



Lake Conroe Dam Rehabilitation

By: Shane Porter, G&A Division

Lake Conroe Dam is getting a fresh coat of paint as part of a lengthy renovation to extend the life of the dam.

The San Jacinto River Authority (SJRA) has contracted with a company to refurbish the five (5) gates of the Lake Conroe Dam by adding structural steel to each existing gate, and adding a new paint system. This lengthy

according to the TCEQ publication, “technical inspections must be performed by specialists familiar with the design and construction of dams and should include assessments of structure safety.” SJRA has contracted with the engineering consulting firm responsible for the original design of the dam, over 40 years ago, to perform these technical inspec-

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Construction workers begin mobilizing to work on Gate 5 at the Lake Conroe Dam.

project will take almost two years to complete, but should not impact the use of the lake.

SJRA’s Lake Conroe Division has the primary function of the operation and maintenance of the dam, spillway structure, and service outlet at Lake Conroe. Lake Conroe Division staff perform a variety of structural inspections in accordance with Guidelines for Operation and Maintenance of Dams in Texas, a publication administered by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ).

Inspections range from periodic technical inspections, regular maintenance inspections, and informal observations by project personnel as they operate the dam. Ac-

tions on a regular basis. These “dam engineers” assist with annual reviews of instrumentation and monitoring of the dam, as well as perform a comprehensive review every five years to develop long term plans for the continued operation and maintenance of the facility.

The main element of this work is a new paint coating system for each of the five (5) tainter gates, which are used to control the amount of water released from the lake in the event of a flood condition. This new paint system is very comparable to recurring maintenance that a home owner may do to their house – scrape away the old paint and put a new coat on. Typically a project of this

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Independent third party inspector reviewing work between sand blasting and painting to ensure work is done according to plans and specifications.

magnitude is done every 10 years, which is typical for the southeast Texas environment (wet/dry cycles, high humidity, UV exposure, etc.). The contractor will sand blast the gates down to bare metal to remove the existing paint. After an inspection of each gate, three different protective coatings will be added, which should protect the metal gates for another 10-15 years.

Boaters on the lake may notice a white curtain on the western gate, which is the contractor's containment system for sand blasting and overspray.

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Boaters on the lake may notice a white curtain on the western gate, which is the contractor's containment system for sand blasting and overspray. The pictures below show this from the warning buoys on the lake side (curtain on the right gate), as well as how the gates look from the river side of the dam (curtain seen on the left gate).



View of Lake Conroe Dam from the San Jacinto River. Note the containment curtain on the left gate.



View of Lake Conroe Dam from the warning buoys on the lake. Note the containment curtain on the right gate.

The last renovation to Lake Conroe Dam of this magnitude was performed in 2001, when structural metal in the form of rib braces and angle members were added to each gate. During this project, the gates were then sand blasted to bare metal and recoated with the paint that is visible today.

The Lake Conroe Division already has a high level maintenance program which enables safe operation of the dam.

Ahead of this project, SJRA had an opportunity to review the new engineering manual for spillway tainter gates, which are design guidelines developed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). These guidelines were amended following the failure of a gate at Folsom Dam in Folsom, CA in 1995. These guidelines were developed for new construction dams and due to the date of construction of Lake Conroe Dam,



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Construction workers add structural steel to strengthen one of the tainter gates at Lake Conroe Dam.

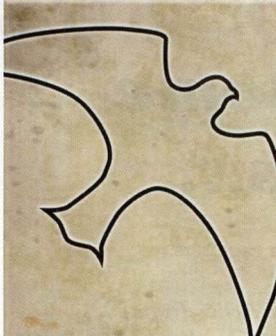
this facility is grandfathered in (similar to home construction and the addition of new codes years after a home is built). The cause of the gate failure was attributed to a

It is important for the contractor to take their time and do a thorough job with metal fabrication and painting, which is essential to delivering a successful product when the contract is finished.

structural failure coupled with poor maintenance. The Lake Conroe Division already has a high level maintenance program which enables safe operation of the dam. The main element of the USACE's report was a retrofit to strengthen struts and bracing of each gate, which is precisely what the SJRA is undertaking.

The contractor will have 600 days to complete this work. It is important for the contractor to take their time and do a thorough job with metal fabrication and painting, which is essential to delivering a successful product when the contract is finished. Further, the contractor can only work on one (1) gate at a time to ensure safe operations of the other gates of the dam.

For more information about this project, please contact the SJRA at 936-588-3111. For more information about Lake Conroe and the Lake Conroe Division, please visit the SJRA's website at www.sjra.net. ♦



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