Annually			Semi-annually
Test operations		Annually			
DEP contacts review	NA	Annually			
Review emergency contact list	Annually	NA			
OMS & DEP review	NA	10 years	10 years	7 years	7 years
Dam safety review	NA	NA	10 years	10 years	7 years

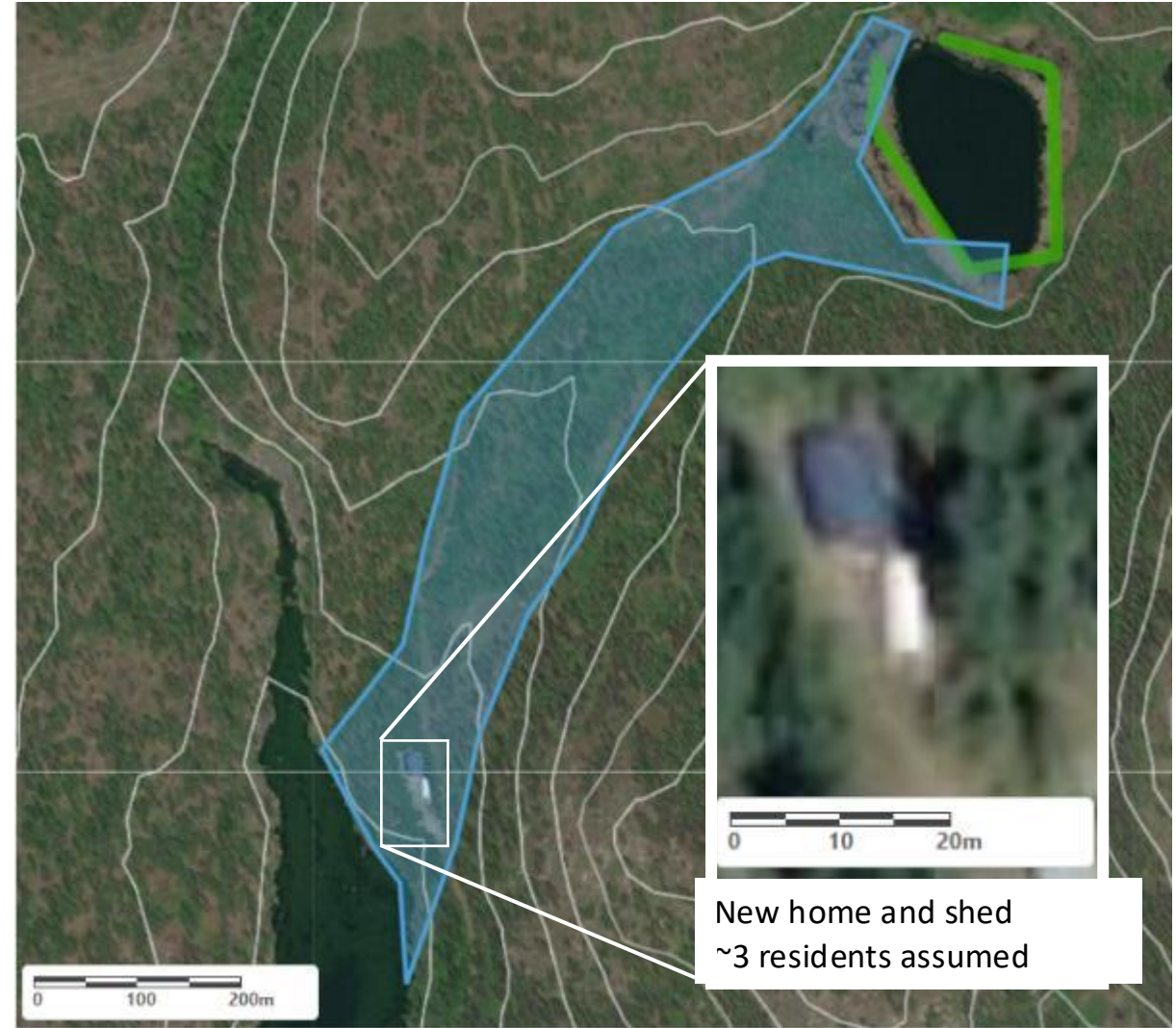
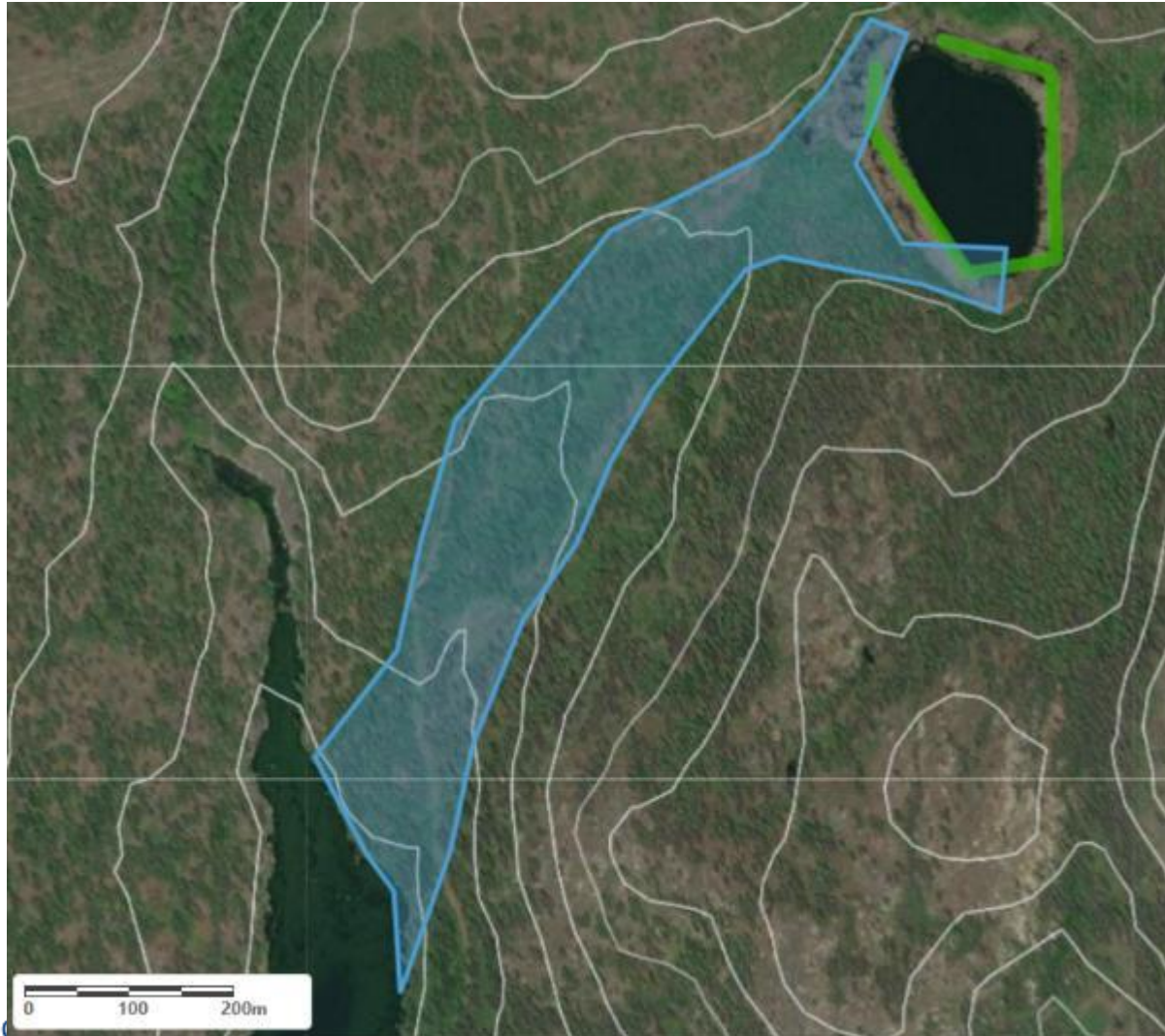


# Consequence Creep

You own a LOW consequence dam and...

- The last 2 years your dam was reviewed and re-determined as LOW and records are on file based on simple inundation mapping.
- A new development of one (1) home was just completed directly in the path of your dam break flood mapping.
- How does this re-determine the classification of your dam

# Consequence Creep continued



# Example 3 – incremental losses

- Using the Schedule 1 table, the classification of HIGH most clearly describes 2 categories
- Highest classification of all category's dictates

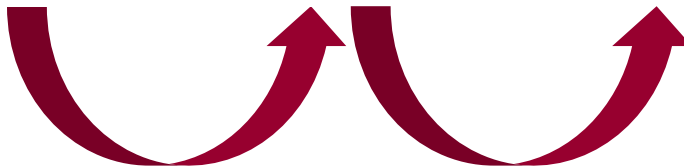
Therefore:

**HIGH**

Dam class	Population at risk	Incremental losses		
		Loss of life	Environmental and cultural values	Infrastructure and economics
Low	None <sup>1</sup>	No possibility of loss or life other than unforeseeable misadventure	Minimal short-term loss or deterioration and no long-term loss or deterioration of (a) fisheries habitat or wildlife habitat, (b) rare or endangered species, (c) unique landscapes, or (d) sites having significant cultural value	minimal economic losses mostly limited to the dam owner's property, with virtually no pre-existing potential for development within the dam inundation zone
Significant	Temporary <sup>2</sup>	Low potential for multiple loss of life	No significant loss or deterioration of (a) important fisheries habitat or important wildlife habitat, (b) rare or endangered species, (c) unique landscapes, or (d) sites having significant cultural value, and restoration or compensation in kind is highly possible	Low economic losses affecting limited infrastructure and residential buildings, public transportation or services or commercial facilities, or some destruction of or damage to locations used occasionally and irregularly for temporary purposes
High	Permanent <sup>3</sup>	10 or fewer	Significant loss or deterioration of (a) important fisheries habitat or important wildlife habitat, (b) rare or endangered species, (c) unique landscapes, or (d) sites having significant cultural value, and restoration or compensation in kind is highly possible	High economic losses affecting infrastructure, public transportation or services or commercial facilities, or some destruction of or some severe damage to scattered residential buildings

# Consequence Creep

Schedule 2	Low	Significant	High	Very High	Extreme
Redetermination		Annually			
Site surveillance	Quarterly	Monthly	Weekly		
Inspections		Annually			Semi-annually
Test operations		Annually			
DEP contacts review	NA	Annually			
Review emergency contact list	Annually	NA			
OMS & DEP review	NA	10 years	10 years	7 years	7 years
Dam safety review	NA	NA	10 years	10 years	7 years





# Overview of the Earthen Dams



# Reminder



In no way does the completion of this course or viewing the content presented, provide all the necessary skills or knowledge criteria required to properly inspect and maintain a dam to reasonably safe standards.

# Dam Safety Background

- A dam is defined as a “*man made barrier constructed for the purpose storing water*”
- Focus on reducing the risk of any potential failure to a minimum
- Preventing damage to residents, environments, infrastructures, and sacred spaces
- Dam failures are avoidable, but cannot be eliminated

## W.A.C Bennett Dam, Peace River BC

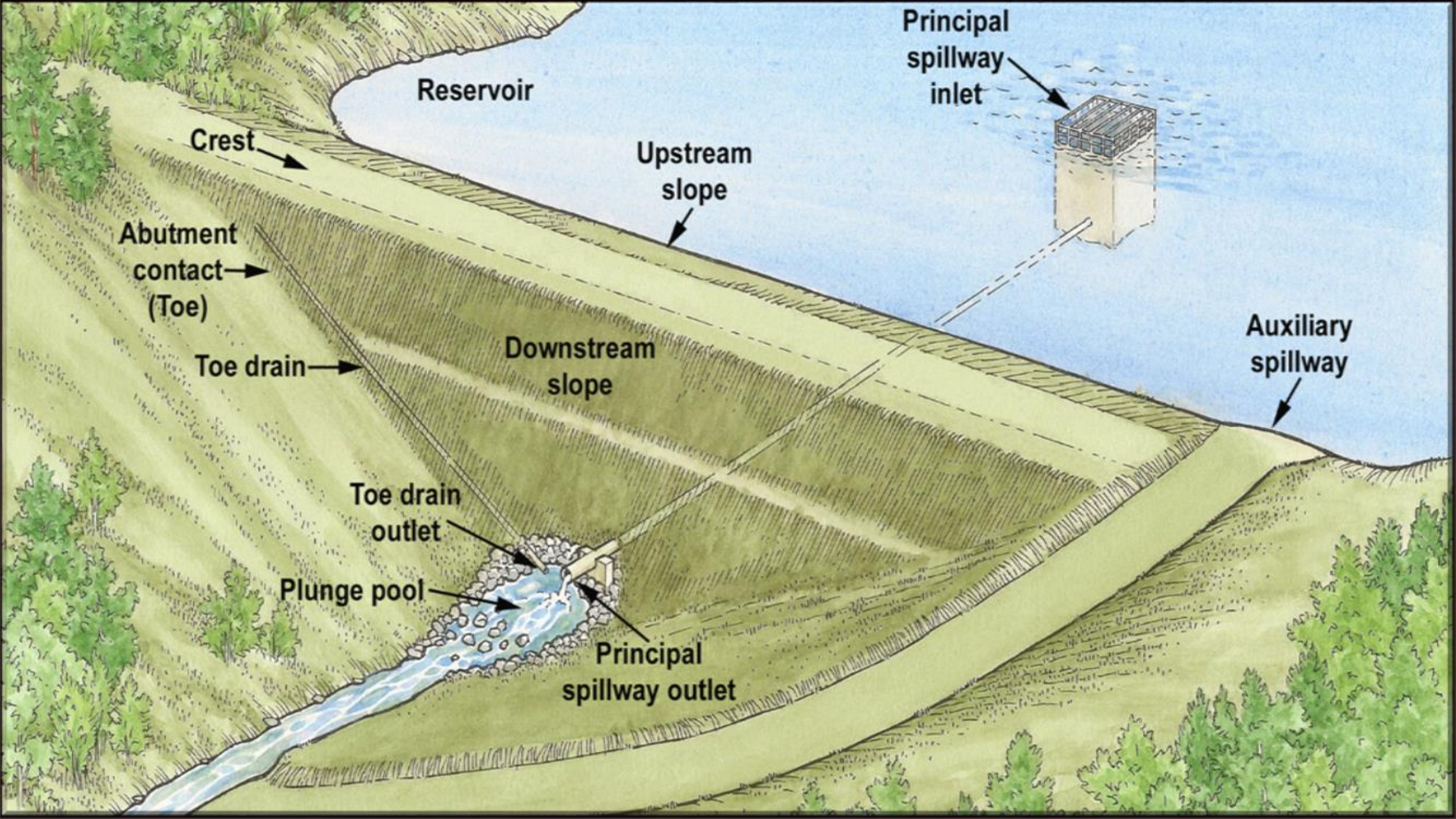
- An example of a large *earthfill dam*
- Over 30% of BC's power comes from this dam
- One of BC's most critical pieces of infrastructure

# Typical BC earthen embankment dam



Common terminology helps us identify, describe, and troubleshoot common deficiencies.





