

Ground was broken Monday on a project to rehabilitate a flood-control dam on West Virginia University property.

The nearly \$8 million project will place a roller-compacted concrete spillway on the dam and raise the water level by ten feet to provide a dedicated water supply for the Reedsville area. A new riser also will be installed.

Clean Water Act rules required some \$2.5 million in additional costs related to mitigation because of the acreage that will be lost when the water level is raised. West Virginia Conservation Agency has teamed with WVU to implement mitigation efforts on the farm that will offset those costs.

As a result, WVU students will get to study mitigation practices in the field. Researchers will monitor sediment and pollution, examine effects on plants and animals in the area, use photography drones to document alterations to the landscape and develop education plans to teach others about the data collected.

“This project will not only help to ensure safety for both people and property, it will also provide a drinking water source for this growing area while also giving students the opportunity to learn in a hands-on environment,” West Virginia Conservation Agency Executive Director Brian Farkas said.

“Making sure our dams are up to regulatory standards is vital to the safety and wellbeing of many West Virginians. From protecting West Virginia businesses to providing a source of water, our dams provide a great deal of benefit to the Mountain State. The Upper Deckers Creek Site 1 dam is another shining example of the great work our West Virginia Conservation Agency does maintaining and managing our dam system.”

The project is some ten years in the making. Before any work could begin, engineering studies had to be conducted and funding had to be secured. Louis Aspey, state conservationist for the federal Natural Resources Conservation Service, called Monday a “momentous day.”

“The whole purpose of this program is to make sure we have safe continued flood control, water supply, and recreational opportunities for the state,” he said.

Triton Engineering of St. Albans, Kanawha County, is the lead contractor for the project. Work will begin soon and is expected to wrap up before Dec. 31, 2018.

Construction cost is about **\$7.9 million**. About two-thirds of funding comes from the 2014 federal Farm Bill through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Partners on the project include the Monongahela Conservation District, NRCS, WVCA, WVU and the Public Service District No. 1 in Preston County.