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USACE hosts open house June 3 in Oxford, MA, for Buffumville Lake and Hodges Village Dam Master Plan revisions

CONCORD, Mass. – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), New England District will host an open house on June 3, 2025, in Oxford, MA, to share details on a draft revision of the 1976 Buffumville Lake Master Plan and the 1976 Hodges Village Dam Master Plan.

The open house will be held from 5 to 7 p.m. at the Oxford Public Library Meeting Room located at 339 Main Street in Oxford. The public open house will cover the proposed changes to the current Buffumville Lake and Hodges Village Dam Master Plans. Team members will share instructions on how to submit comments and provide an opportunity for the public to ask questions and provide feedback. A 30-day public comment period will begin on June 3rd, 2025, and end on July 3rd, 2025.

Master Plan Overview

The Master Plan is defined 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 Buffumville Lake Master Plan and Hodges Village Dam Master Plan, both last approved in 1976, need 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 revised 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 Master Plan revision will not address the technical and operational aspects of the lake related to flood risk management or the water conservation missions of the project.

Submitting Comments & Reviewing Draft Plans:

Comments must be submitted in writing at the open house or digitally via the comment form on the Master Plan Revision webpages during the 30-day public comment period that begins on June 3rd, 2025, and ends on July 3rd, 2025.

- Buffumville: <https://www.nae.usace.army.mil/Missions/Recreation/Bufumville-Lake/Bufumville-Lake-Master-Plan/>
- Hodges Village: <https://www.nae.usace.army.mil/missions/recreation/hodges-village-dam/hodges-village-dam-master-plan/>

During the 30-day public comment period, comments can also be emailed to

- Buffumville: buffumvillemasterplan@usace.army.mil
- Hodges Village: hodgesvillagemasterplan@usace.army.mil

On June 3rd, the websites will also have digital copies of the draft Master Plans, Environmental Assessments and associated documents, a comment form with instructions, and a downloadable presentation covering the topics highlighted in the open house.

About Buffumville Lake

The Buffumville Lake project is located along the Little River and South Fork River in the upper Thames River Basin. After hurricanes Connie and Diane caused catastrophic damage in the surrounding towns in 1955, construction of Buffumville Dam began in 1956 and was completed in April 1958 at a cost of \$3,068,000. It is a rolled earthfill dam that is 3,255 feet long and 57.5 feet high. Buffumville Dam helps to reduce flooding in Webster and in small towns downstream along the French River to Putnam, Conn., and optimizes its flood protection by coordination its operation with Hodges Village Dam in Oxford.

USACE manages the natural resources at Buffumville 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 140,000 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.

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

About Hodges Village Dam

Hodges Village Dam is located on the French River in the upper Thames River Basin. This is a multi-purpose project built and maintained by USACE. Construction of the dam was authorized by the Flood Control Act of 1944. Hodges Village Dam was built in 1959 at a cost of \$4.4 million in response to the floods of 1936 which caused tremendous property damage and took many lives in the Thames River Basin. Hodges Village Dam is part of the comprehensive plan for the development of the Thames River Basin. The main mission of the project is flood risk management and subsequent legislation authorizes the use of the Hodges Village Dam project area for recreation and fish and wildlife management.

While the main purpose of Hodges Village Dam is to provide flood risk management to the Thames River Basin, over the years the project has become a recreational hotspot. With approximately 22 miles of trails weaving around the Hodges Village Dam project area, visitors can enjoy hiking, nature study, mountain biking, cross country skiing and horseback riding.

Hodges Village Dam is also the only legal off-highway motorcycle area in Central Massachusetts and draws visitors from around the tri-state area. Off-highway motorcycles are allowed on the west side of the French River as reservoir level, weather and trail conditions permit. There is also a 13-hole disc golf course and a 3-mile-long canoe trail that starts at Green Briar in North Oxford and ends at the dam site. Hunting of game species is allowed on the west side of the French River in accordance with state regulations.

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

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