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USACE hosts open house August 1 in Oxford, Mass., for Hodges Village Dam Master Plan revision

CONCORD, Mass. – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New England District will host an open house August 1, 2024, in Oxford, Mass., to kick off a process to revise the 1976 Hodges Village Dam Master Plan for the Hodges Village Dam project in Oxford.

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. 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 Hodges Village Dam Master Plan was last approved in 1976 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 Hodges Village Dam project related to flood risk management or the water conservation missions of the project.

An initial 30-day public comment period will begin August 1 and end August 31. During this time, members of the public can submit comments, suggestions and concerns about the master plan. Comments must be submitted in writing at the open house or digitally via the comment link on the Hodges Village Dam Master Plan revision website at <https://www.nae.usace.army.mil/missions/recreation/hodges-village-dam/hodges-village-dam-master-plan/>.

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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 September 2025).

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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