

Hodges Reservoir Water Level

The Hodges Reservoir Dam is a multiple arch dam with ogee spillway that was built in 1918. It has a total storage capacity of 30,000 acre feet. The dam is located north of Rancho Bernardo, and is within the jurisdiction of the California Division of Safety of Dams.

The elevation of the water storage at Hodges Reservoir is being maintained at a maximum level of 295 feet. The Division of Safety of Dams supports the continued operation of the reservoir at this level

- To maintain safety of the dam structure and surrounding communities,
- To ensure efficient use of the local water supply by the City and other local water agencies,
- And to allow for necessary maintenance and improvement work on the Hodges Dam to occur.

Questions & Answers

What is the purpose of Hodges Reservoir?

The primary function of Hodges Reservoir is to impound water for drinking water purposes. Secondary functions are to provide renewable energy and recreational opportunities.

Who does the water in Hodges Reservoir serve?

Water in Hodges Reservoir is used to primarily serve the City of San Diego, City of Solana Beach, portions of the City of Encinitas and communities of Rancho Santa Fe and Fairbanks Ranch. In addition, water in Hodges Reservoir is part of the San Diego County Water Authority's regional emergency supply that can be used to meet demands during an emergency event.

Why is the reservoir level being restricted?

Hodges Dam is more than 100 years old. As with any piece of aging infrastructure, the materials that make up the dam have deteriorated to a point that repairs are now needed. The City has retained a specialized engineering firm to assist with the development of a comprehensive plan to make both short- and long-term repairs and improvements.

Is 295 feet a safe elevation?

Yes. Based on current condition assessments and in consultation with the Division of Safety of Dams, 295 feet has been determined to be a safe operating level. Maintaining the reservoir at elevation 295 has a significant effect by relieving the water pressures on the dam and reducing the total volume within the reservoir. This level was selected to allow beneficial uses of the water supply while also allowing the City to perform more in-depth evaluations of the structure.

Can we still use Hodges Reservoir for recreation?

Yes. Aside from times following heavy rainfalls, Hodges Reservoir's elevation is normally between 290-295, so the City does not anticipate any changes to the recreational program at this time.

What happens if the reservoir level goes above 295 feet?

The City of San Diego monitors the level of the reservoir daily. The dam has historically performed well even at full capacity with a maximum elevation of 315 feet. However, for the foreseeable future, the City will work with our partner agencies to initiate water transfers to lower the level back to 295 feet or below. The City will take preemptive action to manage the level should forecasted rain threaten to increase the reservoir above the restricted capacity based on daily monitoring. If the reservoir does go above 295, it will be lowered as quickly as possible through a variety of existing withdrawal systems.

What is being done to maintain Hodges Dam?

The City is currently performing a comprehensive assessment of the performance and safety of Hodges Dam. This assessment is being closely coordinated with the Division of Safety of Dams. Once the assessment is completed, the City will develop an improvement plan to mitigate any deficiencies identified during the assessment. The City is anticipating the plan to be developed within a year.

Does the elevation impact nesting birds?

While there are no additional or special protections that would be applied to the lowering of the reservoir level because nearby birds are not listed species or on the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's sensitive species list, the City of San Diego does not intentionally or purposefully remove, destroy or impact active nests.

Are other City dams and reservoirs safe?

All City dams have been certified by the Division of Safety of Dams to safely impound water to the level of the spillway crest except for Lake Hodges Dam and El Capitan Dam. El Capitan Reservoir is being maintained 50 feet or more below the spillway crest level as an interim risk reduction measure while analyses are being performed to address seismic stability concerns. Of the City's nine major dams, the Division of Safety of Dams has rated the condition of five as satisfactory, three as fair and Hodges as poor.

Continued monitoring, maintenance and evaluation of the City's dams are necessary to keep them operating safely. The City regularly inspects, maintains and evaluates all its dams. The City prioritizes and conducts required maintenance and makes necessary repairs. Lake Hodges and El Capitan Dams are the only dams that require interim risk reduction measures such as restricting the levels of the reservoirs.

For more information about the Division of Safety of Dams, visit <https://water.ca.gov/damsafety/>.

Have more questions? We're here to help. Call us at 619-668-2050 or email us at customercare@sandiego.gov.

Should conditions change or should more information become available, the City of San Diego will maintain an updated list of questions and answers online:

<https://www.sandiego.gov/reservoirs-lakes/hodges-reservoir>.