

Private Dam Maintenance

The saying “make hay while the sun shines” tells us to get things done when conditions are right. There’s no better time to check your dam than in summer when water levels are low. By making sure your dam is structurally sound and ready for the next major rains, you will ensure the integrity of the dam is not compromised and any leaks, seepage, or other problems are fixed before they become a major issue. Did you know that as a land owner you are legally responsible for the safety of your dam? Impacts can range from erosion damage in nearby creeks and waterways to a snowballing effect where a dam failing upstream can have an impact on dams downstream in the catchment. In a worse case scenario, dam failure can impact directly on lives, homes, and property. There are a number of routine maintenance tasks that will help you understand your dam better. These will help you identify defects when they are relatively minor and more cheaply and easily fixed and help you prolong the life of your dam.

- Walk around your dam, taking note of the upstream slope, the crest of the dam, and the downstream slope and the spillway.
- Look for any signs of erosion, seepage, cracks, holes, or damage by livestock.
- You might want to take photographs so you can note any changes over time.
- Other good times to check on your dam are before and after winter and again after major rains.

Guidelines on how to do these checks of your dam are available online from the State Emergency Service and Department for Environment and Water. Continually maintaining the safety of your dam is important, so download the guidelines now before a small issue turns into a big problem.