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To: Don DeGenova <mayor@tweed.ca>

Subject: What's so dangerous about dams? | Spring Water Awareness & Safety Around Dams

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SPRING WATER AWARENESS & SAFETY AROUND DAMS

Be Smart. Stay Safe.
Prevent a Tragedy



Quinte Conservation operates 40 dams, also known as water control structures. It is important for you to know the hazards created by dams.

[Spring Water Awareness & Safety](#)

What is a dam?

A dam is defined as “a structure of work forwarding, holding back or diverting water”.

Historically dams were built for industrial uses such as mills, logging and navigation. Currently, Quinte Conservation dams are used for flood management, wetland habitat management, and low flow augmentation. The McLeod Dam in Belleville has a secondary purpose: hydroelectricity generation.

Dam Hazards

While low head weirs may appear insignificant, they pose considerable dangers to those around them. Water that continuously re-circulates at the base of low head weirs creates underwater hydraulics which can easily trap someone at the base of the dam, commonly referred to as the “drowning machine”.

Upstream dam leakage between and around stop logs may suck in a swimmer and hold the person below the water level with such force they cannot escape. Objects in foaming water are less buoyant than still water. Air trapped in water reduces the buoyancy and therefore persons caught in such conditions have greater difficulty staying afloat even with the aid of personal floatation gear. Changing water levels and flows below a dam can occur rapidly and without warning.

Safety Tips

Stay off the dam structures unless the area is clearly marked for public travel.

Be alert to changes in water levels.

Never camp, picnic or sunbathe in an area below a dam which may become flooded.

Never swim above a dam or dive from a dam structure. Currents can pull you through the dam or pull you against flow structures with such force that you could not escape.

Dam operations often result in lowering of water levels throughout the winter and spring. However, this can result in ice collapsing onto lower water levels and then water seeping up under the snow. Persons venturing out on the ice should always be aware of the potential of slush under the snow over ice. Travel in slush conditions is very difficult regardless of the mode of travel.



Check out our Spring Water Safety activity sheets!

Activities are appropriate for youth in Kindergarten to Grade 6 and include colouring sheets, crossword puzzles and word searches.

[Spring Water Safety](#)



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