

Joint Statement on Low-Head Dam Awareness Month

April 1, 2026

A collective of non-profit organizations has come together to recognize April as Low-Head Dam Awareness Month. During this month, we will pledge and encourage others to:

- ✓ Spread awareness of the dangers and risks associated with low-head dam structures.
- ✓ Encourage the public to assist in identifying locations throughout the country where these dams are located.
- ✓ Encourage people who recreate on or near water to avoid low-head dams both upstream and downstream.
- ✓ Keep a safe distance away from dams both upstream and downstream to avoid drowning. When approaching a low-head dam while on the water or nearby, walk or portage over land to a safe distance downstream.

Dangers at Low-Head Dams

A low-head dam is a manmade structure spanning a river or stream channel in which water flows over the top of the dam. Low-head dams are identified by a variety of names including weir, diversion structure, diversion dam, falls, jumps, and other names. Low-head dams can be difficult to locate and are usually not marked. Low-head dams are not easily seen looking downstream, as the structure may be completely submerged. Because of their relatively small size and drop, low-head dams may not always appear to be dangerous. Low-head dams are deceptively deadly, at times the water around them appears tranquil and inviting; however, moderate to high flows over such dams create strong turbulence and recirculating currents that can push victims underwater and then pull them back to the face of the dam in a repeating cycle. Even the strongest swimmers and rescuers wearing the best personal floatation devices have drowned at low-head dams.

Ninety-one percent of drownings and other dam-related deaths typically occur in the period from April to August. Swimming, boating, and fishing account for the overwhelming majority of incidents at dams in the United States. Would-be rescuers account for a number of those killed at low-head dams. In the years between 2019 and 2022, nationwide, 192 incidents were identified in the media and 151 people died. Many other incidents have occurred but have not been reported in the media.

All are encouraged to spread the message. Take action during the month of April:

1. Learn more about the [dangers of low-head dams](#) and how to keep safe.
2. Spread the message to those in your network. A [toolkit](#) with social-media-ready images and messages is available to help you get started.
3. Assist the [United States Army Corps of Engineers](#) in identifying locations throughout the country where these dams are located.

Co-Signing Organizations

Association of State Dam Safety Officials

ASCE Environmental & Water Resources Research Institute

American Rivers

American Whitewater

Low Impact Hydropower Institute

United States Society on Dams