



# Fact Sheet

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania • Department of Environmental Protection

## DAM PERMITS IN PENNSYLVANIA



### What is a dam?

A dam is any artificial barrier, such as an earthen embankment or concrete structure, built for the purpose of impounding or storing water or another fluid or semi-fluid.

### When does a dam need a permit?

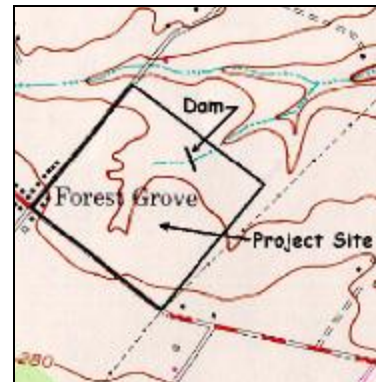
1. A dam permit is required if the proposed dam will be built across a stream and it meets one of the following criteria:
  - a. The contributory drainage area exceeds 100 acres. The drainage area is the land area that, during a storm event, contributes water runoff to the impounding area.
  - b. The maximum depth of water, measured from the upstream toe of the dam to the top of the dam at maximum storage elevation, is greater than 15 feet.
  - c. The impounding capacity (storage volume) at maximum storage elevation is greater than 50 acre-feet.
2. A dam permit is required if the proposed dam is not located across a stream and criteria 1.b AND 1.c listed above are met.
3. A dam permit is required if the dam will store a fluid or semi-fluid, other than water, that may result in pollution or danger to persons or property if it escaped.

### Who makes the determination of the need for a permit for proposed dams?

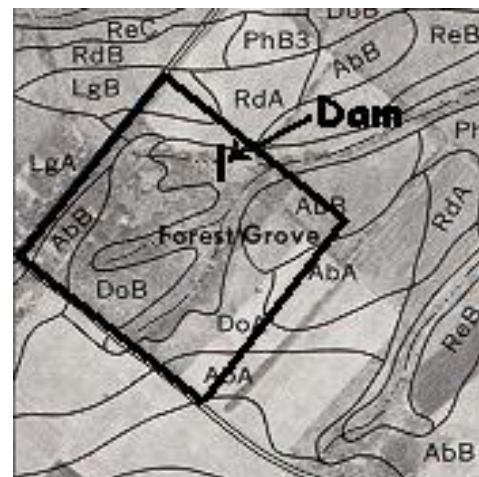
A determination of the need for a permit can be requested from the Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP's) Division of Dam Safety. The

following information is necessary for a jurisdictional determination:

- \*1. The location of the proposed project site, indicated on a copy of a United States Geological Survey Topographic Map.

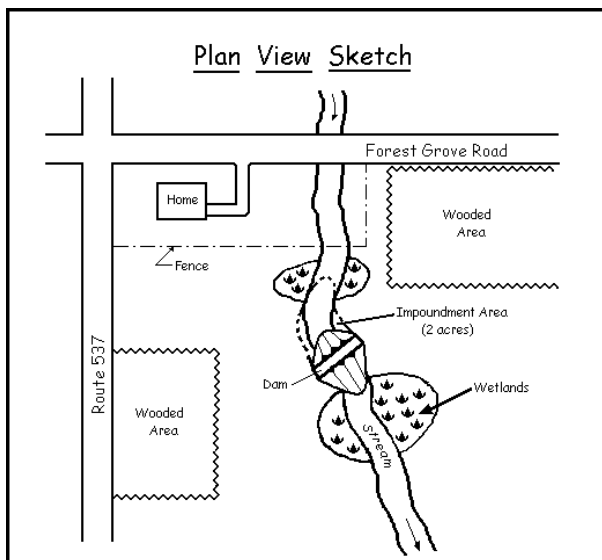


- \*2. A copy of the Soil Survey Map for the project area.

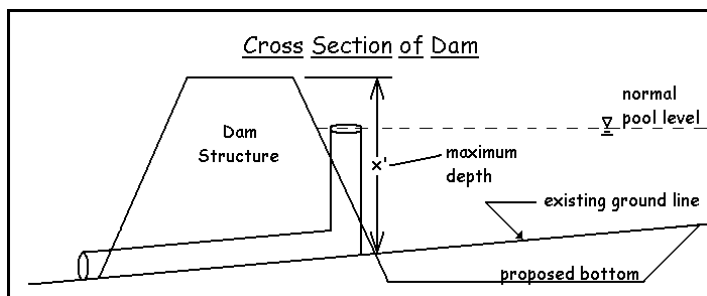


- \* A copy of these maps may be obtained from your County Conservation District Office.

3. A plan view sketch, indicating the proposed surface area of the impoundment and its proximity to streams, wetlands and other structures at the site.



4. A cross-section of the dam (or embankment) indicating the maximum depth.



5. Color photographs of the site.

To request a determination of the need for a permit, send the information described in this fact sheet to:

Department of Environmental Protection  
 Bureau of Waterways Engineering  
 Division of Dam Safety  
 P. O. Box 8554  
 Harrisburg, PA 17105-8554  
 (717) 787-8568

### What if wetlands or a stream exist at the site?

1. If the proposed dam does not require a dam permit, but is located in, along or projecting into a wetlands or across a stream, DEP approval of an Environmental Assessment is required. (An Environmental Assessment is an evaluation of the potential impacts that a project may have on aquatic resources.) The department will provide an Environmental Assessment form with the notification of the determination of the need for a permit or other approvals.
2. In addition, if the proposed dam does not require a dam permit, but is located in an exceptional value watershed, DEP approval of an Environmental Assessment is required.
3. Any excavation of wetlands, stream or floodway within the impoundment area would require an encroachment permit from DEP. The department, upon receipt of the information discussed above, will make this determination.

This fact sheet and related environmental information are available electronically via Internet. For more information, visit us through PA PowerPort at <http://www.state.pa.us> or visit DEP directly at <http://www.dep.state.pa.us> (directLINK "Dam Safety").



[www.GreenWorks.tv](http://www.GreenWorks.tv) - A web space dedicated to helping you learn how to protect and improve the environment. The site features the largest collection of environmental videos available on the Internet and is produced by the nonprofit Environmental Fund for Pennsylvania, with financial support from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, 877-PA-GREEN.