Reservoir

Principal spillway inlet

Crest

Upstream slope

Abutment contact (Toe)

Toe drain

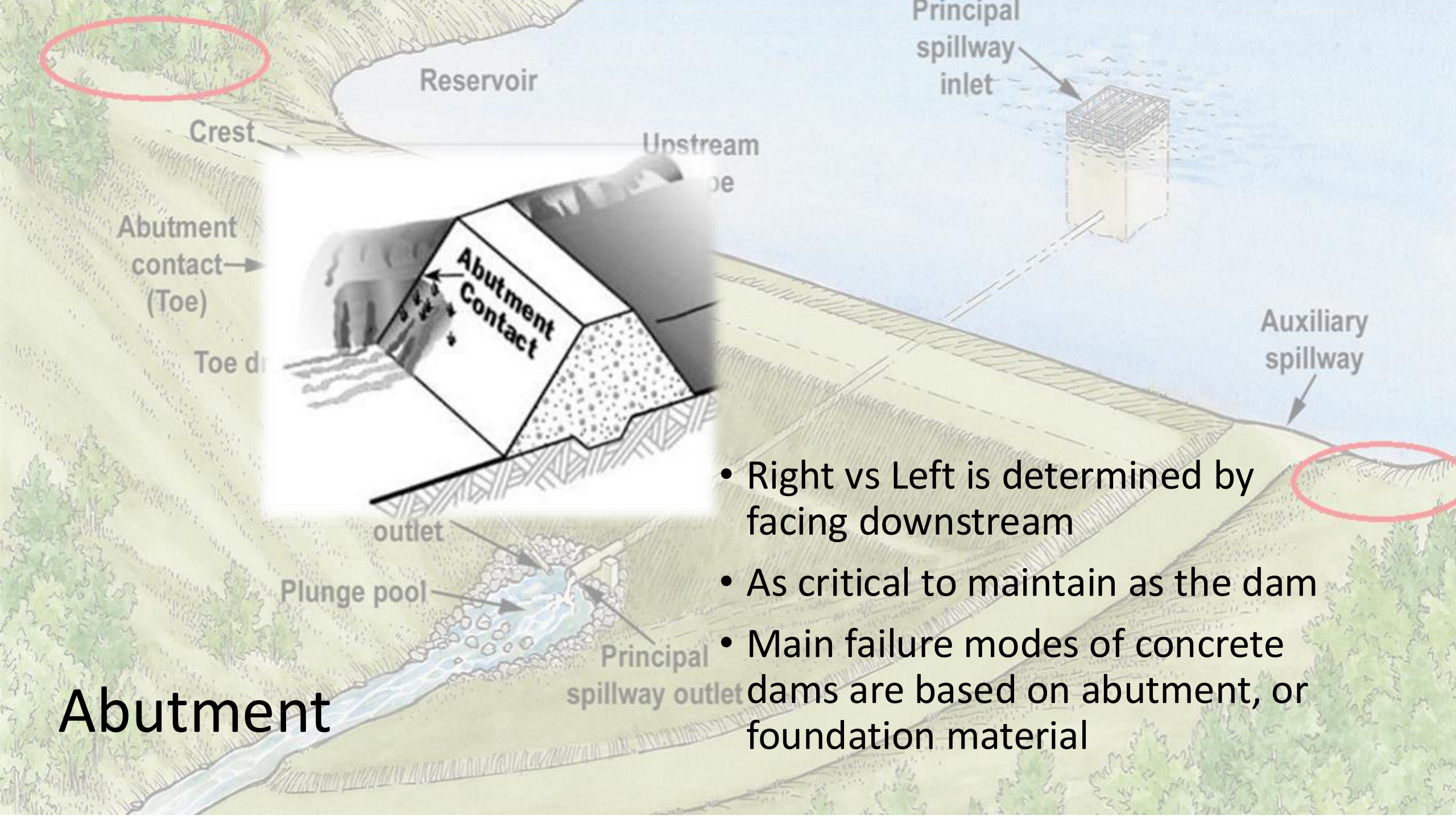
Downstream slope

Auxiliary spillway

Toe drain outlet

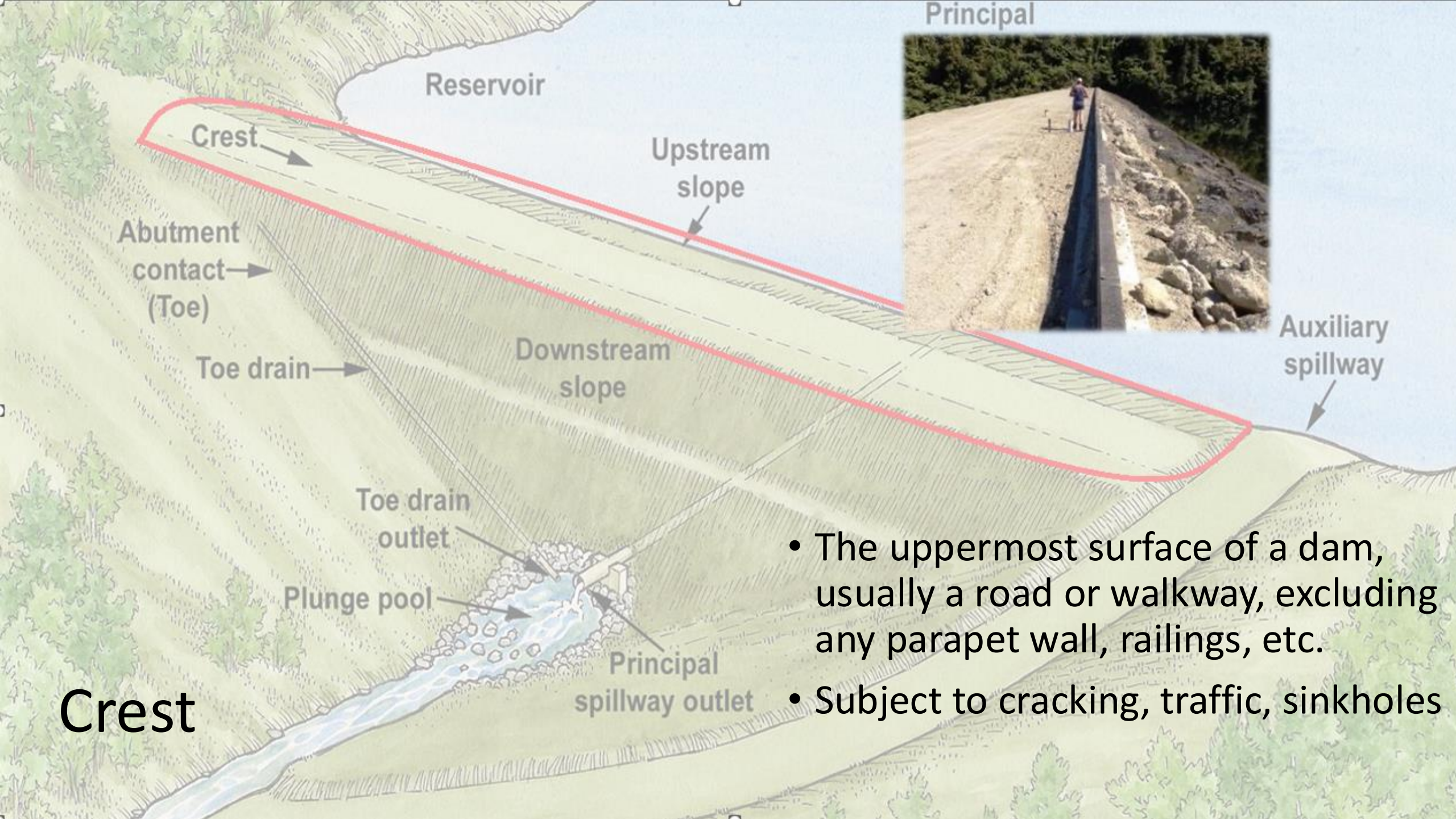
Plunge pool

Principal spillway outlet



# Abutment

- Right vs Left is determined by facing downstream
- As critical to maintain as the dam
- Main failure modes of concrete dams are based on abutment, or foundation material



Principal

Reservoir

Crest

Upstream slope

Abutment contact (Toe)

Toe drain

Downstream slope

Toe drain outlet

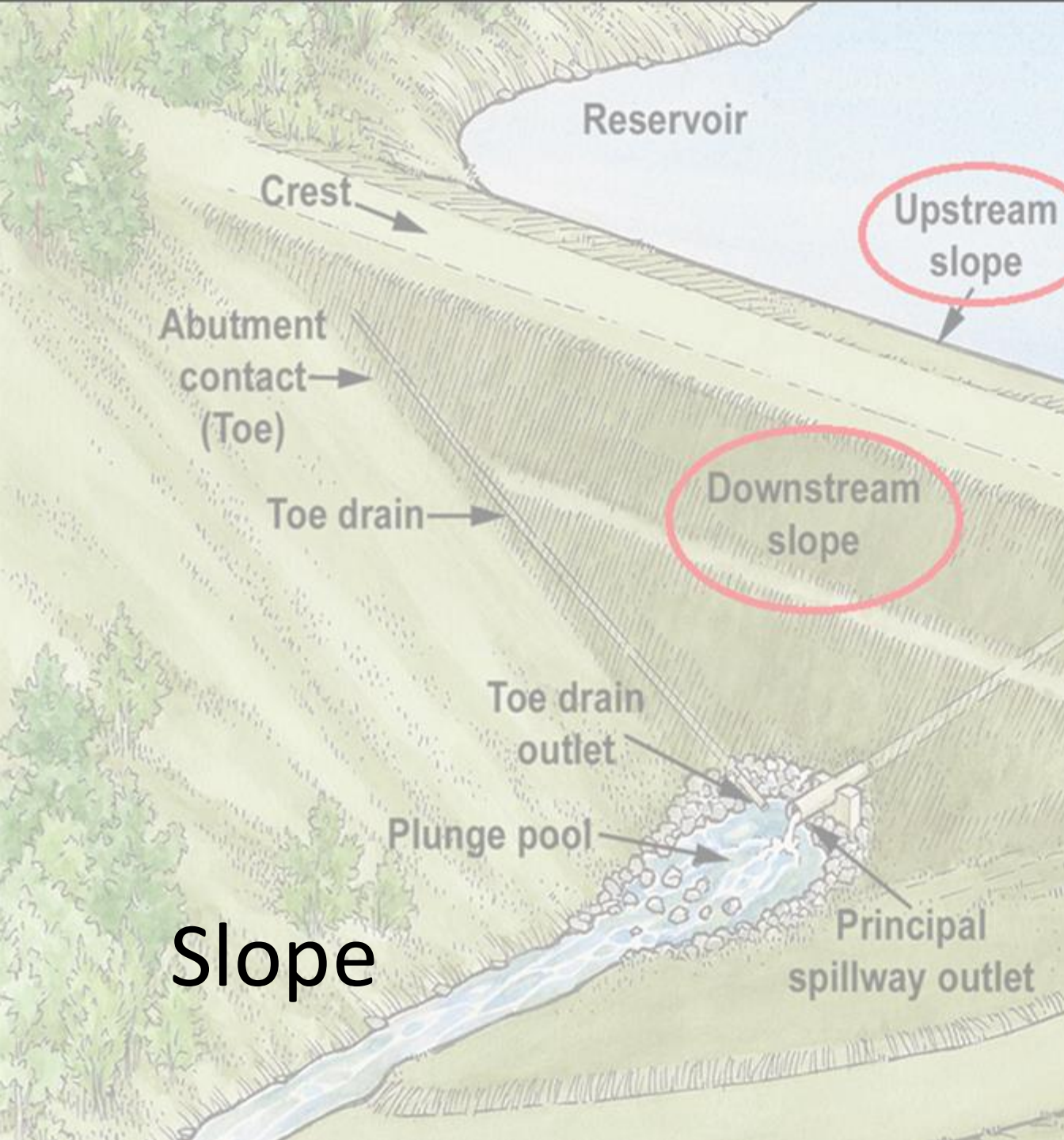
Plunge pool

Principal spillway outlet

Auxiliary spillway

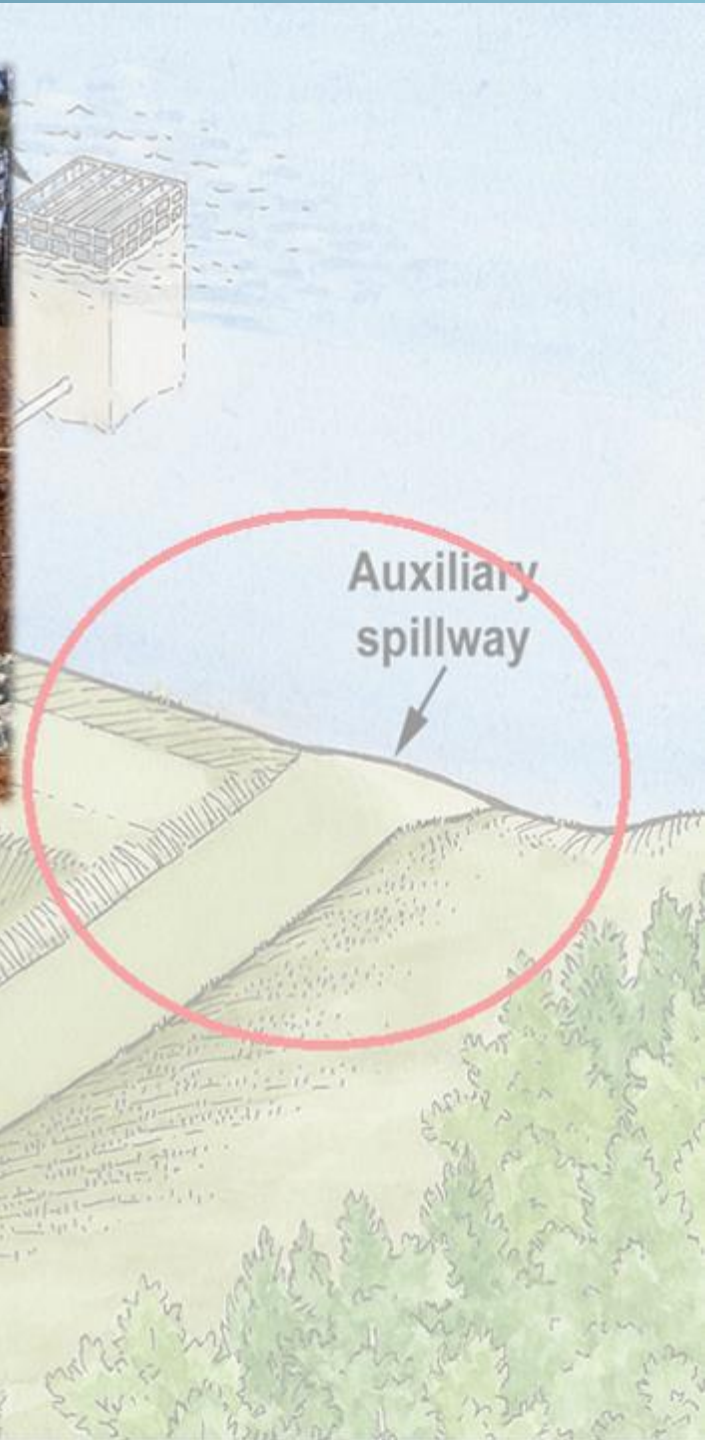
Crest

- The uppermost surface of a dam, usually a road or walkway, excluding any parapet wall, railings, etc.
- Subject to cracking, traffic, sinkholes



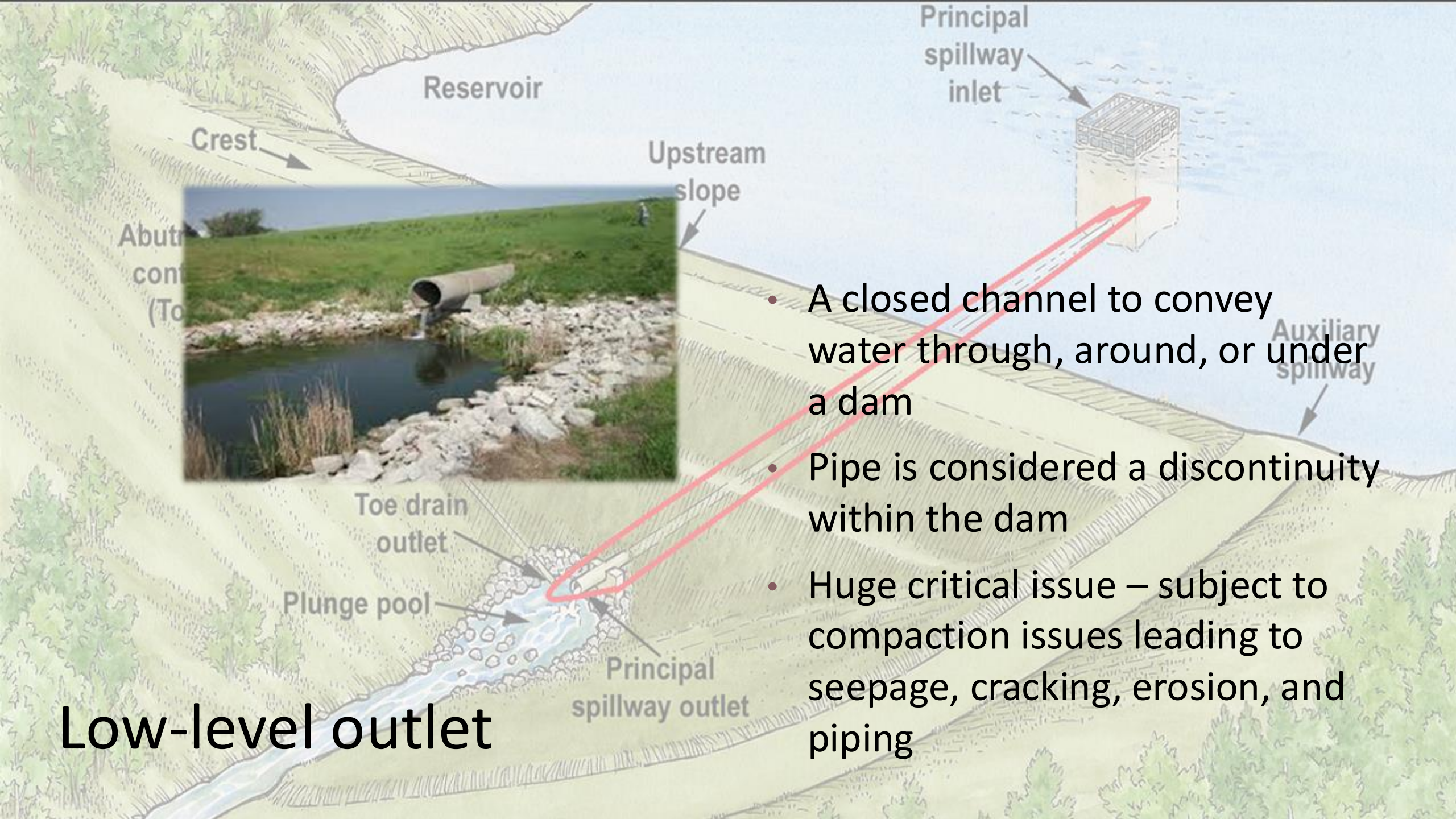
- The vertical inclination from the crest to the toe
- Upstream slope can be protected by riprap or a concrete face
- Downstream slope is subject to seepage, erosion, and animal burrowing

