

We are posting the following question we received from a concerned angler and the answer provided, to hopefully answer the same question many of you are asking.

**Are there any plans to repair the leak in Thompson Pond and restore it to one of my and hundreds of others, favorite sites for trout fishing?**

Dear Angler,

Unfortunately there is not an easy answer to your question, but I will try to explain where we are and where we need to go to bring public fishing back to Thompson.

We face is two problems that become one.

**Problem #1** is the immediate problem of the leak that lowered the lake. As you may know, a leak was discovered back in July and engineers determined that the bottom drain attached to the base of the principal spillway had failed somewhere along its course, near the lake bottom, upstream of the riser. Attempts to locate the source of the leak and find an economical, quick fix were not successful; and, unfortunately the lake slowly drained. However, when the lake level was just about to reach a low enough point to see the bottom pipe and make an assessment of damages, the water stopped going out the pipe. According to the engineers best guess, at this point, they believe some bottom silt and/or other obstruction must have collapsed in on the bottom pipe, essentially "plugging" the leak. Therefore, the lake has started to re-fill and the engineers are still unable to assess what is wrong with the bottom pipe; they think it will start leaking again when there is enough pressure to "move" the obstruction on through the pipe. Bottom Line: we are still unable to assess what is wrong with the bottom pipe and what it takes to fix it. Once the lake drops again and we can see the end of the bottom pipe, hopefully the engineers will be able to tell us how to fix this problem; so it is still a wait and see situation.

**Problem #2** is the major work that needs to be done to Thompson to bring the Dam up to the Dam Safety Standards administered by the Department of Conservation and Recreation ([http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/dam\\_safety\\_and\\_floodplains/index.shtml](http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/dam_safety_and_floodplains/index.shtml) ). According to our most recent dam safety studies, it will take somewhere between \$1,250,000 and \$2,000,000 to bring Thompson up to standards; work that has to be done to get this dam certified includes: a new concrete emergency spillway must be constructed to replace the present emergency spillway, the existing principal spillway tower must be replaced and the bottom drain slip-lined with a new pipe, a new outlet structure is required, and upstream riprap is required.

As you can see, the two problems kind of become one, since we really need to fix everything at once so the dam can be certified (we have been operating on a conditional permit). The overriding issue with all of this work is that DGIF does not have the necessary funds to address all the dam safety problems at all of our lakes (we own some 62 dams, about 36 are significant public fishing lakes, 15 have conditional permits). Most of these lakes were built before 1970 and no longer meet current dam safety standards; the estimate to bring all dams up to standards approaches \$20,000,000. We are trying to address the problems and keep trying to find money to help with these construction needs, but with a fixed budget that depends on generating our Agency revenue through hunting and fishing licenses and boat registration and titling( we do not get any general tax dollars ) there is very little money each year that can go to capital projects (we also have hatcheries, wildlife management areas, boat access sites,

and other infrastructure to maintain) and what funds are available have to go to the highest priority projects.

So, for Thompson, we will continue to try and see what the leak is all about, come up with the cost estimates to fix the leak and all the major work to bring this dam up to standards, fit this into a list of other priority capital needs, and then try to budget this work in the future. At this point, I expect this will take a significant amount of time, unless DGIF sees an infusion of new funds to address all capital needs, including dam safety work.

I know this is not what you were hoping to hear, but it is my honest response to your question. It is certainly my hope that we are able to find funds in the future to once again provide public fishing opportunities at Thompson.

Sincerely,

***Fred Leckie***

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