

For Immediate Release:
April 19, 2024
Release No. MA 2024-12

Contact:
Cenae-pa@usace.army.mil

USACE hosts open house May 2 in Mansfield Center, Conn., for Mansfield Hollow Lake Master Plan revision

CONCORD, Mass. – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New England District will host an open house May 2, 2024, in Mansfield Center, Conn., to kick off a process to revise the 1979 Mansfield Hollow Lake Master Plan for the Mansfield Hollow Lake project in Mansfield.

The open house will be held from 4 to 6 p.m. at the Mansfield Library Programming Room at 54 Warrenton Road in Mansfield Center. There will be no formal presentation during the session, but USACE members will be on hand to share information about the revision process, provide the general schedule and gather initial feedback from the public.

The master plan serves as the strategic land use management document that guides the comprehensive management and development of all recreational, natural and cultural resources throughout the life of the water resource development project. It defines how USACE will manage the resources for public use and conservation.

The current Mansfield Hollow Lake Master Plan was last approved in 1979 and needs revision to address changes in regional land use, population, outdoor recreation trends, and the USACE management policy. Key topics to be discussed in the revised master plan include updated land use classifications, new natural and recreational resource management objectives, recreation facility needs, and special issues such as invasive species management and threatened and endangered species habitat. The revision does not address the technical and operational aspects of the Mansfield Hollow Lake project related to flood risk management or the water conservation missions of the project.

An initial 30-day public comment period will begin May 2 and end June 1. During this time, members of the public can submit comments, suggestions and concerns about the master plan.

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Comments must be submitted in writing at the open house or digitally via the comment form on the Mansfield Hollow Lake Master Plan revision website at <https://www.nae.usace.army.mil/Missions/Recreation/Mansfield-Hollow-Lake/Mansfield-Hollow-Lake-Master-Plan/>. The website also contains a presentation which will be available during the open house that provides details about an additional comment period that will open after the draft report is released (currently scheduled for June 2025).

Mansfield Hollow Dam lies on the confluence of the Natchaug, Fenton and Mt. Hope Rivers in Mansfield. The dam is part of a network of six flood risk management dams in the Thames River Basin constructed and maintained by the New England District. Construction of the dam began in 1949 and was completed in May 1952 at a cost of \$6.5 million. The dam consists of earthfill with stone slope protection. It has a length of 14,050 feet and a height of 68 feet. The project also consists of six earthfill dikes with stone slope protection that total 2,656 feet in length and have a maximum height of 53 feet.

USACE manages the natural resources at Mansfield Hollow Lake for multiple uses to include flood risk management, wildlife habitat, forest production, watershed protection and outdoor recreation. While the main purpose of Buffumville Lake is to provide flood risk management to the Thames River Basin, over the years the lake has become a recreational draw for approximately 435,000 visitors a year. With seven miles of trails, 480 acres of land, 200 acres of water, picnic areas, a swimming beach, 18-hole disc golf course, and a boat launch, the lake can accommodate all kinds of outdoor enthusiasts.

With over 15 miles of trails, 2,472 acres of land, 450 acres of water, picnic areas, and a boat launch, the lake can accommodate all kinds of outdoor enthusiasts. USACE owns 2,472 acres at the project site, of which the State of Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection leases approximately 2,300 acres for recreation and natural resource management.

For more information about Mansfield Hollow Lake, visit the project website at <https://www.nae.usace.army.mil/Missions/Recreation/Mansfield-Hollow-Lake/>.

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