- The structure or work that allows excess water to pass and flow around the dam
- The main mode of flood protection
- Critical to the dam's integrity and function
- Subject to debris, cracking, erosion, and vegetation



## Spillway

Principal spillway outlet



Reservoir

Crest

Abutment  
cont.  
(To

Upstream  
slope

Principal  
spillway  
inlet

Auxiliary  
spillway

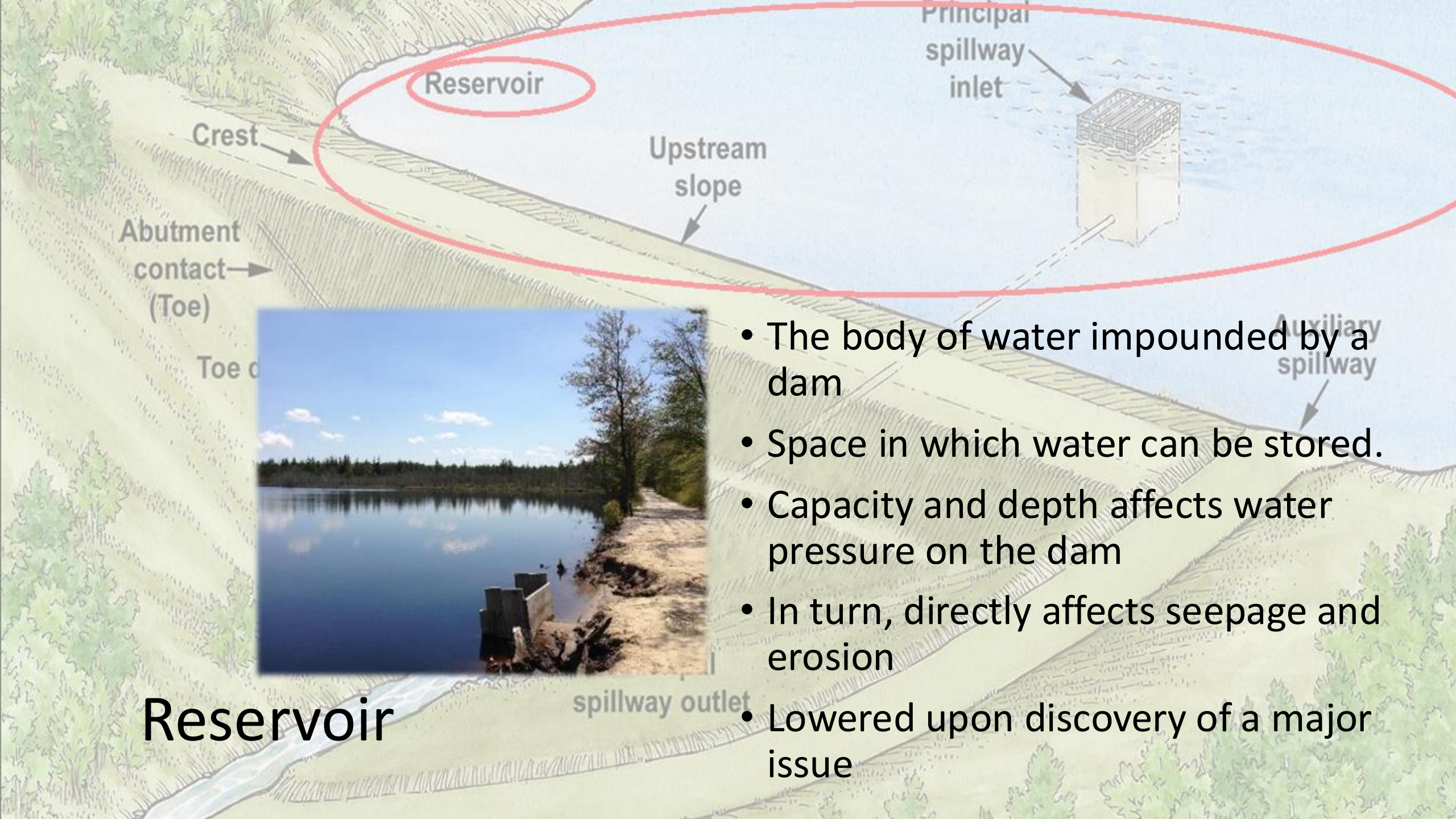
Toe drain  
outlet

Plunge pool

Principal  
spillway outlet

Low-level outlet

- A closed channel to convey water through, around, or under a dam
- Pipe is considered a discontinuity within the dam
- Huge critical issue – subject to compaction issues leading to seepage, cracking, erosion, and piping



Reservoir

Crest

Upstream slope

Principal spillway inlet

Abutment contact (Toe)

Toe of

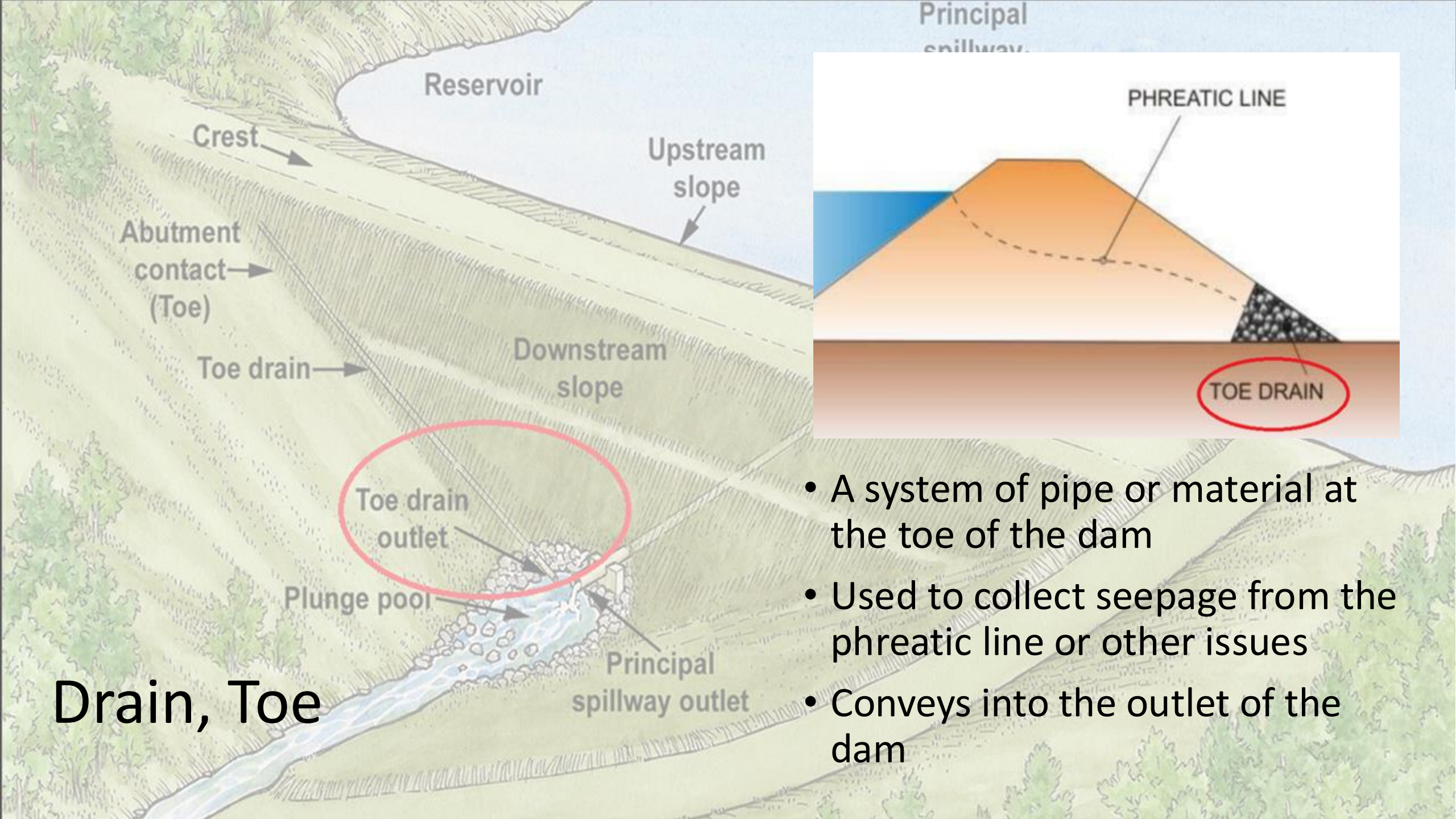
Auxiliary spillway



spillway outlet

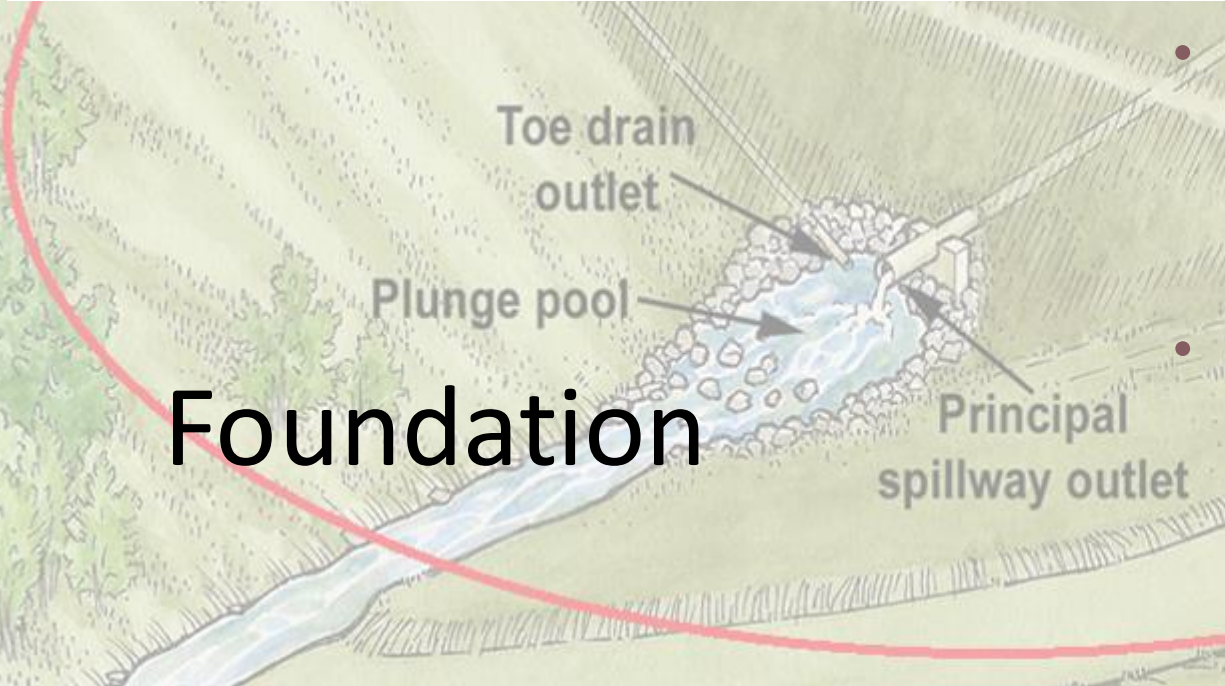
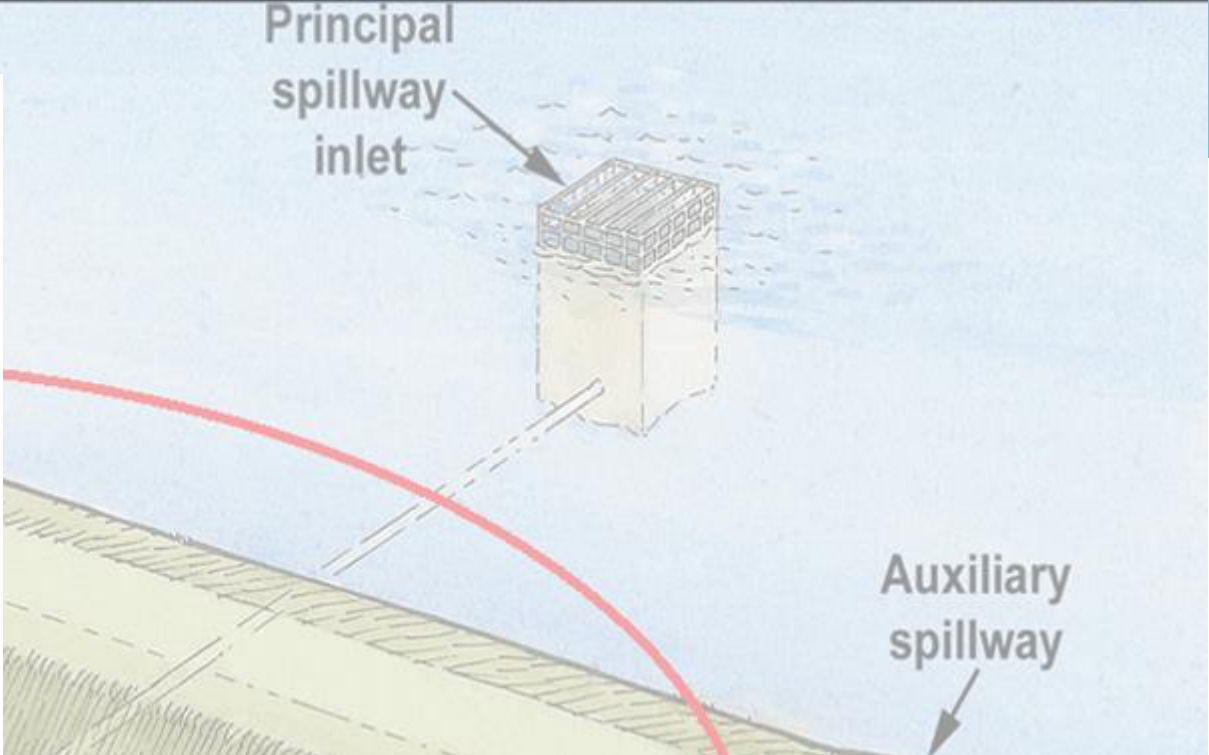
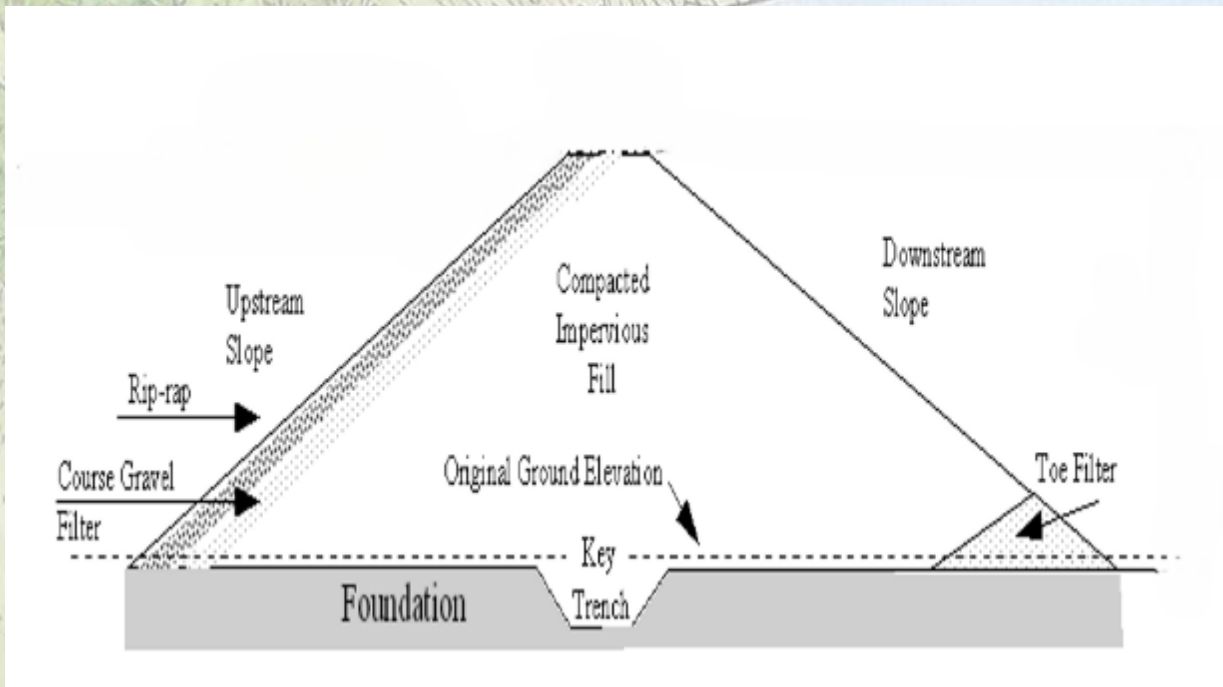
Reservoir

