



Pennsylvania
Emergency Management Agency



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Department of Environmental Protection

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**Shapiro Administration Celebrates Completion of Frank E. Heller Dam
Spillway Rehabilitation Project to Ensure Clean Drinking Water For
51,000 Pennsylvanians and Protect Thousands of Pennsylvanians
from Future Flooding**

PEMA and DEP worked with local officials to secure \$1,176,800 in grant funding from the FEMA High Hazard Potential Dam Program to support the dam spillway rehabilitation project.

The Frank E. Heller Dam supports municipal water supply for 51,000 Pennsylvanians.

The upgraded spillway helps to protect the lives and property of 3,838 Pennsylvanians, 111 businesses, two schools, two day care centers, and two nursing homes downstream of the dam.



Armstrong Township, PA – Today, the **Shapiro Administration** celebrated the completion of the **Frank. E. Heller Dam** spillway rehabilitation project. The dam, located in Armstrong Township, Lycoming County, is owned and operated by the Williamsport Municipal Water Authority (WMWA) and is used to maintain the pool at the Hagerman

Reservoir which supports municipal water supply for approximately 51,000 people. The dam spillway rehabilitation also helps to mitigate an estimated \$22 million in future flood damage to 2,600 residents living downstream of Hagermans Run in South Williamsport.

Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) Director Randy Padfield and Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Deputy Secretary Jill Whitcomb joined WMWA leadership along with local and state officials for the event.

“Projects like the spillway rehabilitation at the Heller Dam demonstrate why sustained investment in hazard mitigation is so important,” said **PEMA Director Randy Padfield**. “By strengthening critical infrastructure now, we reduce future risk and protect the safety of thousands of Pennsylvanians from future flooding. This collaboration between federal, state, and local partners shows what we can accomplish when we work together to build more resilient communities.”

“The rehabilitation of our aging dam infrastructure is crucial to protecting the lives and property of the over 1.5 million Pennsylvanians that live and work downstream of the Commonwealth’s high hazard potential dams every day,” said **Deputy Secretary Jill Whitcomb**. “This represents more than ten percent of the Commonwealth’s population. The average age of Pennsylvania’s dams is currently 77 years and increasing each year, while the typical design life of a dam is 50 years, illustrating the critical need regarding our dams.”

“Maintaining and investing in critical water infrastructure is essential to the health, safety and future of our community. Reliable water service is something people often take for granted, but it requires constant investment to ensure our system remains safe, dependable and resilient for generations to come,” said **WMWA Executive Director Michael D. Miller**. “The Williamsport Municipal Water Authority is extremely grateful to FEMA and PEMA for providing this grant opportunity and for recognizing the importance of investing in critical water infrastructure. The Authority also thanks Senator John Fetterman and Congressman Dan Meuser for their support and leadership throughout the grant process and construction of this project. Their efforts helped make this investment in our community possible.”

“Too often, projects such as this are put off until severe damage has already taken place,” said **Lycoming County Commissioner Mark Mussina**. “We are grateful that the Frank E. Heller Dam rehabilitation was taken care of in a preventative measure, protecting the people and infrastructure of that area and essentially eliminating the chances of significant future damage.”

The successful completion of the **Frank E. Heller Dam** improvements represents a significant investment in the safety and reliability of the dam, the protection of the Hagerman Reservoir, and the communities, infrastructure, and people who live, work, and recreate downstream. This project was made possible through the National Dam Safety Program in partnership between DEP’s Division of Dam Safety, PEMA, and WMWA. The upgraded spillway helps to protect the lives and property of 3,838

Pennsylvanians, 111 businesses, two schools, two day care centers, and two nursing homes downstream of the dam.

“The completion of the Frank E. Heller Dam rehabilitation marks a major investment in the safety and long-term reliability of this critical piece of infrastructure,” said **Sen. Gene Yaw**. “Taking care of these needs today is how we prevent small problems from becoming much larger and more costly down the road. I appreciate the Williamsport Municipal Water Authority and all the state and local partners who helped get this project across the finish line.”

“Our area is no stranger to flooding and the damage it can do to property and infrastructure,” said **Rep. Jamie Flick**. “These residents, businesses, schools, daycare centers, and nursing homes deserve safe drinking water and protection and I’m appreciative of the partnership between Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency, Department of Environmental Protection, and the Williamsport Municipal Water Authority. They worked hard to ensure the Frank E. Heller Dam rehabilitation project was a priority, and made sure funding was in place to get this crucial project done for our community.”

In 2019, the first year of the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA) [Rehabilitation of High Hazard Potential Dam \(HHPD\)](#) grant program, the WMWA received an award administered by DEP for **\$176,800** to determine the best solution to rehabilitate the aging dam. The WMWA used this funding to investigate several options for the dam’s future, ultimately deciding to complete a full dam spillway replacement to ensure reservoir storage capacity, reduce long-term erosion, and provide economic benefits. The original dam was constructed in 1975 and showed signs of aging in 2019, with repairs needed by 2029.

The construction cost for the **Frank E. Heller Dam** spillway rehabilitation project totaled **\$2.1 million**. In 2022, PEMA administered a **\$1 million** award to WMWA for construction, awarded through FEMA’s HHPD grant program. The WMWA covered the remaining funding. Construction work began in March 2025 and was recently completed in Sept. 2026.

FEMA’s National Dam Safety Program introduced the Rehabilitation of High Hazard Potential Dam (HHPD) Grant Program to provide technical, planning, design, and construction assistance for rehabilitation of eligible high hazard potential dams. FEMA requires the state to have a dam safety program to be eligible for the grant.

“FEMA’s role is to support the commonwealth and local communities, who know their needs best,” said **FEMA Region 3 Regional Administrator Andre C. McCoy**. “Through the High Hazard Potential Dam Grant Program, FEMA has provided funding to Pennsylvania for projects identified and managed by the commonwealth. This milestone highlights FEMA’s commitment to use mitigation funding effectively, maximizing impact and supporting long-term community resiliency.”

The **Frank E. Heller Dam** is categorized as a high hazard potential dam. According to FEMA, a high hazard potential dam is a classification standard for any dam whose failure or mis-operation will cause loss of human life and significant property destruction. The classification of a high hazard potential dam does not mean the dam is structurally deficient or is in immediate danger of failing.

Pennsylvania's [Dam Safety Program](#) is a national leader in dam safety and assures proper planning, design review, construction, maintenance, monitoring, and supervision of the over 3,400 dams across the Commonwealth. DEP administers the Dam Safety Program under Pennsylvania's Dam Safety and Encroachments Act, which provides for the regulation of dams and reservoirs in order to protect the health, safety, and welfare of people and property.

Under the leadership of **Gov. Shapiro**, PEMA is currently managing over **\$118 million** in federal hazard mitigation funding. This funding supports hundreds of planning, project scoping, design work, community resilience and critical infrastructure construction projects across the Commonwealth. The [Pennsylvania Silver Jackets Team](#), comprised of federal, state, and local partners, has played a significant role in the advancement of several projects through use of collaborative, community-driven solutions to reduce flood risk. Recent [estimates](#) from the National Institute of Building Sciences show that *every \$1 invested in hazard mitigation saves up to \$13 from future disasters.*

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