



# 2017 ASCE Infrastructure Report Card

## Levees and Dams

*Prepared by the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure Democratic Staff  
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### 2017 ASCE Grades

Levees: **D**

Dams (Federal and Non-Federal): **D**

### Talking Points: Levees

- According to the 2017 Infrastructure Report Card, America's levees received a grade of D, which is a slight improvement from their grade of D- in 2013.
- *Levee Inventory*—According to the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE):
  - A network of 30,000 documented miles of levees protects communities, critical infrastructure, and valuable property, with levees in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) Levee Safety Program protecting an estimated \$1.3 trillion in property.
  - Nationwide, the total inventory of Federal, State, and locally owned and operated levees may be closer to 100,000 miles of structures—protecting millions of people in urban, suburban, and rural areas.
  - Yet, because this large, mostly undocumented, inventory of levees is outside of Federal authority, the condition of the majority of the Nation's levees is largely unknown.
  - The average age of levees in the United States is 50 years and many are showing their age.
- *The State of Our Levees*—ASCE estimates that **\$80 billion** is needed in the next 10 years to maintain and improve the Nation's levees. However, Federal funding is available only for Corps-owned levees. States and localities own more than one-half of levees, and State and local governments have limited budgets for levee repair and maintenance.
- *Levees Safety Programs Are Underfunded*—In the Water Resources Development Acts of 2007 and 2014, Congress created a focused levee-safety authority within the Corps to first inventory, and later assess, the condition of both Federal and non-Federal levee structures. The Water Resources Reform and Development Act of 2014 also created a new National Levee Safety Initiative to promote consistent safety standards, create levee safety guidelines, and provide funding assistance to States to establish levee safety programs. Yet, these programs remain underfunded.

- *The Future of Our Levees*—ASCE has made several recommendations for improving the grade of D for the Nation’s inventory of levees, including:
  - Completing the Corps’ National Levee Inventory of all Federal, State, and local levee structures;
  - Funding the Corps’ National Levee Safety Initiative; and
  - Increasing funding at all levels of government to address structural and nonstructural solutions that reduce risk to people and property.

### Talking Points: Federal and Non-Federal Dams

- According to the 2017 Infrastructure Report Card, America’s dams (including Federal and non-Federal dams) received a grade of D, unchanged from the 2013 Report Card
- *Dam Inventory*—The Corps maintains an inventory of Federal and non-federally owned dams located in the United States.
  - Eighteen percent of the dams in the inventory are used for flood control.
  - More than half of the Nation’s dams are privately owned, while the Federal government owns approximately 4% of the dams or 3,381 dams.
  - According to the ASCE:
    - The average age of the 90,580 Federal and non-Federal dams in the inventory is 56 years.
    - In 2016, over 87,000 dams in the inventory were non-Federal dams.
    - By 2025, seven out of 10 dams in the United States will be more than 50 years old.
    - As of 2015, nearly 15,500 dams (or 17 percent) are considered high-hazard dams. Of the high-hazard dams, an estimated 2,170 are deficient. High-hazard dams are dams that may cause death in the event of failure.
    - Approximately 11,882 dams are considered significant hazard dams. Under this classification, loss of life may not occur but there could be significant economic loss.
- *The State of Our Dams*—The Association of State Dam Safety Officials estimate that it will cost over \$60 billion to rehabilitate the Nation’s non-Federal dams. Of that, almost \$19 billion is for non-Federal high hazard dams alone.
- *Dam Rehabilitation Funding*—Congress authorized \$10 million for each of fiscal years 2017 and 2018 for a dam rehabilitation and repair program of non-Federal dams as part of the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act in the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress.
- *Dam Failures Unknown*—At least one dam failure has been documented in every State. From 2005 through June 2013, State dam safety programs reported 173 dam failures and 587 “incidents”—episodes that, without intervention, would likely have resulted in dam failure.