- The body of water impounded by a dam
- Space in which water can be stored.
- Capacity and depth affects water pressure on the dam
- In turn, directly affects seepage and erosion
- Lowered upon discovery of a major issue



# Drain, Toe

- A system of pipe or material at the toe of the dam
- Used to collect seepage from the phreatic line or other issues
- Conveys into the outlet of the dam

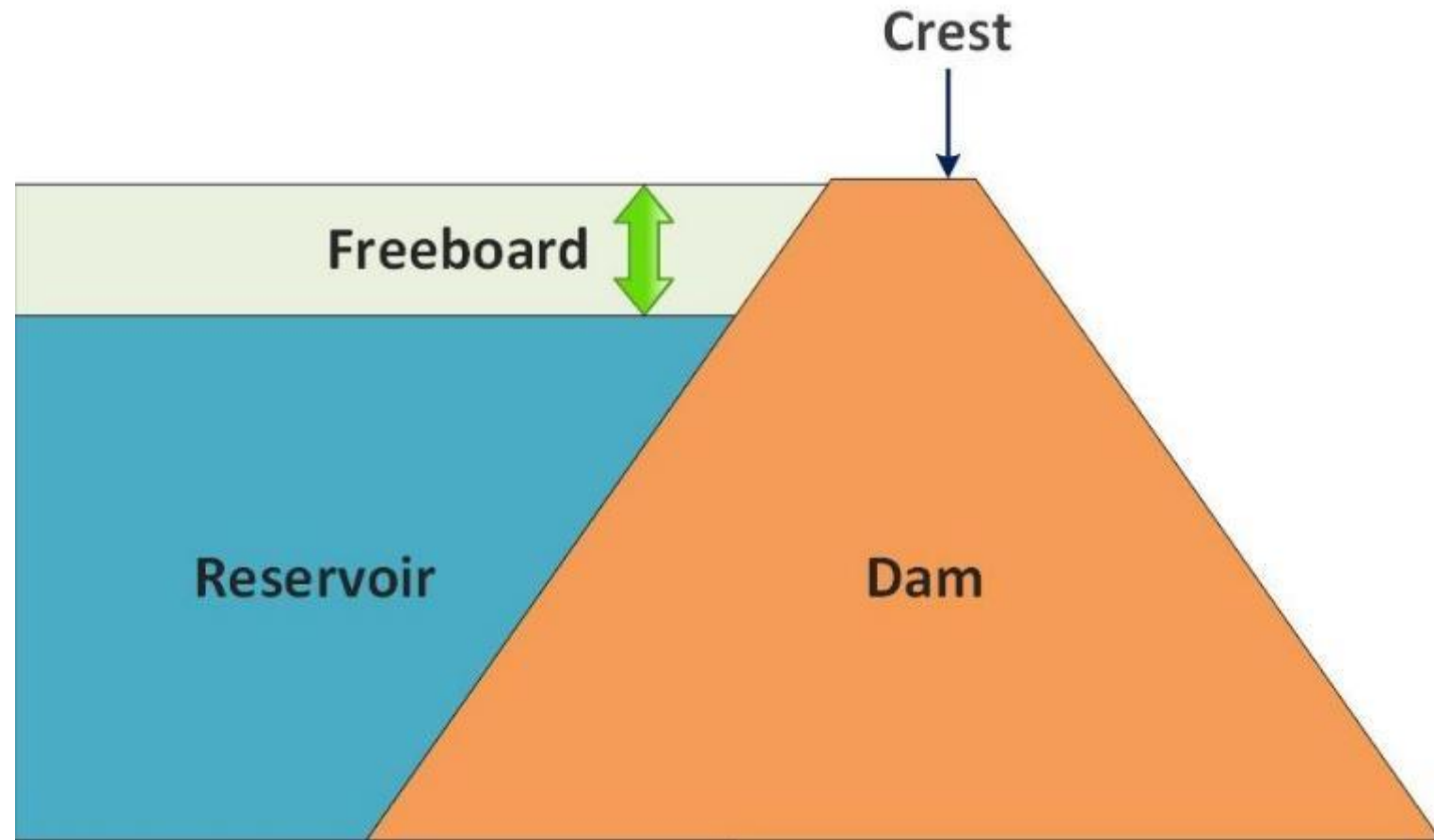


**Foundation**

- The portion of the valley floor that underlies and supports the dam structure
- Based on material and permeability, subject to seepage and compaction issues

# Freeboard

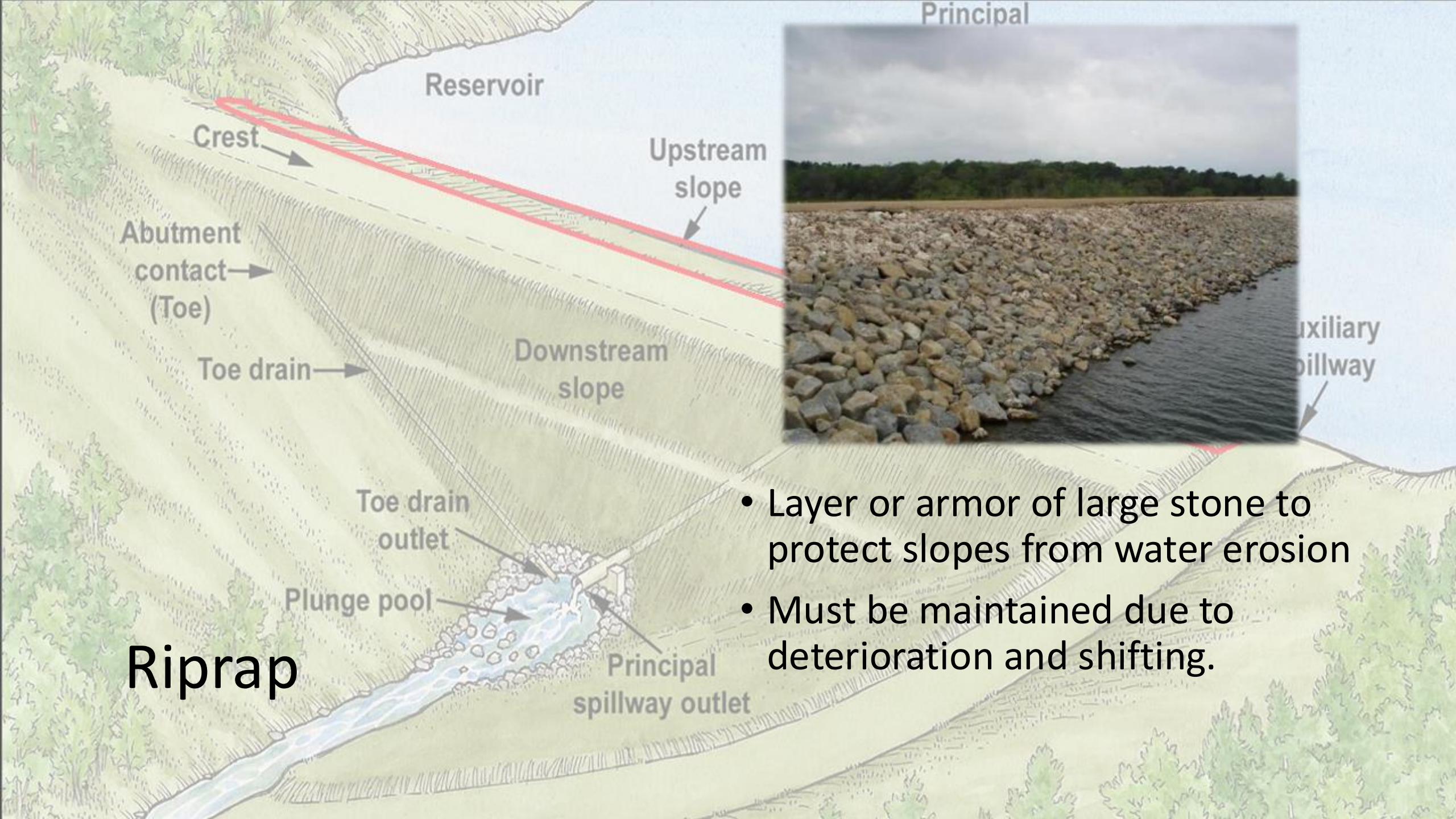
- Provided as a buffer against uncertainty
- Adjusted to accommodate forecasted rainfall, flooding, and freshet



# Intake



- Intake establishes the drawdown level of the reservoir
- Can be towers, drop inlets, submerged, and box structures
- Prone to plugging



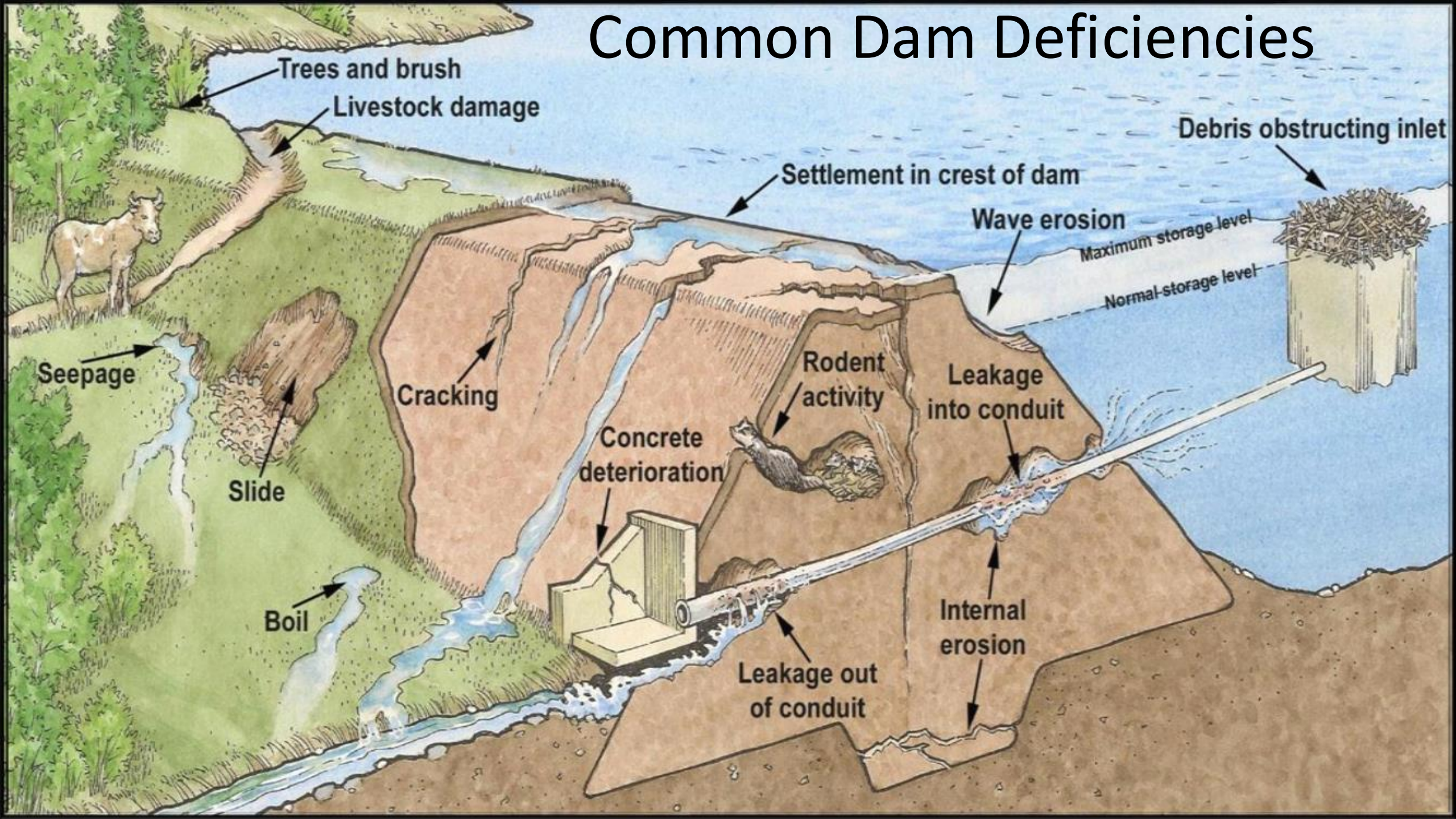
# Riprap

- Layer or armor of large stone to protect slopes from water erosion
- Must be maintained due to deterioration and shifting.

# Example – Mackin Creek Dam



# Common Dam Deficiencies



# Embankment Dams

Embankment dams have 3 specific failure modes that owners should be aware of:

**External Erosion-**  
overtopping, waves, surface erosion

**Internal Erosion-** Piping  
within the structure

**Structural-** Foundation,  
upstream or downstream slope,  
spillways, outlet, reservoir banks

Be proactive!

Stay aware of these failure modes to prevent future dam catastrophes!

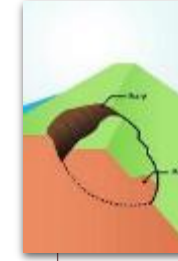
# Embankment Dam Deficiencies



Longitudinal Cracking



Transverse Cracking



Slides and Sloughs



Sinkholes



Vegetation



Riprap Issues



Animal Burrowing



Erosion



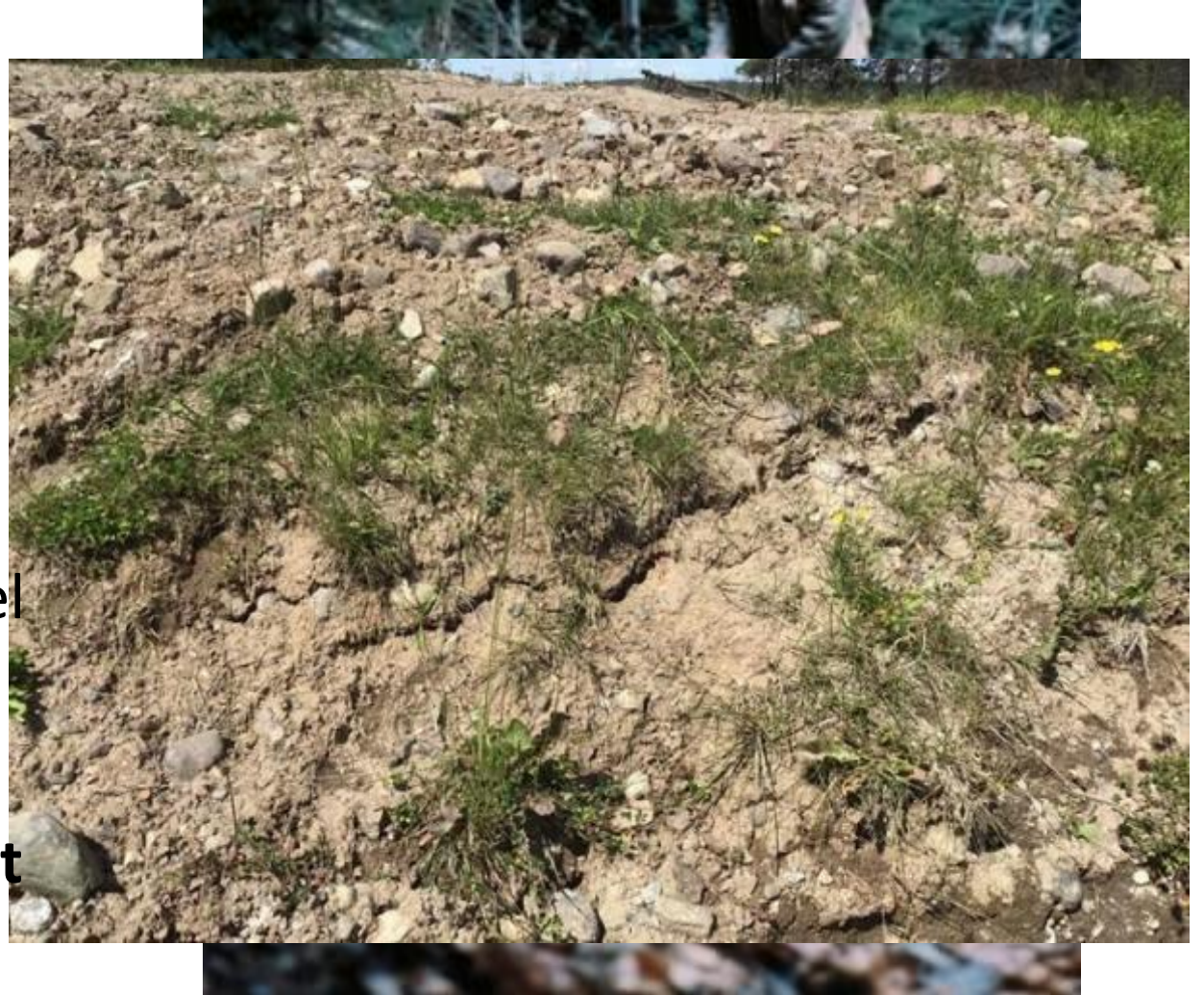
Seepage

# Longitudinal Cracking

Cracks parallel to the crest of the dam can occur for various reasons such as:

