

10 Decommissioning

10.1 Introduction

When a dam is no longer needed, the dam owner may:

- arrange for the transfer of ownership and associated responsibilities to another party
- decommission the dam.

10.2 Decommissioning

A decommissioned dam is a dam where parts of the structure are removed or otherwise modified to make it incapable of storing water, either temporarily or permanently.

The extent of modification required for the safe decommissioning of a dam should be assessed by an experienced dams engineer and may include:

- effective removal of part of the main wall
- permanent enlargement or opening of the outlet works
- lowering of the spillway crest
- removal of spillway, control gates or stopboards
- excavation of a diversion channel through an abutment.

10.3 Dam Safety Decommissioning Plan

When decommissioning a dam, owners should prepare a dam safety decommissioning plan, which outlines the proposed action to be taken to decommission the dam. The dam safety decommissioning plan should:

- include a time sequence of studies and works associated with the decommissioning
- address all dam safety issues associated with the decommissioning including:
 - show impacts of sudden loss of remaining embankments or other dam sections for a range of flood events in compliance with the Guidelines for Failure Impact Assessments of Water Dams
 - provision for safe release of stored water
 - assessment of altered hydraulic character of spillways and streams
 - provision to minimise impact on downstream residents
 - provision for consultation with downstream residents and landholders.

In addition to dam safety issues there are numerous environmental, economic and social issues to be considered when decommissioning a dam. The owner should determine the requirements of the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) when planning the decommissioning of any dam.

