

Red House Dam Reconstruction FAQ:

A comprehensive rehabilitation project of the Red House Dam will commence this summer in an effort to further provide safe and enjoyable recreation at Allegany State Park. The dam was originally built in 1927 and is need of repair.

Below are some questions and answers that may help you better understand the project as well as to plan accordingly if you are planning a visit this summer.

1. How will the dam be lowered? When?

Water levels will be lowered thru the existing spillway slide gates, which will be repaired and operational prior to the water drawdown of the lake. A minimum flowrate will be maintained during the project, as required by NYSDEC, in order to accommodate the wildlife species in Red House Brook downstream of the dam. Measures will be taken to remove sediment from downstream flow, which will ensure protection of species below the dam.

2. Where does the water go?

The lake water will continue to be routed through Red House Brook downstream of the dam.

3. What happens to the fish in Red House Lake?

NYS Parks is coordinating with regional DEC fisheries to move some fish from Red House Lake to Quaker Lake before drawdown commences.

By reducing the fish population (transferring them to Quaker Lake) the oxygen demand on the remaining volume of water will be lessened. That, coupled with a slow drawdown and the relatively short maximum drawdown period, will minimize negative impacts to the fish population to the greatest extent possible.

4. How long will it be drained?

The partial draw down of Red House Lake may begin as early as July 5th, but not before. The lake is planned to be fully re-watered by spring 2018. The initial drawdown period is expected to last approximately 4 weeks. Once the first phase of work is completed on the spillway and lakeside embankment, the water levels will be incrementally increased to accommodate the construction operations along the shoreline and bridge areas.

5. How does that impact, if at all, tourism in the Red House area for the summer?

During construction, ASP Route 1 will be closed to all vehicle, bicycle, and pedestrian traffic from the Red House maintenance road to the Administration Building. Also, the Red House beach area will be closed while the drawdown is in effect. Information will be provided at the Park Entrance stations in regards to the construction operations and detour route to the Administration Building.

Swimming will open at Red House Beach this year on Memorial Day and continue weekends until the start of peak season later in June, at which time the beach will be open daily until the lake is lowered for the construction work (estimated early July at the earliest).

In anticipation of this project, we have made arrangements to increase the size and capacity of Quaker Lake Beach to accommodate additional swimmers for the summer season. Quaker Lake offers a great alternative for water recreation especially with the opening of the new bathhouse and playground. We are also working closely with our concession operator and he is making plans to rent boats at Quaker Lake this summer and will be adding more staff at the Quaker Beach Snack Bar. While swimming and water recreation on Red House Lake could be impacted as soon as July due to the required lowering of lake levels the picnic areas, picnic shelters, athletic fields, park stores, gift shops, and Red House Beach Snack Bar will remain open throughout the summer.

Given the fact that other water recreation opportunities exist at Allegany State Park, we do not anticipate that this project will have a major impact on visitation to the Park.

The Allegany State Park Facebook page will be updated regularly with more detailed information as the project develops.

6. What, specifically, is being done to the dam? Why is it necessary?

The dam is being rehabilitated to achieve compliance with NYSDEC's current dam safety regulations. This major rehabilitation project is addressing several key components of the dam including demolition and replacement of the existing bridge, spillway rehabilitation, embankment strengthening, road safety improvements, installation of new lakeside path and lake access improvements.

7. Who will do the work? What is the process? Timeline? Cost?

Final design and reviews have been completed. The project has gone to bid and a subsequent bid opening took place on April 5th. A contract award is currently pending with a general contractor.

The Red House Dam Renovation Project was originally estimated at \$6 million. The plan is to address the dam rehabilitation as a single project rather than using a phased approach which will save time, funds and result in lowering the lake only one time. The project is scheduled to be fully completed before the start of the 2018 summer season. The lake is planned to be fully re-watered by spring 2018

8. When was the last time it was drained?

Note the lake is not being “drained”. It is being lowered by 8 feet for approximately a month and then it will be incrementally brought back up to normal levels as construction progresses. Red House Lake was previously lowered back in 2000 to remove some sediment near the inlets to the lake.

9. Does this happen in other parts of the park?

The Park does have two other man-made lakes that include dam structures (Science Lake and Quaker Lake) which require regular maintenance and upkeep. Red House Dam is nearly 100 years old. There is no major renovation worked scheduled on the other two dams at this time beyond normal inspection, maintenance and upkeep.