

NEWS RELEASE | **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** | December 18 2025

State Water Commission Launches Operation Safe Flow To Improve Safety At Low-Head Dams

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota State Water Commission (SWC) has approved Operation Safe Flow, a new initiative led by the Department of Water Resources (DWR) to improve public safety at low-head dams and enhance outdoor recreation opportunities across the state.

Low-head dam safety has been a SWC priority since 2019, when a statewide inventory and risk-ranking process identified 112 low-head dams, including 53 with elevated risk to human safety. While the Commission provides free warning signs and offers up to 75% cost-share for mitigation projects, local progress has been slower than desired and tragic incidents have continued to occur, most recently at Fort Ransom Dam in 2024.

Operation Safe Flow is designed to reduce barriers faced by dam owners by developing clear, least-cost options for mitigating hazardous roller effects. Under the initiative, DWR will partner with a single engineering firm to prepare 30 percent preconstruction designs at no cost to local sponsors for six selected dams with higher risk ratings in terms of public safety. The designs will focus on feasible options such as dam removal or modification.

The six dams selected for the initial phase of Operation Safe Flow are:

- Arvilla Dam, Grand Forks County
- Fort Ransom Dam, Ransom County
- Grafton Railroad Dam, Walsh County
- Grafton Water Supply Dam, Walsh County
- Minto Dam, Walsh County
- Soldiers Home Dam, Ransom County

Following development of these alternatives, dam owners will be able to evaluate whether to advance projects using DWR construction services, proceed under the State Water Commission's existing cost-share program, or take no further action.

To begin this effort, DWR is soliciting submissions to a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) from engineering firms interested in providing professional services for Operation Safe Flow. The selected firm will complete preliminary designs and preconstruction services for hazard mitigation at the six identified dams.

RFQ submittals are due by 4:00 PM CST on Thursday, January 8, 2026.

For more information, visit www.dwr.nd.gov.

For More Information Contact:

Cory Drevecky, Planner IV

cjdrevecky@nd.gov

(701) 328-4967

Department of Water Resources

1200 Memorial Highway | Bismarck, ND 58504

Phone: (701) 328-2750 | FAX: (701) 328-3696

E-mail: dwr@nd.gov