Dam Owner Grants Participation Guide

Dam Rehabilitation, Removal, Floodplain Restoration, and Culvert Retrofit Projects & Grants

> **Overview:** This 3-Step Guide assists dam owners with awareness of possible participation in dam rehabilitation, dam removal, floodplain restoration, and culvert retrofit grant programs. Owners can either individually apply or, if required, partner with an eligible government sponsor, watershed nonprofit, or state agency to co-develop projects and access public grant funding.

1. Choose Your Participation Path

Your role and grant options depend on whether you want to keep, modify, or eliminate the structure:

- **Dam Rehabilitation and Safety Upgrades *(Grant Program #1/3/4/7/8/9)*:** Repairing spillways, outlets, or embankments, or adding fish passage, to bring a dam up to state safety standards while maintaining impoundment functions.
- **Dam Breach or Removal *(Grant Program #1/2/3/4/8/9/10)*:** Decommissioning aging or obsolete dams to eliminate long-term maintenance and liability costs, reconnect upstream and downstream habitats, and restore natural sediment transport.
- **Floodplain Restoration and Reconnection *(Grant Program #5/6/10)*:** Allowing project partners to lower streambanks, excavate legacy sediment, or set back levees on your property so high flows spread naturally across the floodplain instead of overtopping infrastructure.
- **Culvert Retrofits and Road-Stream Crossings *(Grant Program #8/10)*:** Partnering with local transportation departments or conservation groups to replace undersized or perched culverts near your property with open-bottom arches or bridges that pass floodwaters and aquatic wildlife.

2. Target a State or Federal Grant Program

The following are several annually or periodically funded grant programs that dam owners can consider based on their participation pathway:

#	Grant Program*	Best For	Eligible Applicants & Cost Share
1.	North Carolina Dam Safety Grant Fund	High hazard dam repairs, barrier removals, and flood resilience projects within NC.	Public and private owners of eligible high-hazard dams for rehabilitation, repair, or removal. No cost matching requirement.
2.	North Carolina Land and Water Fund	Dam removal for water quality and habitat purposes within NC.	Local governments and nonprofits. A Board of Trustees sets cost matching requirements for grants and has the authority to waive them under specific board guidelines.
3.	Corps Water Infrastructure Financing Program (CWIFP)	Large-scale, non-federal dam safety and levee projects to maintain, upgrade, repair, or remove dams listed in the National Inventory of Dams.	Public entities, state revolving funds, or publicly sponsored private entities. Requires a minimum non-CWIFP cost share of 51% (or 20% for economically disadvantaged communities).
4.	FEMA High Hazard Potential Dam Grant Program	Rehabilitating, repairing, or removing non-Federal High hazard dams that fail to meet State safety standards.	States pass funds through to local governments or nonprofits. Requires a 35% cost match, an approved Hazard Mitigation Plan, and National Floodplain Insurance Program (NFIP) participation.

#	Grant Program*	Best For	Eligible Applicants & Cost Share
5.	FEMA BRIC or HMG	Broad flood mitigation, floodplain reconnection, and nature-based infrastructure upgrades.	Government entities and federally recognized tribes with typically a 25% cost match, passed through state emergency management agencies.
6.	FEMA Flood Mitigation Assistance	Dam-related work designed to control localized floodwaters, reconnect floodplains, and lower NFIP insurance claims.	States or Tribal Governments. Privately owned dams must secure a local government sponsor in accordance with state rules. 25% cost match (federal share up to 90% or 100% for high-risk properties and disadvantaged communities).
7.	FEMA Safeguarding Tomorrow Revolving Loan Fund	Constructing, repairing, modifying, or addressing deferred maintenance on non-Federal flood-control structures, such as dams, spillways, and levees, to increase resilience and reduce natural hazard risks.	Local governments (such as cities, counties, towns, or special districts). Privately owned dams must secure a local government sponsor in accordance with state rules. Minimum 10% cost match of the FEMA capitalization grant into their established entity loan fund.
8.	FHWA Culvert AOP Program	Replacing, removing, or repairing culverts and weirs at road/rail crossings to restore migratory fish passage.	States, local governments, and Tribal Governments (20% cost match, 0% cost match for Tribal Governments).
9.	USDA NRCS Watershed REHAB	Upgrading or decommissioning aging dams originally built under USDA watershed programs (PL-534 or PL-566).	Local project sponsors (districts, municipalities); covers up to 65% of rehabilitation costs, with land rights often counting toward the local match.
10.	USFWS National Fish Passage Program	Dam removals, culvert replacements, fishways, and floodplain restoration that reopen aquatic habitats.	State/local agencies, Tribal Governments, nonprofits, and private landowners working collaboratively with regional USFWS field offices.

**Note: See funding opportunity announcements for specific requirements. Review Association of State Dam Safety Officials Dam Rehabilitation Funding Directory and American Rivers River Restoration Funding Sources Guide for an expanded grant program list.*

3. Organize the Project: Collect Documents & Review Requirements

1. **Verify your dam's regulatory status and records.** Contact the NCDEQ Dam Safety Office (DamSafety@deq.nc.gov) to confirm your dam's hazard classification (Low, Intermediate, or High), gather recent inspection reports, Emergency Action Plans, Operations & Maintenance (O&M) records, and check for any outstanding Notices of Deficiency.
2. **Recruit a local sponsoring partner.** If you are a private dam owner or HOA/POA, reach out to your county emergency management office, municipal stormwater or public works department, Soil and Water Conservation District, or a local watershed group to serve as the lead grant applicant if required by the grant program.
3. **Conduct a preliminary feasibility assessment.** Before funding full construction, dam owners/partners usually apply for smaller planning or design grants to evaluate engineering alternatives (rehabilitation vs. removal), sediment testing, downstream flood impacts, and permitting needs.
4. **Structure your cost-share and factor long-term liabilities.** Be prepared to sign and establish a multi-year site access, O&M Plan, Floodplain Management Plan or conservation easement (often 25+ years) as required and determine how the non-federal match will be met—often through state matching grants, partner funds, or the value of conservation easements and in-kind land rights.

Questions and comments may be directed to the North Carolina Dam Safety Program via DamSafety@deq.nc.gov.