



2948 Memorial Highway  
Lake Lure, NC 28746  
828.625.9983

**Media contact:**

Valerie A. Hoffman  
[writerworks@att.net](mailto:writerworks@att.net)  
828.625.9927

## **Town Leaders United in their Commitment to Address Necessary Repairs at Historic Lake Lure Dam**

**Lake Lure, NC, Dec. 28, 2017:** Although a recent report citing several major issues with Lake Lure’s hydroelectric dam is concerning, leaders with the Town of Lake Lure stress that the 91-year-old structure is in reasonably good condition relative to other dams of that generation.

They further state that they are united in their commitment to find a way to fund the repairs, keep citizens informed, and protect the recreational livelihood of the lake for residents and visitors alike.

“Certainly, we understand that the initial report was a wake-up call for all of us,” observed retiring Mayor Bob Keith. “However, I know I speak for Mayor Cooley as well as our council when I say that we truly believe this is a time to pull together and work toward some viable solutions to the challenges ahead.”

Town Manager Ron Nalley agreed: “As we wait for the second phase of this study to be completed, it’s important to refrain from counter-productive activities such as jumping to premature conclusions or placing blame.”

The study that Nalley is referring to was requested by Town leaders to evaluate the structural integrity, stability and overall safety of the aging dam.

The study is being conducted by Dr. Dan Marks, a professional in the field of dam safety. Phase one indicated that there are several issues related to loss of strength in the concrete, erosion, leakage, and stress on the dam as a whole. Phase two, currently underway, is focused on a detailed structural analysis of the dam. It will be completed by March.

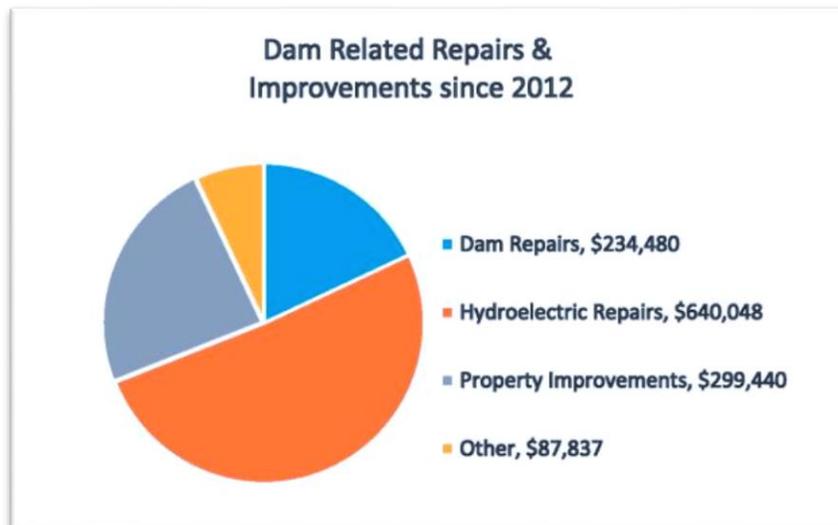
Town leaders say that having the two studies together will provide a more thorough representation of the challenges and overall cost of corrective action. Following its completion, the Town will determine a specific strategy for next steps in repairs and how to fund them.

In his work thus far with the Town, Dr. Marks has indicated that solutions do exist and that repairs can take place over time.

However, even without phase two of the study in hand, the Town had begun to take several important steps in recent years to address aging infrastructure challenges.

Since 2012, approximately \$1.26 million has been directed toward the dam and hydroelectric related repairs, updates, and replacement of equipment. So far this year, the Town has spent approximately \$4,000 addressing specific concerns raised by the State of North Carolina in its annual report.

Further, Town Council has earmarked all revenue from the sale of electricity produced by the dam for repairs at the dam going forward.



Of the situation, Town leaders also point out that it is important to remember that the issues associated with the dam have occurred slowly over time.

The mounting issues with the dam have most likely taken place within the last eleven years since a 2006 Study by Devine-Tarbell & Associates found that the dam was found to be “generally in good condition and generally well maintained by Town staff.”

The report stated then that no items were found to suggest the safety of the structure had been compromised or that immediate actions to assure safety were required.

The 2006 report went on to say that some leakage, near-surface concrete deterioration, and a crack, was observed, but that these conditions did not appear to be substantially worse than conditions described in previous inspection reports from 1999.

That study was made part of the 2007-2027 Comprehensive Plan adopted by the Town of Lake Lure. In subsequent years, citizens have been made aware of the increasing and inevitable challenges associated with the community’s aging infrastructure in various reports, including the 2013 and 2015 State of the Town Reports.

Routine maintenance activities at the Lake Lure Dam have taken place with regularity, but have focused primarily on the powerhouse equipment, intake gate and spillway gates. No significant structural repairs have been made.



2948 Memorial Highway  
Lake Lure, NC 28746  
828.625.9983

A comprehensive dam inspection such as the one now underway, was deferred by previous administrations, principally because the Town already had an abundance of information on the condition and deficiencies of the dam and hydro plant. Rather than seeking additional engineering reports, they wanted to utilize every dollar toward creating revenue from the sale of electricity at the dam to in turn reinvest back into repairs.

Depending on annual rainfall amounts, revenue to the Town of Lake Lure from Duke Power for the sale of electricity averages around \$350,000. That revenue is earmarked to cover repairs to the dam as well as the ongoing management of sediment coming into the lake. The dam does not provide electricity to Lake Lure.

Following Dr. Marks' presentation during a Town Council meeting in October, (former) Mayor Keith said, "While the issues surrounding the needed repairs at the dam are serious, and they will be expensive, we do not believe there is an imminent danger or need to panic." He further said that the immediate establishment of a reserve fund for repairs or replacement is in order.

Originally, a proposal for only a safety inspection was submitted to the Town. However, due to observed evidence of accelerated deterioration of the dam, Town Council felt that a significantly expanded scope of work was necessary.

As the study is completed in March the Town of Lake Lure will again update the public.

Completed in September 1926, the dam created the lake for which the community is named. Full impoundment of the lake was completed in 1927.

-end-