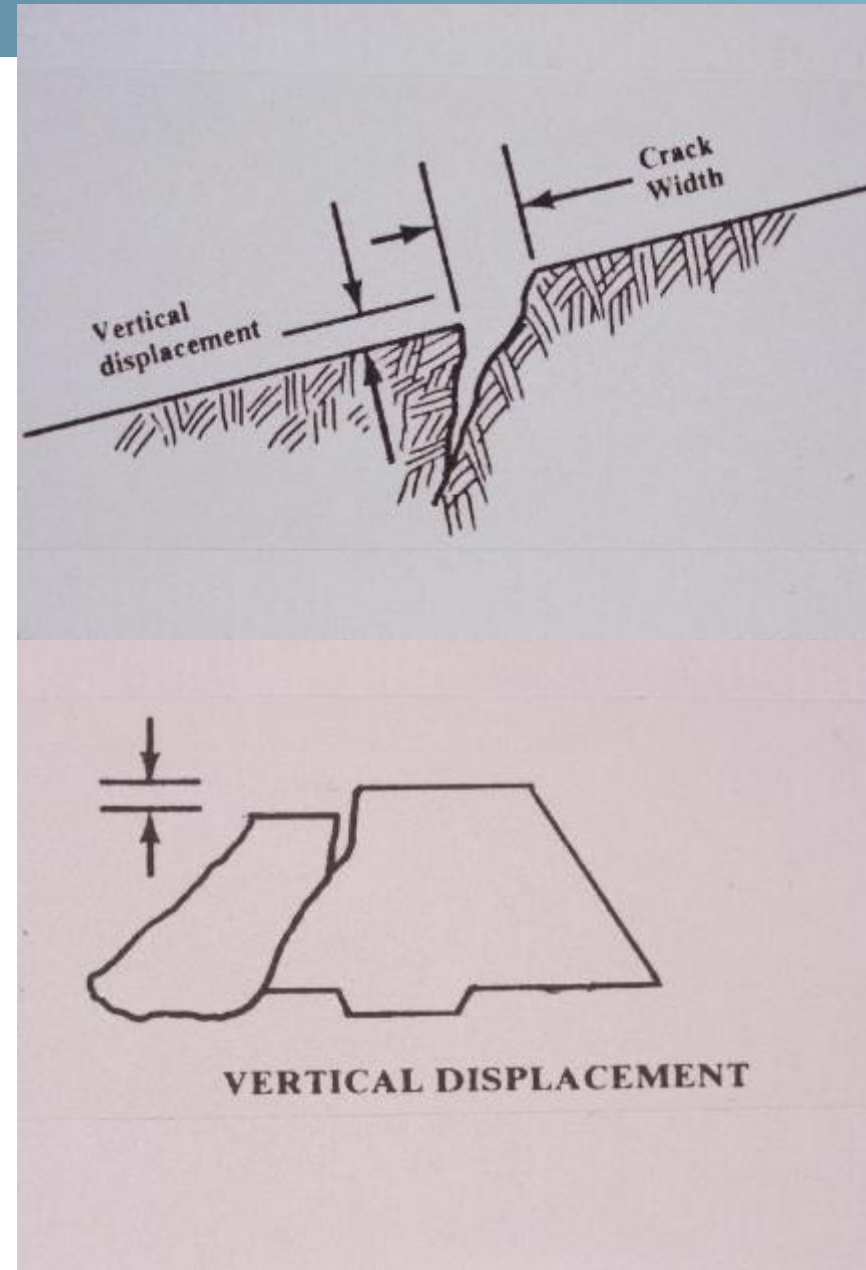
- Poor compaction
- Progressive settlement of foundation
- Traffic on crest
- Seasonal changes that affect the reservoir level and freeboard level

This can result in **vertical displacement** and dam failures

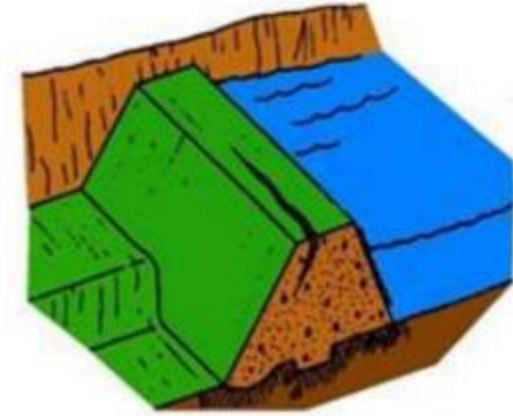


# Vertical Displacement

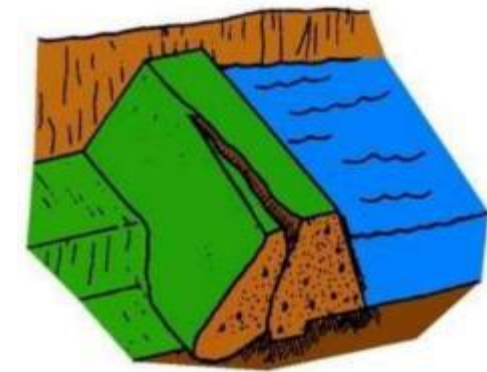
- Occurs on the upstream or downstream slopes
- These deficiencies are as serious as those located on the crest



- Measure the width of the crack as well as the horizontal length
- Document and record the displacement using the **SMPL** method
- Immediately forward to a DSO



Longitudinal Cracking



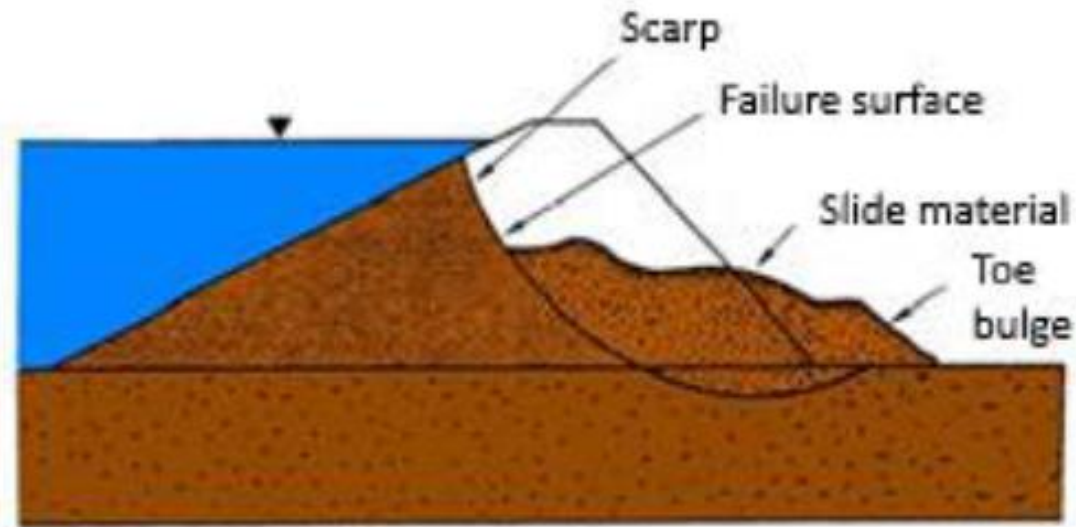
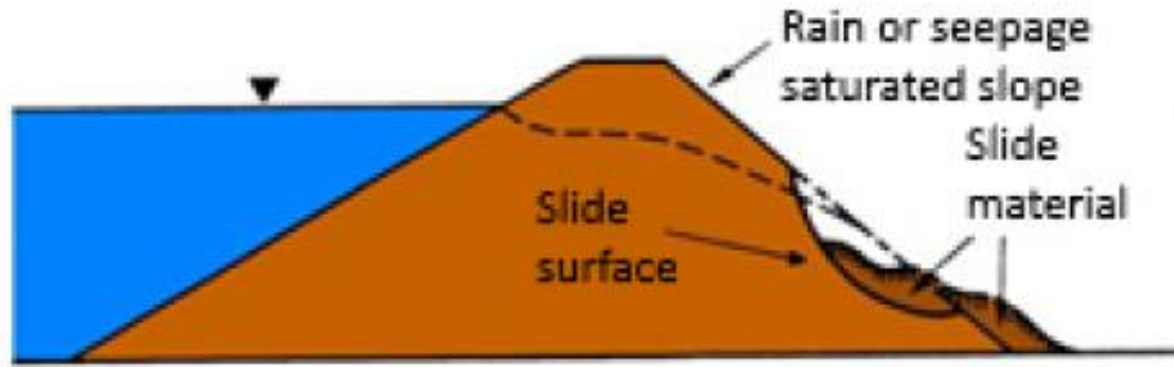
Vertical Displacement

# Slides / Sloughs



- Due to saturation of weakened slopes
- Normally avoided with proper design of the dam and a rock-filled toe
- Inspections and surveillance allow for tracking the rate of change as cracks appear and develop
- Severe cases require consultation with an engineer

# Phreatic Line



# Hamilton Lake Dam



Ministry of  
Water, Land and

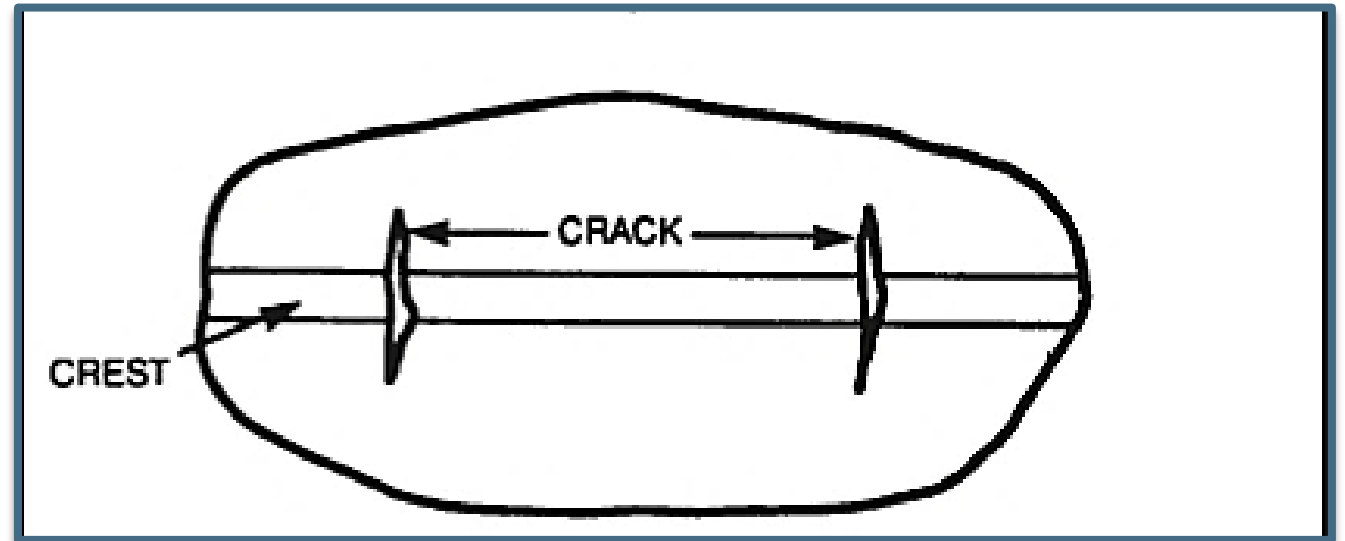
A slough and  
aftermath of a  
vertical  
displacement  
crack

