

Project Update 1/17/2024

Major work is complete at both the North Dam (dam facing Lebanon Borough) and at the Dike (dam crossed by CR 629). Minor items may need to be addressed after a final walkthrough as the project nears completion, but no significant work is occurring or planned at this time.

Major earthwork was completed at the South Dam (dam facing Molasses Hill Rd) in August 2023. During fall 2023, the Contractor worked to restore the embankment and surrounding areas to preconstruction condition. This included topsoiling/seeding, tree planting, installing turf reinforcement matting and dam instrumentation/monitoring equipment, decommissioning soil erosion/sediment control measures, and paving. Most work has paused due to the colder weather. This work will continue when favorable weather conditions return (e.g. for grass seed germination).

As part of the rehabilitation project, the reservoir water surface elevation was lowered in fall 2019 and was kept at or below elevation 360 feet for the duration of the project (25 feet lower than normal pool). In fall 2023, with major earthwork complete at all three embankments, the NJ Water Supply Authority began a pumping program to refill the reservoir to elevation 385 feet (normal pool). Since pumping began, the pool elevation has risen by more than 5.5 feet, which represents over 4 billion gallons. Reservoir elevation data is available here: <https://www.njwsa.org/raritan-operations-data.html> (click on the operations report link).

The pumping program has been continuous since mid-November and is anticipated to continue all spring as long as river conditions allow (typically until May or June). The ability to pump is highly dependent on conditions in the South Branch Raritan River. Flows in the river must be high enough to provide extended periods of excess water for pumping while still meeting prescribed passing flows at various points down river. Abundant rainfall in recent months has facilitated the pumping effort by supplying ample river water and providing some natural refilling. It is estimated that completion of refilling will take 1-3 years.



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Vegetation has been reestablished on the slope of the South Dam. Minor restoration work continues.



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Crest of the South Dam – General View



Over 9,000 saplings were planted in Fall 2023 to reforest an approximately 23-acre area adjacent to South Dam that was utilized for storage/staging of materials & equipment during construction. Prior to the start of the project, this area was predominately ash trees that had been decimated by emerald ash borers, an invasive species that kills ash trees.