

May 31st is

National Dam Safety Awareness Day!

- National Dam Safety Awareness Day occurs each year on May 31st to commemorate the failure of the South Fork Dam in Johnstown, Pennsylvania on May 31, 1889.
- National Dam Safety Awareness Day was created to promote responsibility and best practices for dam owners and the public and to encourage steps that can be taken to prevent or lessen the impact of future dam failures.
- Dams are a critical part of our national infrastructure and provide a wide range of benefits including water supply storage, flood control, recreation, and other uses.
- According to the National Inventory of Dams, there are 171 dams in Albemarle County. The Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority (RWSA) operates 6 state or federally regulated dams as well as multiple small dams, so a robust Dam Safety program is crucial to our mission.
- More information on RWSA drinking water reservoirs can be found on our website at <https://www.rivanna.org/drinking-water-reservoirs/>.
- Educational resources for dam owners and the public are available on the Association of State Dam Safety Officials (ASDSO) Website at <https://damsafety.org/NDSAD>.



Ragged Mountain Dam & Reservoir

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South Rivanna Dam & Reservoir

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Do you know what makes a dam a “high hazard” or “low hazard” dam?

- Dams are classified according to the impact a potential failure (breach) or mis-operation (unscheduled release) would have on areas downstream of the dam.
 - Hazard potential does not describe the current condition of a dam.
- Failure of a high hazard dam would almost certainly result in loss of life and significant economic and environmental losses.
 - RWSA operates four high hazard Dams: Ragged Mountain Dam, Sugar Hollow Dam, Beaver Creek Dam, and South Fork Rivanna Dam.
- Significant hazard dams, were they to fail, would not likely result in loss of life, but could cause economic or environmental losses.
- Low hazard dams are unlikely to cause any loss of life nor any significant economic or environmental losses.
 - RWSA operates two low hazard dams: Totier Creek Dam and Lickinghole Creek Dam.

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Sugar Hollow Dam

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Are you aware of the dangers of low head dams?
RWSA operates a low head dam at the river intake to the
North Rivanna Water Treatment Plant.

- Low head dams, sometimes referred to as “drowning machines,” pose a serious danger to swimmers, boaters, and fishermen.
- Surface currents below low head dams can suck unsuspecting victims toward the face of the dam, trapping them in a recirculating current that is difficult to escape.
- Always use caution around these dams, no matter how tranquil or inviting they appear!
- Steer clear when swimming or fishing and always portage canoes and kayaks around the dam.

More information on the dangers of low head dams can be found on the Association of State Dam Safety Officials (ASDSO) YouTube Channel at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q1XJsFYE_xU.



North Fork Low Head Dam