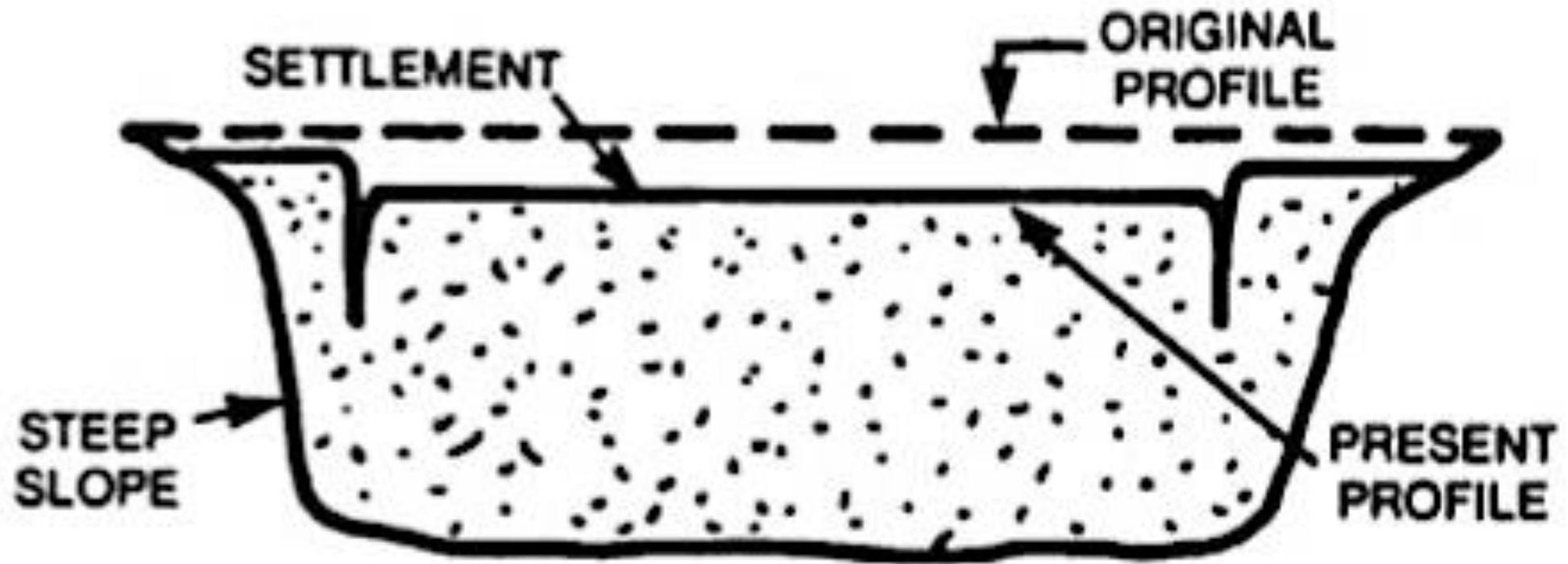


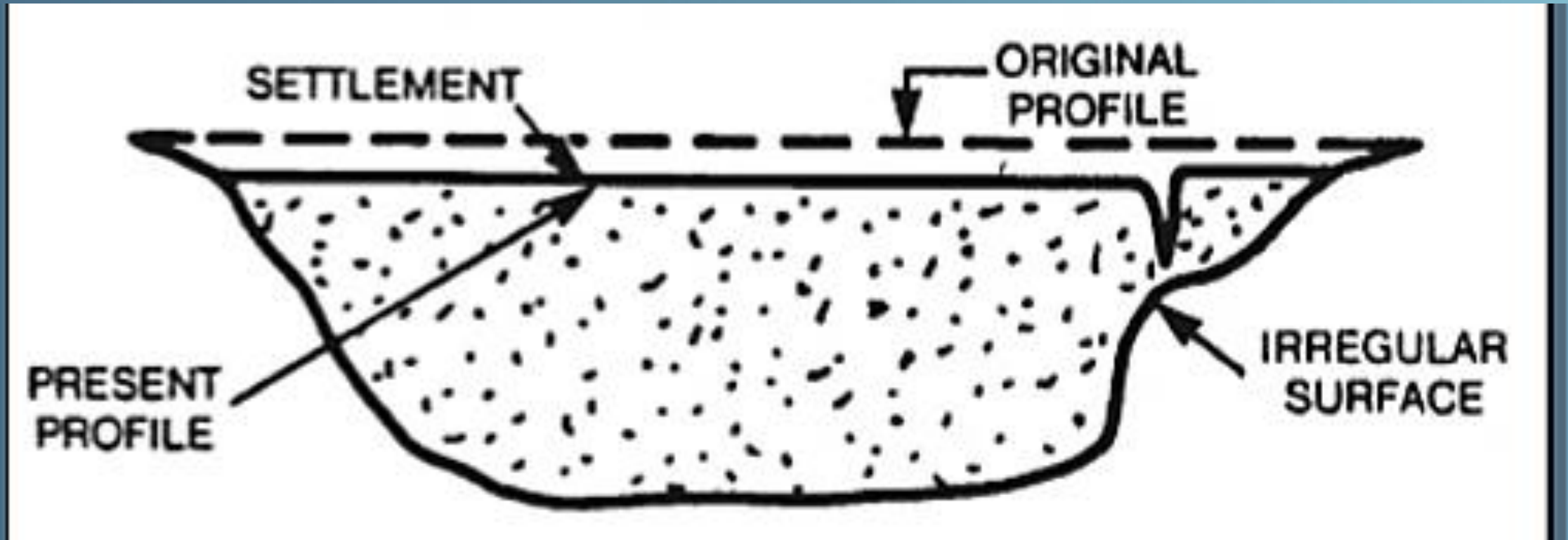


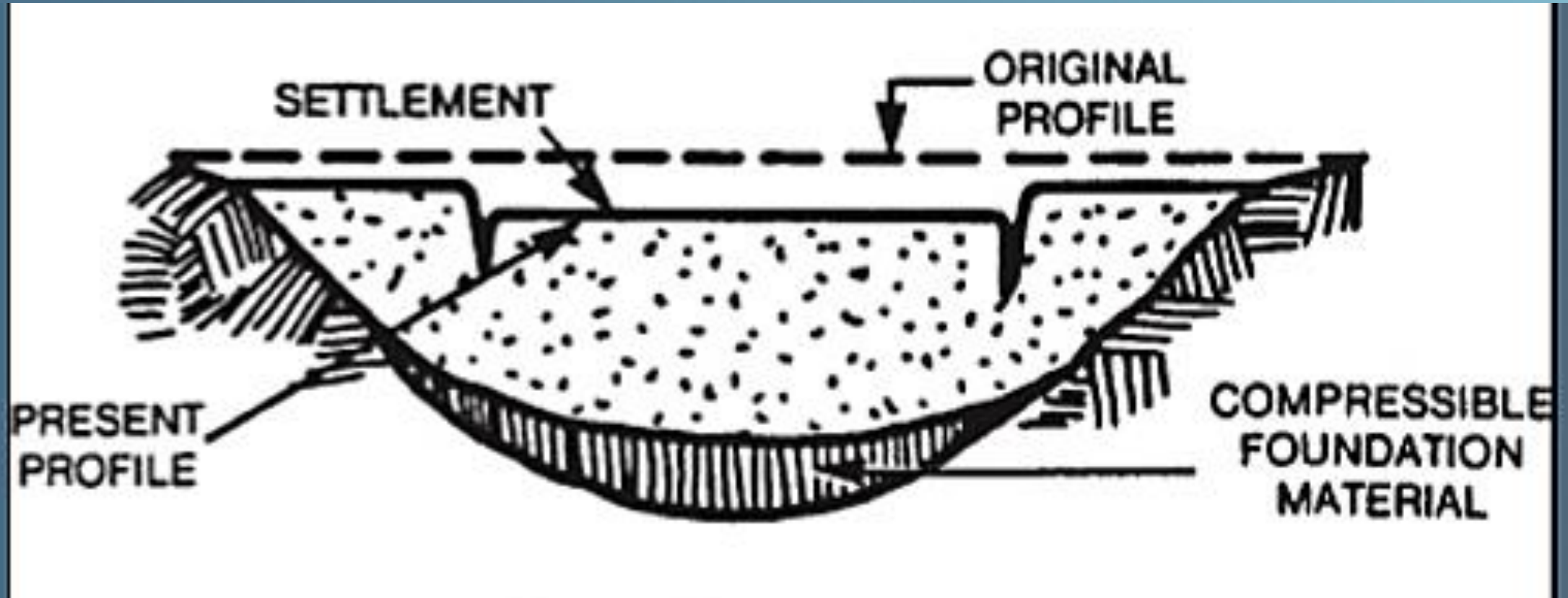
# Transverse Cracking

- Occurs perpendicular to the crest
- Results in sinkholes, puddling, and low areas









# Sinkholes

- Circular shaped cracks
- Due to seepage, piping, or loss of embankment fill
- Outer cracks indicate the area affected by the underground removal of material
- Filling the hole with rock and gravel can be a temporary and emergency measure



# Vegetation

- Caused by lack of maintenance
- Interferes with surveillance and inspection
- Results in other deficiencies





# Dalzall Creek Dam Failure

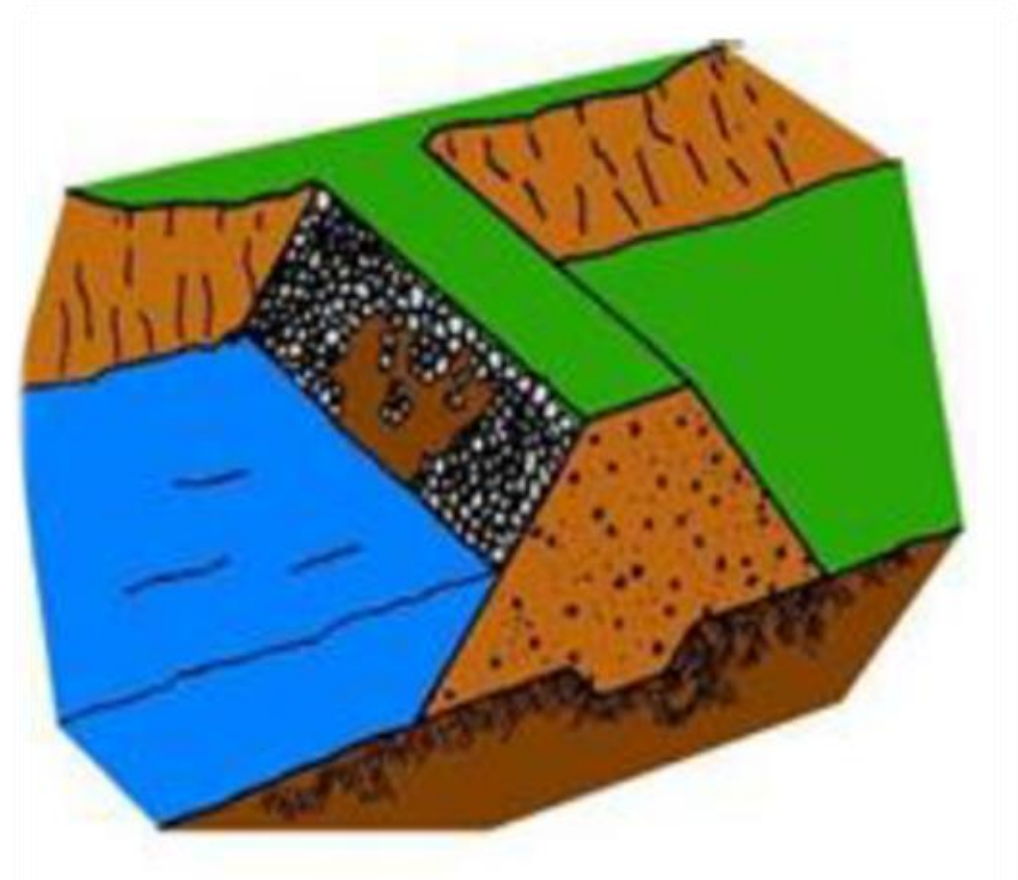
- Caused by high winds and large trees on embankment





# Riprap Deterioration

- Rock or similar material used to armor shorelines or abutments of dams from water and ice erosion
- Can be dislodged if the slope is too steep or if the riprap material is too small



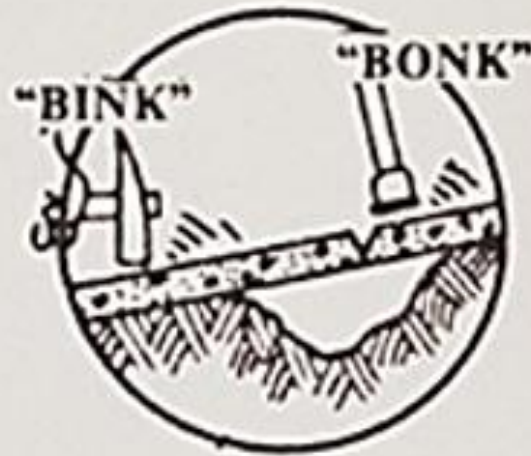
Dislodged Riprap

# Riprap Issues

## RIPRAP BREAKDOWN



## UNSEEN VOIDS UNDER UPSTREAM FACING



## DETERIORATION IN OUTLET OR SPILLWAY CHANNELS



RIPRAP MISSING

# Riprap Deterioration



The slope protection has been broken down into piles of sand.

# Riprap Deterioration

The retaining wall was failing, causing the embankment to collapse

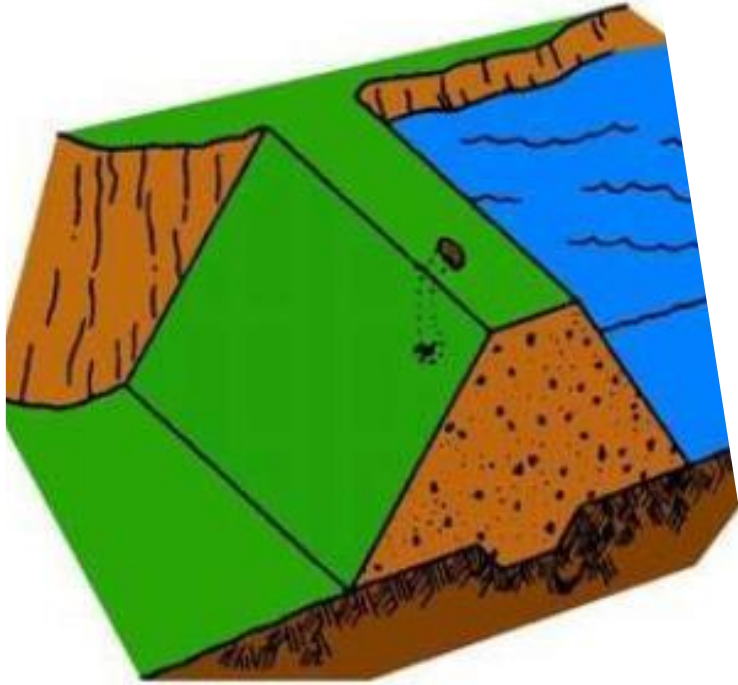


# Riprap Deterioration



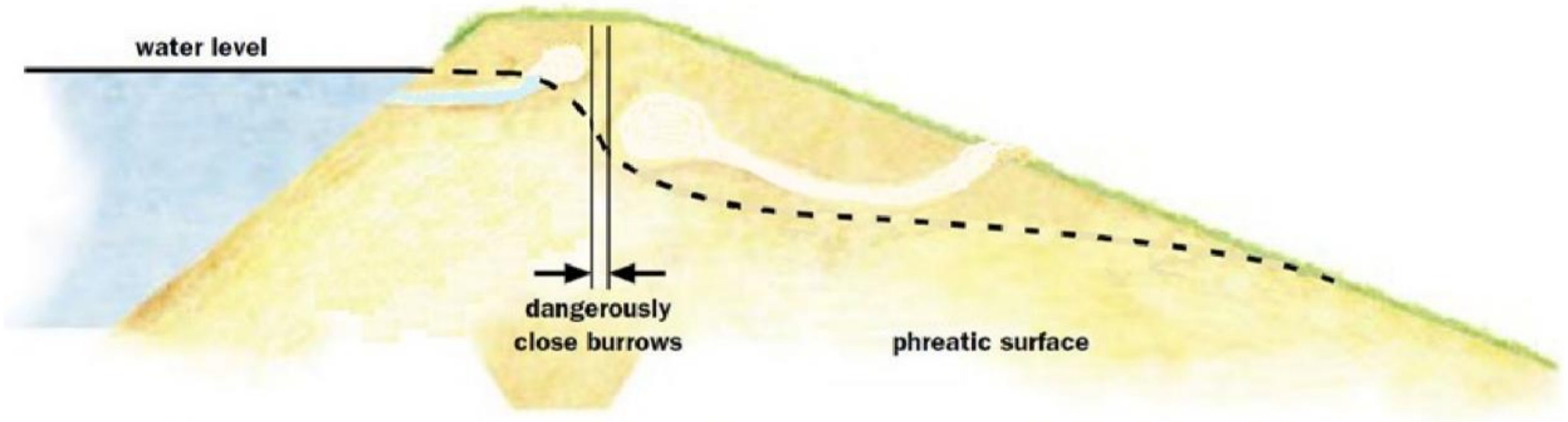
Ineffective riprap and fines being eroded away by small waves.

# Animal Infestation



Rodent Activity on Crest

- Often hidden under vegetation
- Rodent control programs can reduce future damage to the dam
- Determine the exact location and extent of each tunneling deficiency



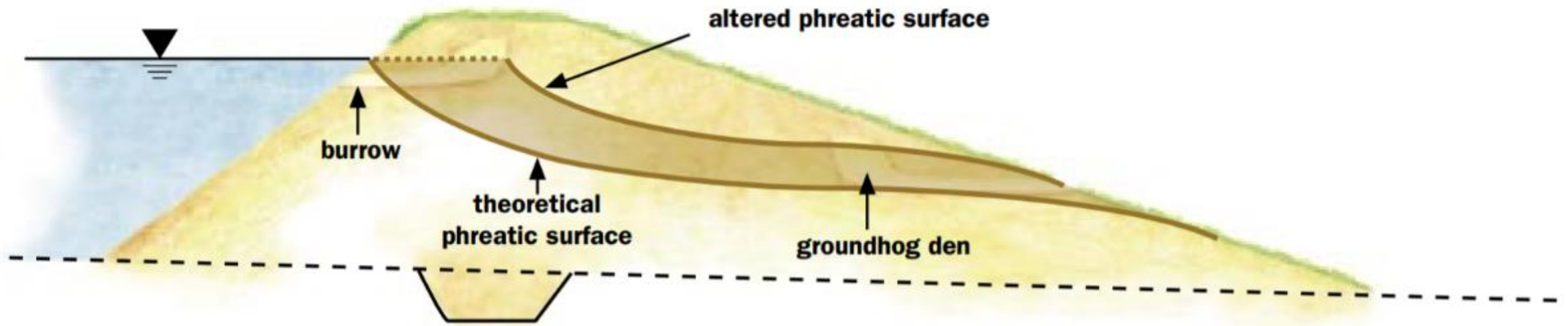


Figure 2-2. Burrows can alter dam hydraulics by shortening seepage paths.

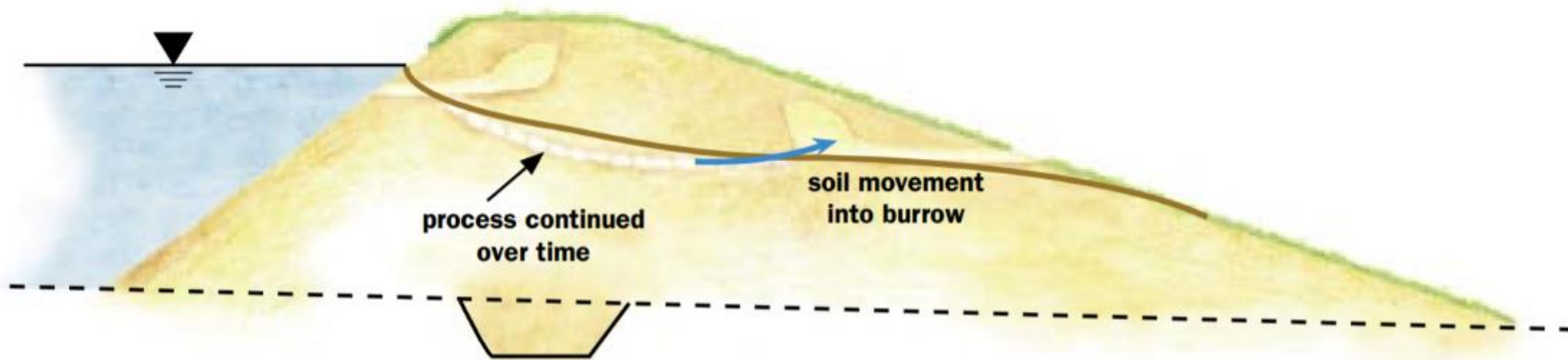


Figure 2-3. Burrows can lead to piping within an embankment.

