

Update: 4/15/2010

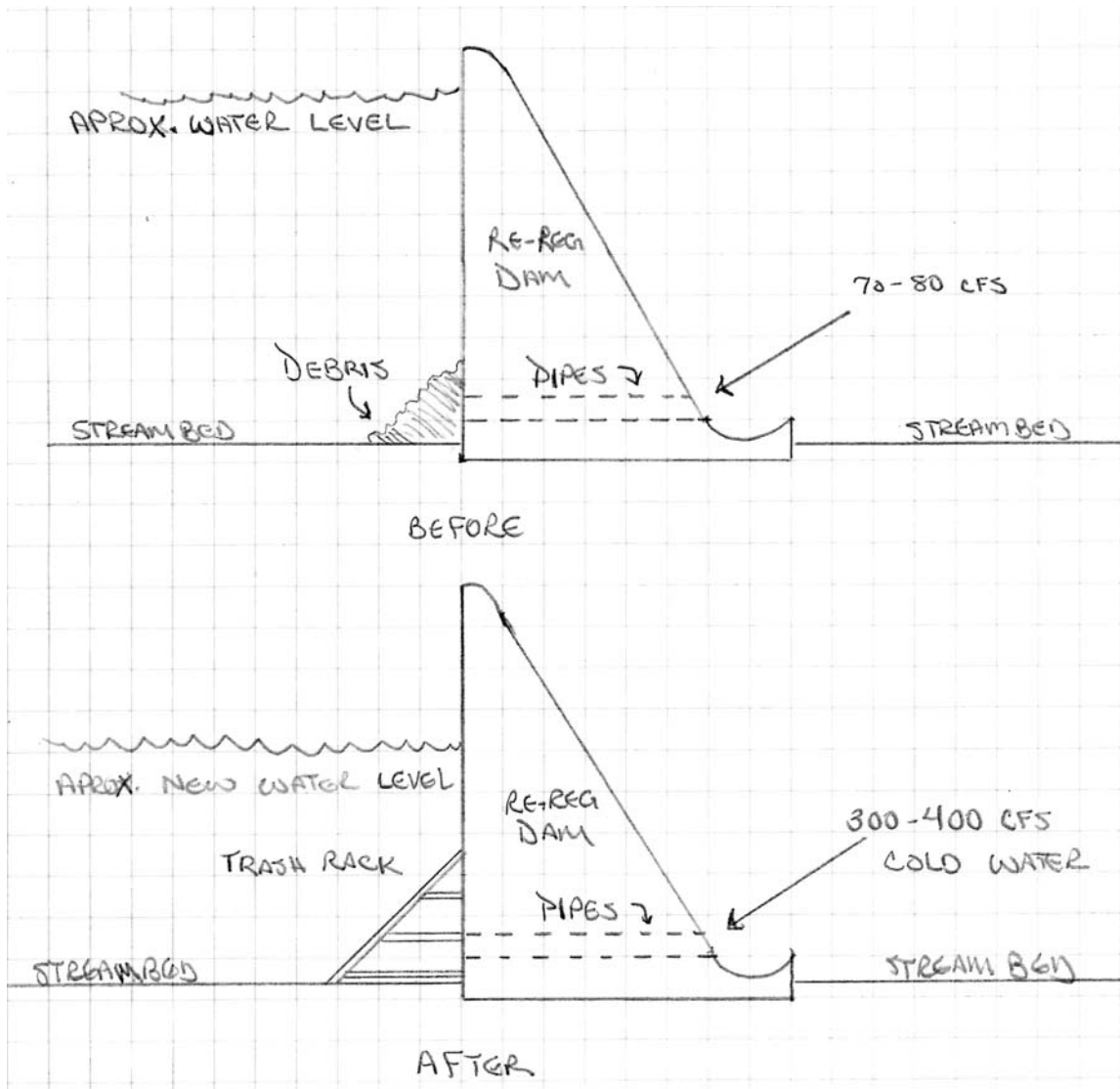
2-½ years ago, when I was voted onto the Board of Directors of the LMFRF, I asked about cleaning out re-regulation dam. My obvious stupidity was answered, amidst howls and groans, by the Foundation tasking me with the job of seeing if anything really could be done about this long-standing problem. For as long as anyone could remember the dam's low flow pipes had been clogged and causing real problems for the trout downstream.

The re-regulation dam is 37' high and over 800' long and is the delineation between Zone II and Zone III of the Lower Mountain Fork Trout Fishery. It was built at the same time as the main reservoir (1963) and is meant to mitigate the violent water level fluctuations during hydroelectric generation events and prevent erosion downstream. For the most part, the dam does its job remarkably well. This is evidenced by the fact that Zone III is probably the best trout habitat of any section of our river. Unfortunately, this notoriety is marred by the fact that clogged pipes in the bottom of the dam cause hot water behind the dam to flow over the top and kill off the trout downstream every summer.

In the bottom of the dam, at the center of the original river channel, are four 2' diameter pipes with grates over them that should be allowing 300-400 cubic feet per second of cold bottom water to flow through the dam year-round. My task was to figure out a plan to unclog the pipes (without killing one or more fly fishermen), and then get all the requisite paperwork, permissions, permits, approvals, and last but not least, funding.

After innumerable phone calls and countless meetings; after filling out forms and pleading for letters of support; and after asking people to please donate anything they can to the cause, I can happily say that we are ready! We have the companies lined up, permits and letters of permission are in hand, and 100% of our portion of the funding has been obtained.

Sometime during the autumn, at the same time that Southwestern Power will be shut down for maintenance, we will bring in massive pumps and assemble them on a barge in the middle of the re-regulation pond. We will drain the 1600 acre feet of water in a matter of days and proceed to remove all the sediment and debris that has built up behind these pipes with track hoes and dump trucks. We will also remove the small grates over each pipe. When this is done, James Vincent and his team from the ODWC will construct and install a much larger trash rack that should last for generations without the need for maintenance.



Before and After Sketches of the Project

The benefits of this clean out will be multiple:

1. 300-400 cfs of cold water will flow down Zone III year-round.
2. A year-round trout fishery for the bottom four miles of the Lower Mountain Fork River Trout Fishery as opposed to the current seasonal fishery.
3. This constant source of cooler water will mitigate any hot water that comes over the top during the summer months.
4. It will reduce the amount of hot water that could come over the top by:
  - a. Maintaining a lower pond resting level.
  - b. Lowering the pond level more quickly after generation.
5. A lower pond resting level will effectively mean lengthening the amount of fishable river in Zone II.
6. Decrease the amount of time that Zone III is unfishable after a generation event by lowering the pond more efficiently.

7. Increasing the length of the fishery by miles will greatly reduce the crowded fishing conditions in Zone I.
8. Colder temperatures and great habitat increase the chances of natural reproduction of rainbow and brown trout in Zone III.
9. Four extra miles of trout stream during the summer vacation crowds.
10. Increased tourism dollars for McCurtain County, the Oklahoma Board of Tourism, and area businesses.

Caveat: At this point the project is out of our hands and in the hands of the ODWC. It is up to them to approve this project and obtain the matching Federal funds to bring this project to fruition.

However, we have come farther in the last 2-½ years than we ever thought we could. And I would like to thank each and every one of you that answered my endless questions, took my many phone calls (some all on the same day), and donated their time, money, and patience to help us get this far.

Thanks for everything,

Dr. Patrick Waters