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Working for Clean Streams and Protected Natural Resources in Fairfax County

November 12, 2024

The Honorable Scott A. Surovell
Senate District 34
Richmond, VA 23218

Email: SenatorSurovell@senate.virginia.gov

Dear Senator Surovell,

In your role as a state legislator serving northern Virginia, we want to make you aware of efforts to **reduce the public health and safety risk from a potential natural disaster** that may affect our area. We request your help in securing funds from the General Assembly in 2025 to help mitigate this risk.

Lake Barcroft Dam, located in the vicinity of Falls Church, is owned and maintained by the Lake Barcroft Watershed Improvement District (LBWID), a political subdivision of the Commonwealth of Virginia. The LBWID's three Trustees and annual budget are approved by the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District (NVSWCD). We maintain a close working relationship between our organizations.

Oversight of the physical structure of the Lake Barcroft Dam is done through the Virginia's Department of Conservation & Recreation - Division of Dam Safety (DCR). Due to the increasing frequency of severe rain events in our region of the country, DCR has updated its regulations to require replacing existing earthen embankments at Virginia dams, such as those found at the Lake Barcroft Dam. The new regulations require concrete structures extending from the dam structure to the bedrock on both sides of the facility. This work would improve dam safety against the risk of catastrophic flooding.

While Lake Barcroft Dam has always been a well maintained, safely operated, and solid structure as certified by DCR over the years, because of the large number of people and vital infrastructure below the dam it is classified as a **"High Hazard Potential Dam"** - defined where an impounding structure's failure will cause probable loss of life and/or serious economic damage. The area at risk downstream of the dam is substantial, including stretches of I-95 and I-395, the Holmes Run Valley, Cameron Run, Eisenhower Valley, and the Huntington areas in Fairfax County and the City of Alexandria. The risk to these downstream areas is real; in 1972 the dam's embankment failed during a hurricane. If the earthen embankments of Lake Barcroft Dam were to fail again, the impact would be much worse than was the case fifty years ago, given the much greater total population and population density (see graphic below). There is also now a significant amount of critical and social infrastructure that is at risk of considerable damage or complete loss if the earthen embankments were to erode:

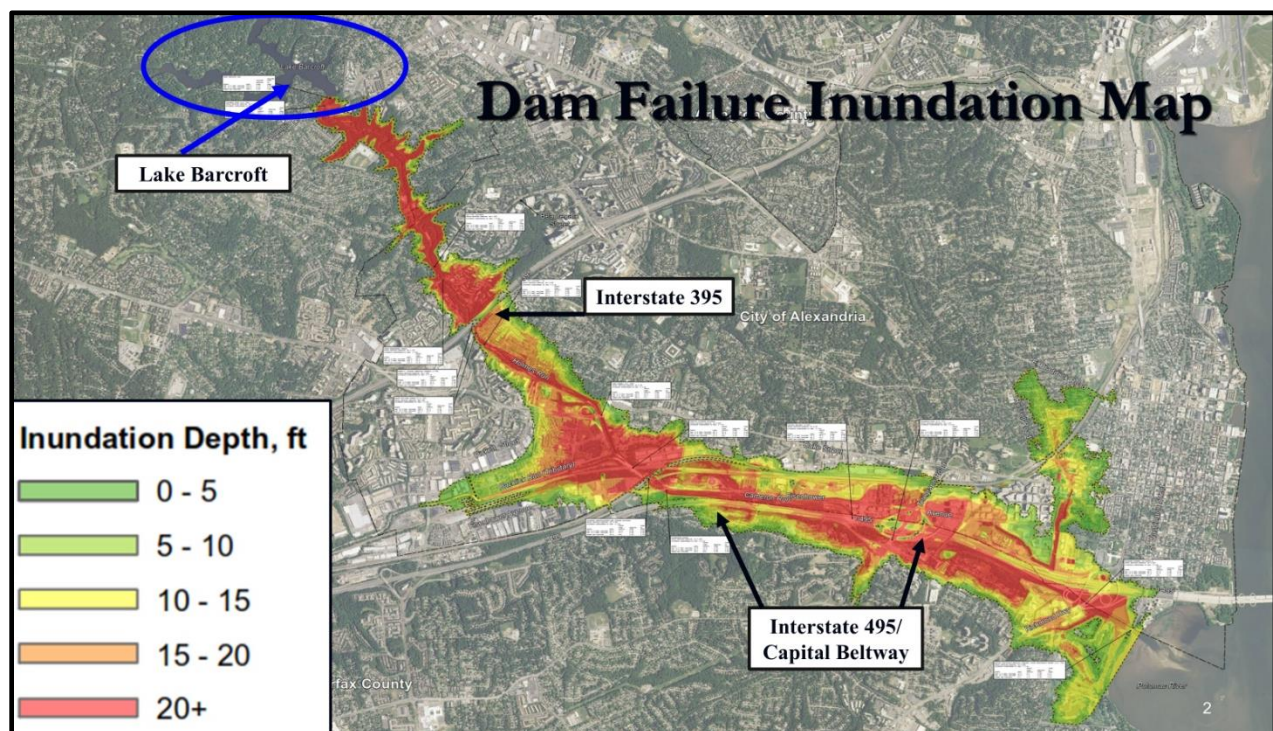
Community Impacts

- 5,477 dwellings.
- Approximate residential population of 14,420, including economically diverse communities.
- Hundreds of private business locations that would be severely damaged and closed for an extended period of time.

- Hundreds of acres of public parks that would be flooded and their facilities damaged.

Critical Infrastructure Impacts

- Two major interstate highways (I-95 and I-395), which are major commercial and commuter transportation routes serving all of northern Virginia and the national Capital region.
- Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Maintenance Yard and Switching Station; Eisenhower and Huntington Metro Stations.
- Alexandria Sewage Treatment Facility and Alexandria Detention Facility.
- Existing stormwater and flood control facilities in the flooded area would be damaged.
- U.S. Federal Courthouse and U.S. Patent and Trademark Office in Alexandria.



Bringing the Lake Barcroft Dam into compliance with DCR's updated Virginia's Dam Safety spillway requirements will reduce the risk to thousands of lives and billions of dollars of property.

The cost of the project is estimated at \$8 million, which exceeds the capacity of DCR to fund through its typical level of funding. Therefore, a funding plan has been put together utilizing a combination of LBWID funds (\$2.1 million), State appropriations (\$3.0 million), and Federal funds (\$2.725 million) over the next three budget years to align with the anticipated construction timeline. The initial request for State funding is for \$500,000 through a budget amendment to the FY2025 budget. These funds will be used to finalize the design engineering required for DCR's final approval of the construction plans. Construction could begin in late calendar 2026 and the project will therefore be seeking State appropriations in the FY2026-2027 biennial budget.

The NVSWCD strongly supports this plan and therefore encourages your support of a \$500,000 budget amendment for DCR in the upcoming session of the General Assembly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Scott J. Cameron". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Scott" being the most prominent part.

Scott J. Cameron
Chairman

C: Fairfax County Board of Supervisors