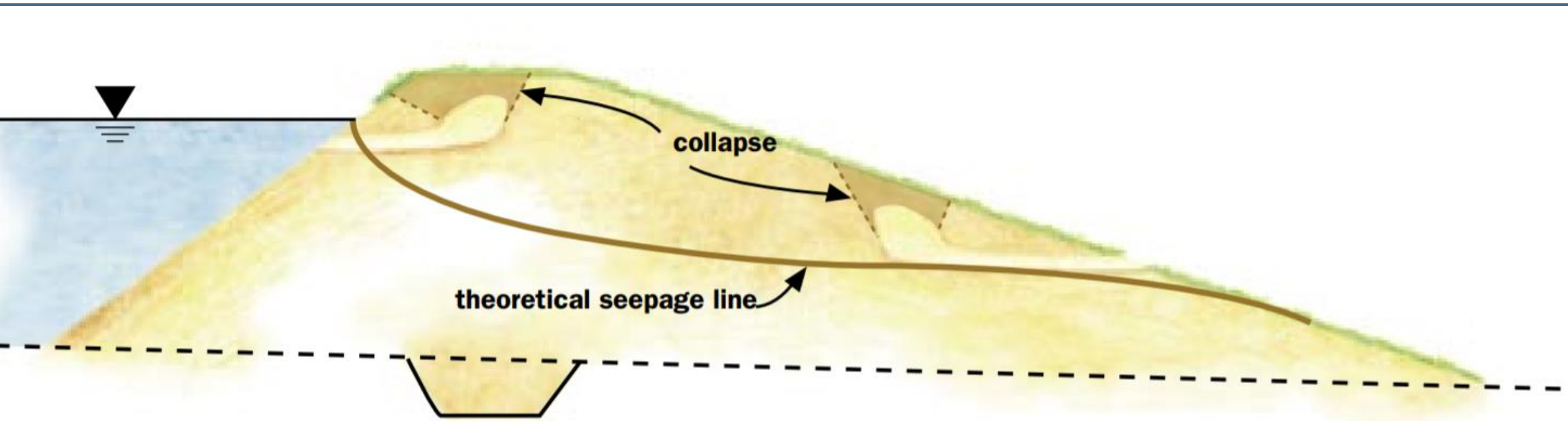
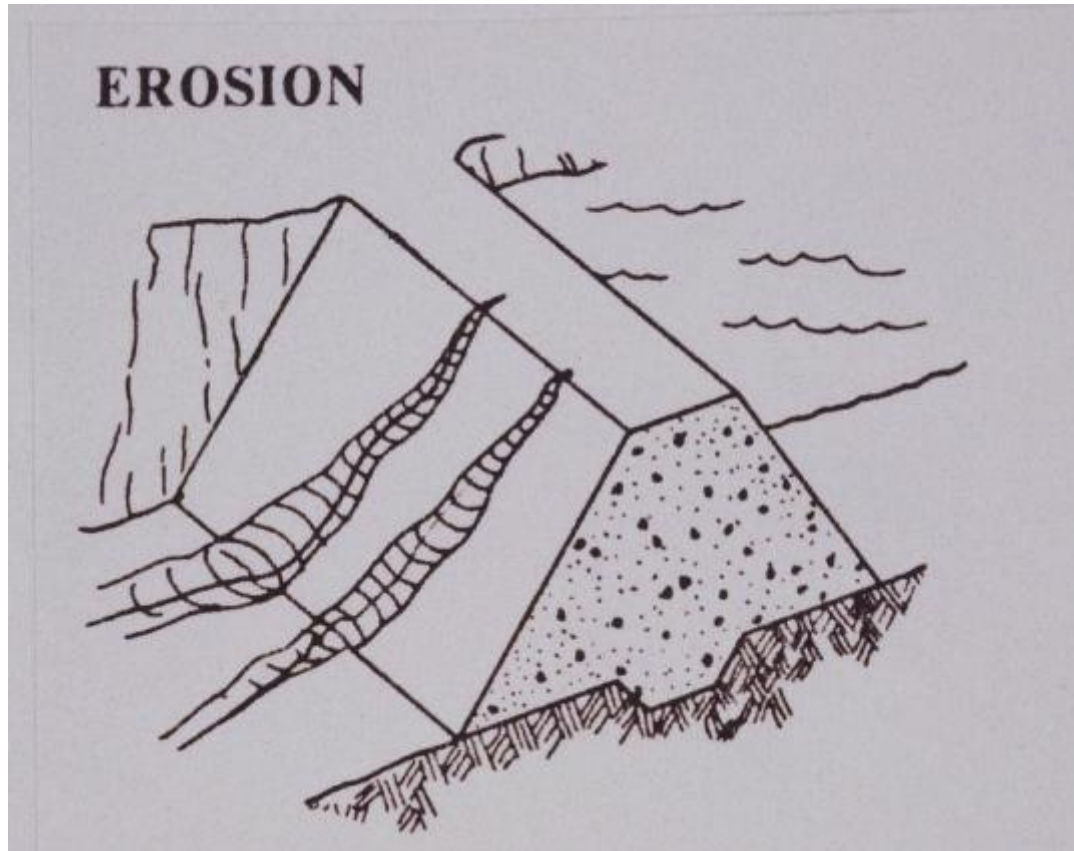


Figure 2-4. Burrows can collapse, leading to formation of sinkholes and loss of structural integrity.

# Erosion



Causes include:

- Weather
- Traffic across the slope
- Excessive overtopping

Can be resolved if detected early

- protective grasses, rock, or riprap is the typical solution

# Erosion due to trespassing



# Seepage



- Indicated by wet areas downstream from dam
- Occurs at all dams in some capacity
- Becomes a concern when:
  - It carries material
  - Flow rate/volume changes
- Should always be controlled to prevent erosion and a potential dam failure

# Detecting Seepage



- Easier to see following light snowfall
- Flows either through the dam or foundation
- Accurate measurements over a long period of time will establish a baseline seepage flow

Angle 1



Angle 2



# Surveillance & Inspection

## Surveillance

the monitoring of a dam and the surrounding or adjacent to the dam (a) through visual observation, and (b) if there is instrumentation relating to the dam, through the systematic collection of instrumentation readings and analysis and interpretation of the readings

AKA Routine Inspections (CDA)



## Inspection

a thorough on-site inspection of the dam and dam site conducted by a person who is an owner of the dam or an agent of an owner of the dam who is responsible for the safety of the dam

AKA Engineering Inspections (CDA)

# Surveillance & Inspection: Purpose

Dam Failures are often preceded by warning signs.

A comprehensive visual inspection can identify issues and provide the opportunity to perform mitigative measures.



# Surveillance & Inspection: Purpose con't

The goal is to identify deviations in performance conditions so corrective, or risk

mitigation, measures can be implemented...



# Overview General Inspection & Maintenance



Be comfortable contacting your DSO



Commitment is key to the improvement of the inspection process of all dams



Due diligence may successfully prevent future dam failures and will reduce the liability on owners



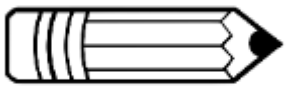
Exercise reasonable care - Section 29 of the Water Act & Section 5 of the Dam Safety Regulation

# Inspections - SMPL

A very useful and common practice to use when conducting inspections and surveillance is the **SMPL (Simple) method**:

Tools and Equipment needed: a camera, tape measure, clipboard, flashlight, and other tools.

Sketch and Note



Measure



Photograph



Locate and Reference



# Equipment for Visual Inspections

Common equipment to carry with you in an inspection:



- **Clip Board / Notebook**
- **Tape Measure**
- **Camera**
- **Flashlight**
- **Guidebook – Self Help Guide**

**Photos** Take photos from the same angle

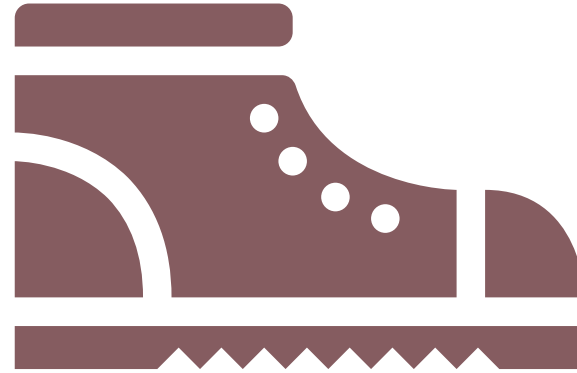
**Flashlight** Invest in high-quality

**Reference** Use guides and pocketbook

# Safety Preparations



Take time to be prepared



Bring proper safety equipment and appropriate gear

- steel toe boots, hard hats, vests, etc.



Always follow WCB regulations. Include the inspection process in your workplace WHMIS manual / procedures.

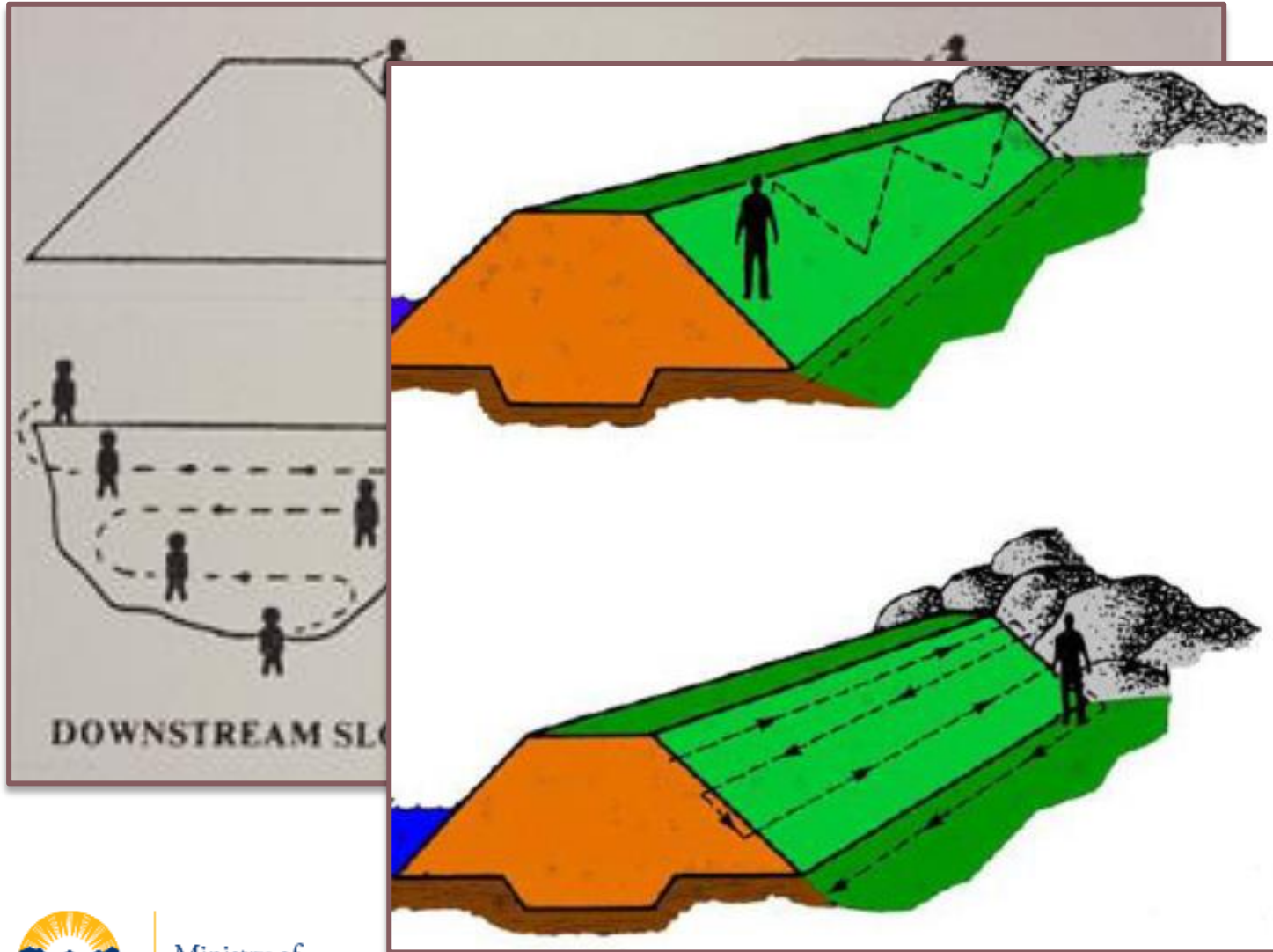
# Inspections – Operating Level

Best reservoir stages for a formal inspection:

- ***Maximum***
- ***Average / Normal***
- ***Minimum***
- Vary the timing of annual inspections
  - Consistent timing may lead to missing critical deficiencies
- Varied timings increases accuracy for assessing:
  - reservoir levels
  - spillway flows
  - soil saturations



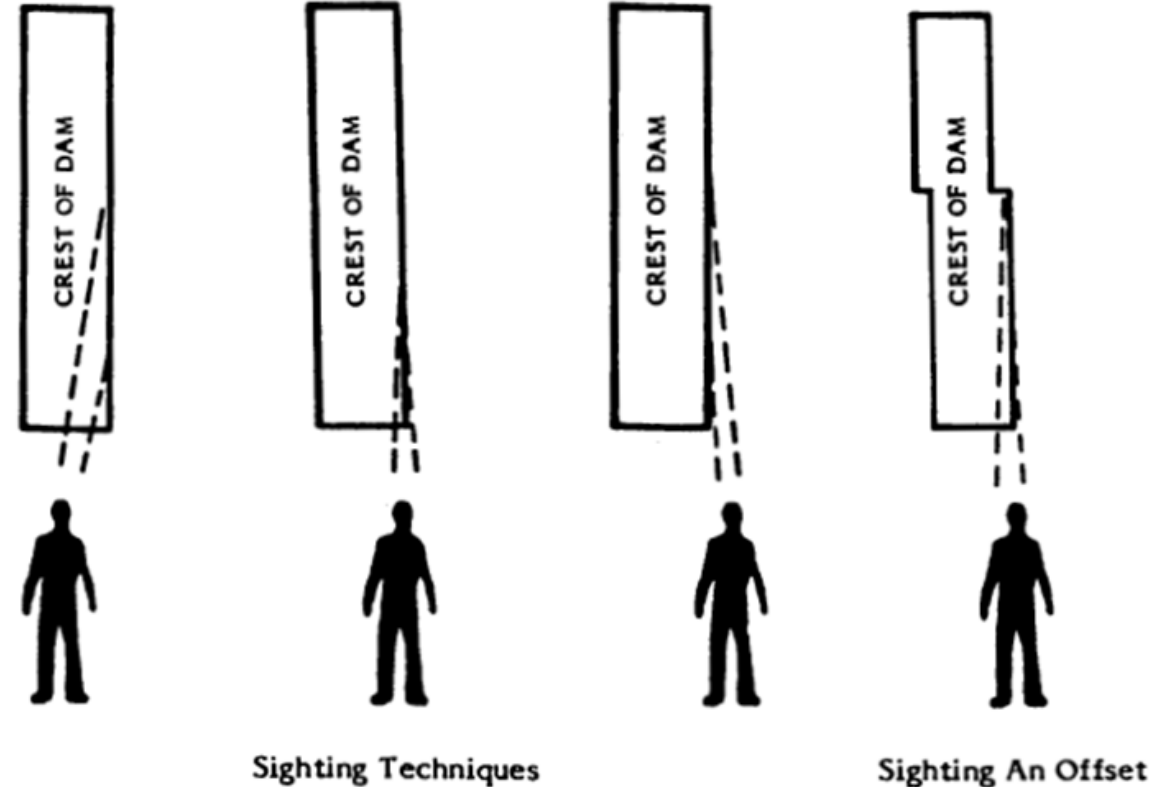
# Inspection Techniques



- Various routes for inspecting a downstream slope
- Move around to gain different perspectives
- Consistent Vantage points for pictures for comparing images over time

# Inspection and Monitoring

- Regular inspection and monitoring
- Assess interior conditions of spillway conduits
- Document all deficiencies
- Monitor change of deficiencies
- Vary the inspection vantage points





# Tools and Resources



# Creating a Dam Safety Maintenance System – 3 Phases

## 1. Planning

1. Identify OMS activities
2. Develop operating procedures
3. Establish a records management system



## 2. Implementing

1. Identify required resources
2. Administer the program



## 3. Evaluating

1. Identify standards
2. Collect information
3. Assess effectiveness



# BC Dam Safety Program Resources

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the BC Dam Safety Program website. The browser's address bar shows the URL: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/air-land-water/water/drought-flooding-dikes-dams/dam-safety>. The website header includes the British Columbia logo, a search bar, and a menu icon. The breadcrumb navigation path is: Home / Environmental protection and sustainability / Air, land and water / Water / Drought, flooding, dikes and dams / Dam safety.

**MORE TOPICS**

**Drought, flooding, dikes and dams**

- Integrated flood hazard management
- Drought information
- River Forecast Centre
- Flood Warnings and Advisories

**Dam safety**

- Education and training
- Technical resources
- Compliance and enforcement
- Dam Safety Program annual reports
- Contact the B.C. Dam Safety Program

## Dam safety

Last updated on September 11, 2025

More than 1,900 active dams in B.C. are regulated under the Water Sustainability Act. Regulated dams require a water licence issued under the Act and must meet the requirements specified in the Dam Safety Regulation.

