

## \$3.8M sought to fix leaks at Needwood Dam

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The county Planning Board says it needs \$3.8 million to help fix the leaks in Lake Needwood Dam in Derwood.

The County Council's Planning, Housing and Economic Development Committee met Monday morning to discuss the funding.

The repairs are needed as a result of storm damage from heavy rains that pounded the area during the last week of June.

The rains resulted in a rapid rise of the water level in Lake Needwood. The reservoir peaked nearly 25 feet above its normal level, and on June 27 uncontrolled leaking occurred on the left downstream slope and abutment of the dam.

Since such seepage can compromise an earthen dam, the county evacuated about 2,200 residents downstream, mostly in Aspen Hill, in the early-morning hours.

The leaks stopped and the lake itself receded three days later.

The county reported no problems with the dam during Tropical Storm Ernesto, which hit the area in early September. However, Aspen Hill residents who were evacuated in June said they were still concerned about the safety of the dam should another event like June's storms occur.

County Park and Planning contracted an engineering firm, URS Corporation, headquartered in San Francisco, with an office in Gaithersburg, to determine the cause of the seepage and to determine appropriate

actions to make repairs.

A consensus developed that the cause of the seep was flow through naturally occurring underground rock, as opposed to flow through the dam itself. In addition, there is concern that the dam's filter is not functioning as intended.

The proposed remedial action, according to a report issued during Monday's Planning, Housing and Economic Development Committee meeting, includes installation of a grout curtain in the fractured rock beneath and around the sides of the dam. It also recommends construction of a surface filter drain on the downstream toe of the dam to collect and mitigate any additional seepage.

The Maryland Department of the Environment, which has jurisdiction

over dams in Maryland, requires the implementation of remedial measures for the dam no later than March 31, 2007.

The PHED Committee recommends funding the project, but with the requirement that Park and Planning provide members of the County Council with more specific follow-up information, particularly once construction bids are available.

Patrick Lacefield, public information officer for the County Council, said the council is expected to vote on the Lake Needwood project on Tuesday.

Other ongoing work related to the project includes the update and improvement of the Emergency Action Plan for both Lake Needwood and nearby Lake Frank and the installation of automated monitoring instrumentation at both lakes.