

CURRENT PRACTICES  
OF THE  
DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES  
IN  
SUPERVISION OF DAMS AND RESERVOIRS

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## Introduction

The following is provided to help the reader comply with the requirements of the foregoing sections of the Water Code (WC) and the California Code of Regulations (CCR). Current practices of the Department of Water Resources in supervision of dams and reservoirs in State jurisdiction are given. Information required for applications is outlined. (CCR 310)

## Division of Safety of Dams

Responsibility for supervision of dams and reservoirs is assigned to the department and delegated to the Division of Safety of Dams (DSOD).

## Dams and Reservoirs in State Jurisdiction

Water Code Sections 6000 to 6004.5 and 6025.5 identify dams and reservoirs that are in State jurisdiction. Note that dams and reservoirs owned by the United States are not subject to State jurisdiction except as otherwise provided by federal law.

The Division will review the physical description on request of existing or proposed impoundments and determine if they are or will be in State jurisdiction. Plans for proposed impoundments are usually required before determinations can be made.

## Proposed Dams and Reservoirs

The Division of Safety of Dams inspects sites, reviews preliminary plans, and comments on firm proposals for proposed dams and reservoirs. It attempts to inspect representative field exploration, unique laboratory testing, etc., for proposed facilities. However, any comments based on preliminary plans and data are not binding on the Division's later consideration of applications.

In matters relating to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the Department of Water Resources is the lead or responsible agency for dams and reservoirs. Environmental consideration for dams and reservoirs not directly related to safety is assigned to the Department's four districts. Usually, the Division of Safety of Dams makes preliminary reviews of dam and reservoir proposals, as discussed above, before environmental documentation is prepared. Other water related concerns are handled by the appropriate district.

## Procedure for Construction or Enlargement of Dams and Reservoirs

1. If adequate water rights are not already held, file an application for water rights with the State Water Resources Control Board, Division of Water Rights, 901 P Street, Sacramento, California 95814. Evidence of water rights is required before a construction or enlargement application can be approved. (CCR 303)
2. Pre-application meetings are not required by the statutes or regulations. Practice, however, has shown that early involvement

of DSOD in projects is most beneficial for aggressive project schedules. CEQA scoping meetings, early site visits to view exploration, preliminary design discussions, project schedule reviews, and submittal of preliminary 60 percent plans, specifications, and geologic data are recommended to expedite review leading to final approval.

3. File application for construction or enlargement of dam. (CCR 310) Include:
  - (a) Application forms (DWR 3) in duplicate to Department of Water Resources, Division of Safety of Dams, P.O. Box 942836, Sacramento, California 94236-0001, (2200 X Street, Suite 200), plus one copy to the Fish and Game Commission in-care of the State Department of Fish and Game, 12<sup>th</sup> Floor, Resources Building, 1416 Ninth Street, Sacramento, California 95814, if the dam is in a stream. (WC 6500) Sign all copies.
  - (b) Plans prepared by registered civil engineer pursuant to California law. (CCR 304) Such plans shall be filed in duplicate in the form of paper prints. Unsigned, nearly complete, prints should be submitted.
  - (c) Specifications in duplicate. Nearly complete specifications should be submitted.
  - (d) Filing Fee. (WC 6300-6309 and CCR 314). The Current fee structure is listed on the Division Website under "Fees."
  - (e) Certain additional information may be desirable, or may be required, depending upon the magnitude of the project. Such added information may include soils data, logs of borings or other exploratory data, geologic reports, hydrologic data, structural and hydraulic design notes, etc.
  - (f) Information to enable the department to comply with the California Environmental Quality Act and regulations. This information is as appropriate:
    - (1) A copy of the final adopted environmental impact report or initial study--negative declaration prepared by a lead agency, or
    - (2) Data and information necessary for the department to act as lead agency to prepare the environmental documentation.

The environmental documentation in either case must be submitted to the State Clearing-house for processing as required by State law.

4. Within 30 days after receipt of an application, the Division informs the applicant that the application is complete or of the information necessary to make it complete.
5. After review of plans, specifications, etc., and inspection of the site, changes in the plans and specifications, and any supplemental data necessary for approval, will be identified.
6. Submit signed drawings in triplicate and final specifications in duplicate for application approval when review comments are resolved.
7. All civil engineering work is to bear the seal or stamp of the responsible civil engineer and shall be signed across the face with the expiration of the certificate shown on or adjacent to the seal. Civil engineering work includes plans, specifications, reports, and documents which are prepared under the Civil Engineering Practice Act.
8. Notify the Division when construction is to begin and keep DSOD field engineers informed as to the status of construction work at all times. Inspections are made during construction as deemed necessary. No foundations or abutments shall be covered until the DSOD field engineer has inspected and approved them.
9. Upon completion of construction, notify the Division by letter. Final inspections are made as soon as practicable after notice is received.
10. As soon as possible after completion of the dam and final inspection by the division's field engineer, file the following:
  - (a) Affidavit of cost of construction. Attach breakdown of costs, including engineering.
  - (b) Additional filing fee if final cost exceeds estimated cost by more than 15 percent.
  - (c) As-constructed plans, if required, in the form of paper prints.
11. A Certificate of Approval will be issued upon a finding that the dam and reservoir are safe to impound water within the limitations prescribed in the certificate. Impoundment of water must not commence until this certificate is issued.

#### Procedure for Repair or Alteration of Dams or Reservoirs

The procedure is the same as for construction or enlargement except for the following:

1. Evidence of water rights is not required.
2. Use application form DWR 4.
3. Plans and specifications may not be required for minor repair work.
4. Repair and maintenance qualify for an exemption under the California Environmental Quality Act.
5. Only two sets of signed plans are required for application approval.
6. The Certificate of Approval is only modified when the alteration or repair lowers the approved water surface elevation.

#### Procedure for Removal of Dams and Reservoirs

The procedure is the same as for construction or enlargement except for the following:

1. Evidence of water rights is not required.
2. Use application form DWR 5.
3. Only two sets of signed plans are required for application approval.
4. The Certificate of Approval, if any, is returned to the Department.