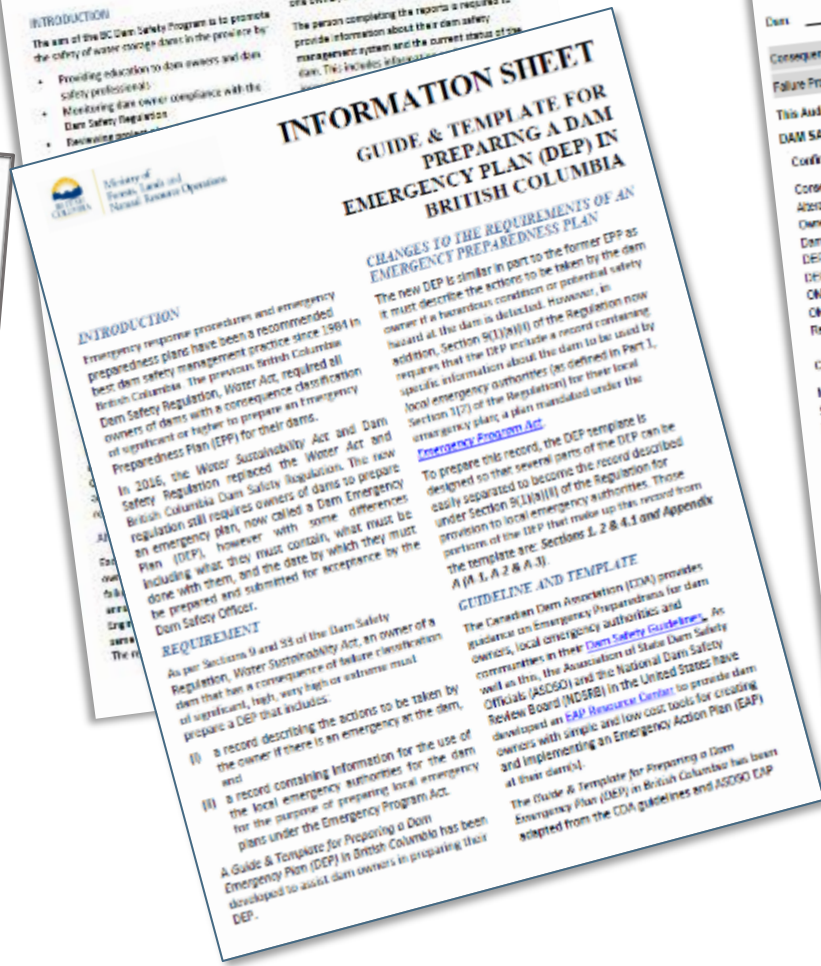
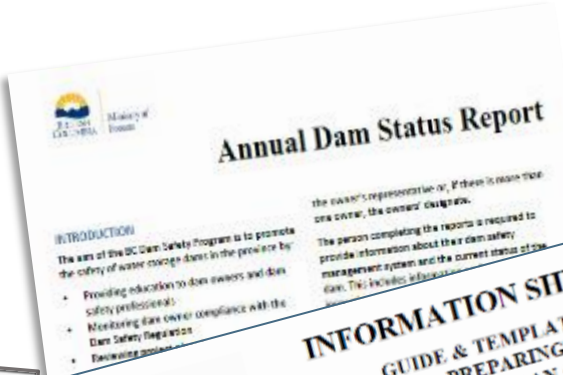
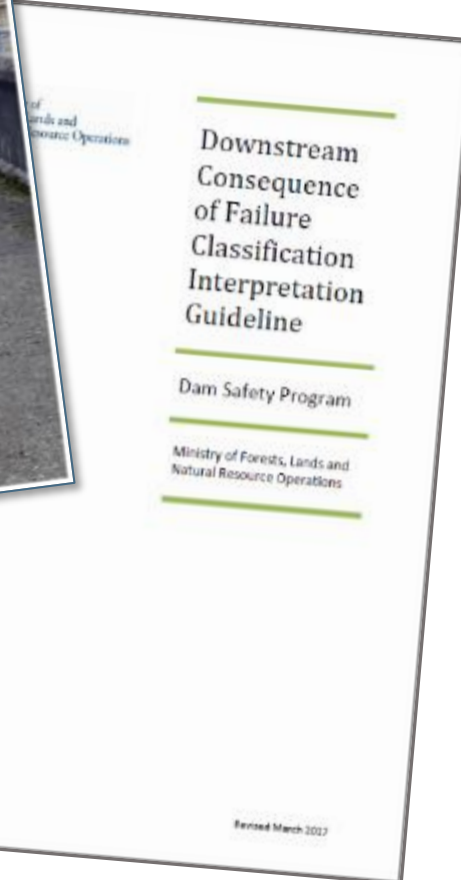
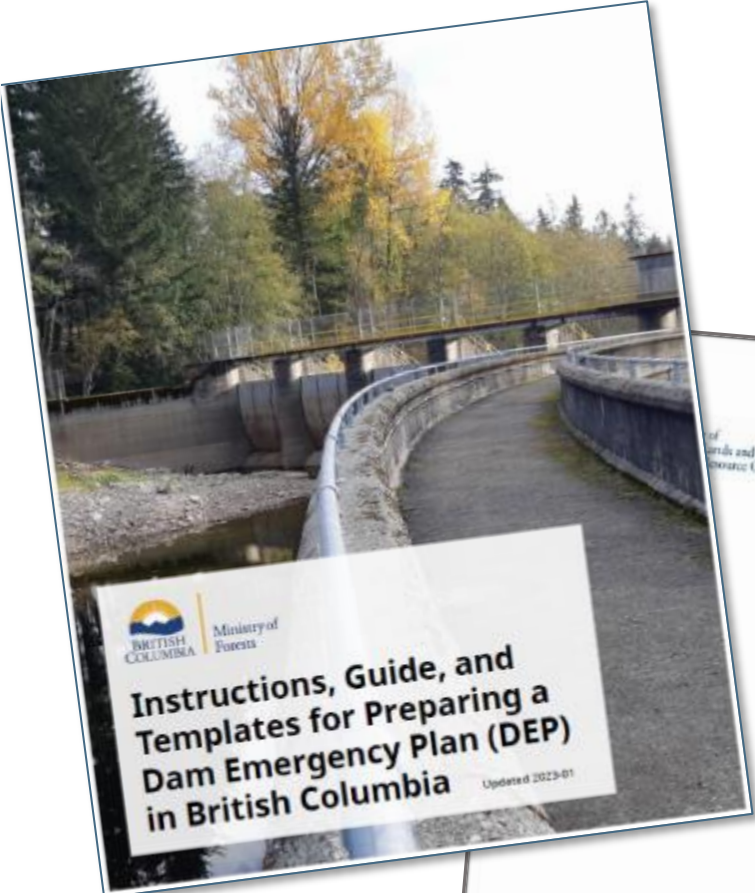
There are procedures and practices that are important to know if you're involved in the management, design, construction, rehabilitation, decommissioning or removal of dams in B.C.

- [Learn about the Dam Safety Regulation](#)
- [Find technical resources](#)
- [Find educational resources](#)
- [Learn about compliance with and enforcement of dam safety procedures](#)
- [Browse the Dam Safety Program Annual Reports](#)
- [Contact the B.C. Dam Safety Program](#)


### On this page

- [Oversight of dam safety in B.C.](#)
- [Information bulletins](#)

# Guides, Templates, Bulletins and Checklists



# BC DSP Surveillance Templates



## SITE SURVEILLANCE (For Concrete Dams)

It is recommended that you customize this form for your dam

Dam Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Dam File #: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Inspection Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Frequency of Inspections: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Other Participants: \_\_\_\_\_

Was the spillway flowing? If yes, what was the water depth over the spillway sill? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Y N (circle one) If no, how far was the water below the spillway sill level? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Was the low level outlet open? If yes, what was the approximate discharge rate? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Y N (circle one)

Are the following components of your dam in SATISFACTORY CONDITION? Yes or No?  
 Check box if applicable - Please refer to the Inspection and Maintenance of Dams manual for dam inspection information

CONCRETE STRUCTURE	OUTLET	SPILLWAY	Y	N
1. Align			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Joint			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Conc			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Drain			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Publi			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>


"Site Surveillance"  
FORM  
(concrete)

Were any of the following POTENTIAL PROBLEM INDICATORS found?

INDICATOR	CONCRETE STRUCTURE		OUTLET		SPILLWAY	
	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
a) Seepage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) External Erosion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Cracks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Settlement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Horizontal Movement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) Excessive Debris	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) Vegetation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comment on any problems: \_\_\_\_\_

Complete and file this report form weekly or as required in your OMS manual.  
 This form may also be used for monthly inspections of significant failure consequence dams or for quarterly inspections for low failure consequence dams (see Schedule 2 of the Dam Safety Regulation).  
 Documentation of your site surveillance may be requested by a Provincial Dam Safety Officer.  
 Updated: September 2014



## SITE SURVEILLANCE (For Dams with Earth or Rock Embankments)

It is recommended that you customize this form for your dam

Dam Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Dam File #: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Inspection Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Frequency of Inspections: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Other Participants: \_\_\_\_\_

Was the spillway flowing? If yes, what was the water depth over the spillway sill? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Y N (circle one) If no, how far was the water below the spillway sill level? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Was the low level outlet open? If yes, what was the approximate discharge rate? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Y N (circle one)

Are the following components of your dam in SATISFACTORY CONDITION? Yes or No?  
 Check box if applicable - Please refer to the Inspection and Maintenance of Dams manual for dam inspection information

EMBANKMENT	OUTLET	SPILLWAY	Y	N
1. U/S Slope			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Crest			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. D/S Slope			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. D/S Toe			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Seepage V			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Public saf			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

"Site Surveillance"  
FORM  
(earth/rock)

Were any of the following POTENTIAL PROBLEM INDICATORS found?

INDICATOR	EMBANKMENT		OUTLET		SPILLW
	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
a) Seepage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) External Erosion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Cracks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Settlement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Sloughing / Slides	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) Animal Activity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) Excessive Growth	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h) Excessive Debris	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comment on any problems, concerns or deficiencies found: \_\_\_\_\_

This form may also be used for monthly inspections of significant failure consequence dams or for quarterly inspections for low failure consequence dams (see Schedule 2 of the Dam Safety Regulation).  
 Documentation of your site surveillance may be requested by a Provincial Dam Safety Officer.  
 Updated: September 2014

## Formal Annual Inspection Pre-Inspection Information

It is recommended that you customize this form to fit your dam.

Name of Dam: \_\_\_\_\_ Inspection Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Current Weather: \_\_\_\_\_ Weather During Last Week: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name of Creek, Stream, River: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Dam Owner: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City, Province: \_\_\_\_\_ Water Licence #: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name of Principle Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Principle Contact's Bus Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Principle Contact's Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Principle Contact's Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Person Responsible for this Inspection: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other Inspection Participants: \_\_\_\_\_

Were dam deficiencies identified that required follow-up? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date of Last Annual Inspection Report reviewed?: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Were recommendations from the last DSR Report implemented? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Repairs or modifi \_\_\_\_\_  
 Failures/Incident: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Has all the maint \_\_\_\_\_  
 Are the Works Ci \_\_\_\_\_

## "Formal Inspection" FORM (generic)

← Focus Today!

### Failure Consequence Classification

Circle current Failure Consequence Classification (based on BC Dam Safety Regulation)  
 Low Significant High Very-High Extreme

### Hydrology

Drainage Area Size: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Inflow Design Flood (IDF): \_\_\_\_\_  
 1000 yr Flood: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Probable Maximum Flood: \_\_\_\_\_ m<sup>3</sup>/s  
 Spillway Crest Elevation: \_\_\_\_\_ m<sup>3</sup>/s  
 Spillway Capacity: \_\_\_\_\_ m<sup>3</sup>/s  
 Gross Freeboard (@ full supply level): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Reservoir Storage Volume: \_\_\_\_\_

Reservoir Area: \_\_\_\_\_  
 IDF Return Period: \_\_\_\_\_  
 (if available): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Spillway Width: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Net Freeboard (while spillway passing IDF): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Freeboard (at time of visit): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Licenced Storage Volume: \_\_\_\_\_

### Emergency Preparedness Plan (EPP)

Has the emergency contact information in the EPP been updated this year and distributed as required? \_\_\_\_\_

### Other Key Information

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

November 2013  
Page 1 of 8

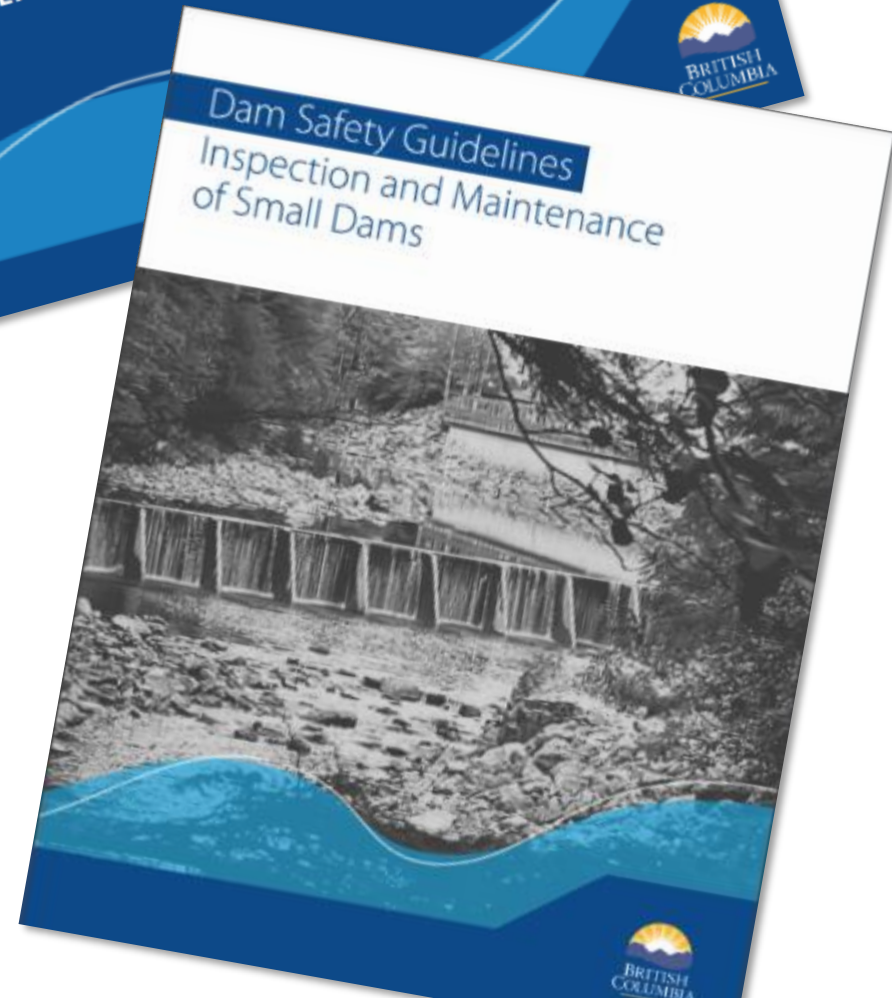
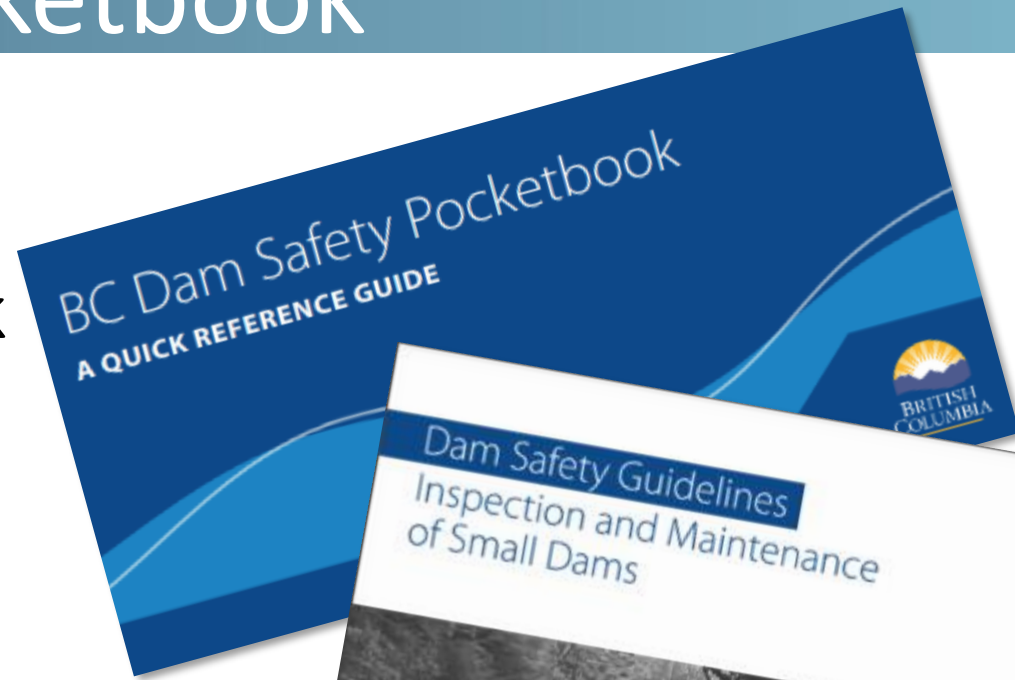
All templates say "It is recommended that you customize this form for your dam"

# Self Help Guide and Pocketbook

The Safety Pocketbook Quick Reference Guide

&

the Inspections and Maintenance of Small Dams manual





# Dam Safety Training

Visit the [BC Dam Safety Education and Training webpage](#) for training opportunities or use the QR code to request training for your team.



# Questions

---

Reach out to [dam.safety@gov.bc](mailto:dam.safety@gov.bc) for specific questions for a Dam Safety Officer

