

FAQ – Frequently Asked Questions

This page introduces questions and answers about the Lake Conestee Site and Dam, and the potential consequences of a dam failure. These FAQs are organized by topic.

When the Lake Conestee Dam Fails,

Topic No 1: What is in Lake Conestee, and how might it impact Lake Greenwood ?

Topic No.2: What about Flooding and Flood Damage ?

Topic No.3: What could happen downstream in the Reedy River, Boyd's Mill Pond, and the Reedy Arm of Lake Greenwood ?

Topic No.4: What is the solution for containing the hazardous contaminants trapped behind the old dam ?

Topic No.5: What might the economic impacts be for communities along the river, around Boyd's Mill Pond, and Lake Greenwood, and the region ?

Topic No.6: What do we know about the “forever chemicals” (PFAS) in Lake Conestee, and the Reedy, and how might they impact the downstream communities ?

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Reference as: **LCDRP-FAQs – RRD-10.3, 230322-HRI**

FAQ – Frequently Asked Questions

When the Lake Conestee Dam Fails,

Topic No 3: What could happen downstream in the Reedy River, Boyd's Mill Pond, and the Reedy Arm of L. Greenwood ?

- Q3.1 Entire river system affected ?*
- Q3.2 Duration of contaminant releases ?*
- Q3.3 Effects of nutrients released ?*
- Q3.4 Potential for algae blooms ?*
- Q3.5 How flow conditions move contaminants ?*
- Q3.6 Potential for fish kills ?*
- Q3.7 Fish and wildlife habitats affected ?*
- Q3.8 Potential for fish kills ?*
- Q3.9 Fish safe to eat ?*
- Q3.10 Will sediment affect boating ?*
- Q3.11 Water contact recreation safe ?*
- Q3.12 Water supplies safe to drink ?*

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FAQ: When the Lake Conestee Dam Fails,

Topic No.3: What could happen downstream in Reedy River, Boyd's Mill Pond, and the Reedy Arm of L. Greenwood ?

Q

Question 3.1

Would the entire river system be affected by sediment and hazardous substances?

A

Eventually, Yes. As the mud and pollutants migrate downstream they will spread wherever floodwaters take them. The nature and extent of contamination will vary based on many factors. Contaminated sediments may be deposited downstream only to be eroded and re-mobilized again later.

This is one of several questions related to Topic No.3. See Q3.1 – Q3.12.

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Question 3.2

How long would sediment and contaminants continue to migrate downstream?

A

For decades. Once the dam is breached, the river will continue to cut down through the old lakebed, scouring the sediments and toxins, resulting in an ongoing release. Below the dam they will move as surely as the river flows.

This is one of several questions related to Topic No.3. See Q3.1 – Q3.12.

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Question 3.3

Would nutrients in the sediment, particularly nitrogen (N) and phosphorus (P), affect water quality?

A

A massive amount of N and P have been trapped in LC over 131 years. These nutrients can have a 'fertilizing' effect on water quality. They could have a potentially devastating impact on water quality all the way to and including Lake Greenwood.

This is one of several questions related to Topic No.3. See Q3.1 – Q3.12.

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Question 3.4

Would these elevated nutrient levels increase the potential for algae blooms and aquatic weeds?

A

YES. Higher concentrations of nitrogen and phosphorus in the water could contribute to serious algae and aquatic weed problems, especially in Boyd's Mill Pond and the Reedy Arm of Lake Greenwood, but also potentially further down-lake.

This is one of several questions related to Topic No.3. See Q3.1 – Q3.12.

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Question 3.5

Do contaminants move even at low river flow, or only with storm events?

A

The movement of toxins and sediment is as constant as the flow of the river. With rainfall events and higher river flows even more sediment and pollutants move, and even faster. In Piedmont streams, over 90% of suspended sediment moves on the 60 rainiest days each year.

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Question 3.6

Is it possible water quality impacts could cause fish kills?

A

YES. Increased amounts of organic matter stirred up from the sediment will deplete oxygen in the river and lakes. Decay of algae and aquatic weeds can also reduce oxygen levels. Many gamefish cannot tolerate low oxygen levels, leaving behind only pollution-tolerant species.

This is one of several questions related to Topic No.3. See Q3.1 – Q3.12.

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Question 3.7

Will increased sediment and pollutant loads impair aquatic habitats, fish, and wildlife?

A

YES. Sediment loads and high concentrations of toxins will diminish habitat, and make it more difficult for aquatic life to eat, breath, reproduce, and thrive. Wildlife and fish-eating birds may also be affected.

This is one of several questions related to Topic No.3. See Q3.1 – Q3.12.

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Question 3.8

Is it possible fish may be unsafe to eat?

A

Very possible. This is already the case at Lake Conestee, where fish are contaminated with toxic metals, pesticides, PAHs, and other chemicals. The fish in many reaches of the river and reservoirs downstream have not been rigorously tested for toxin levels.

This is one of several questions related to Topic No.3. See Q3.1 – Q3.12.

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Question 3.9

Would toxin levels increase in the sediments of the river, reservoirs, and floodplains?

A

YES. The findings of contaminants throughout the sediments of Lake Conestee illustrate how this works. Anywhere floodwaters go, to include floodplains, sediments and the pollutants that adhere to them will be deposited.

This is one of several questions related to Topic No.3. See Q3.1 – Q3.12.

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Question 3.10

As the increased sediment load migrates downriver would areas for boating and canoeing be reduced?

A

Large quantities of sediment will choke the Reedy River in many reaches. As sediment migrates downstream, it will accelerate sedimentation in Boyd's Mill Pond, and then Lake Greenwood. Boatable areas will be reduced.

This is one of several questions related to Topic No.3. See Q3.1 – Q3.12.

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Question 3.11

Will contaminants in the river and reservoirs make water contact recreation unsafe?

A

Very possible. Contaminant levels in water, sediment, and fish tissue will need to be monitored to assess possible exposures. Many people may decide contact recreation may be a risk they choose to avoid.

This is one of several questions related to Topic No.3. See Q3.1 – Q3.12.

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Question 3.12

Will public water supplies still be 'clean enough' to drink?

A

To be determined. More frequent and intensive monitoring and testing will be appropriate to assure levels of toxins and contaminants of concern are acceptable. Some citizens will choose to avoid any risk, or to use in-home treatment systems.

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