

# InfrastructureUSA

## Guest on THE INFRA BLOG

**Jason Campbell, P.E., President, Association of State Dam Safety Officials**

**Conversation with Steve Anderson, Managing Director, InfrastructureUSA**

### **Dam Safety Left out of the Discussion**

Dam safety isn't out there in the forefront of everything; it's not like roads and bridges. People drive in cars every day, but they may drive by a dam every day also and never, never think twice about it; all they see is the impoundment behind it, and the recreation that they enjoy from that, but they don't realize, necessarily, the hazard that may be involved.

### **Should we be Concerned?**

I think that, from a state perspective, we're doing the best we can do. We have limited funding, we have limited staff, limited resources, so we do the best we can do. We try not to be too alarmist, we don't want to cause panic, but we have a lot of work to do. There are a lot of dams out there that need fixing, and we need to find a way to fund them.

### **Getting the Public Involved**

I think we definitely need to get the public involved in the issues. Dams in particular, like I said earlier, aren't always in the forefront of people's minds. And so from that standpoint, it's important to get it out there, and let people be aware of, and let them know what the condition is, and where they're at, and how that hazard can potentially affect them. But we don't want to be too far on the extreme, and say that the world is ending, and all dams are going to fail. But time and age do take a toll on the structures, and we do need to fix them.

### **How are Dams Financed?**

Unlike most infrastructure in this country--roads, bridges, sewers--all those are pretty much publicly owned structures and so they're financed with tax dollars. Approximately 70% of the dams in the country are privately owned. And they can be anything from corporations to individuals, to homeowner's associations, and so not everybody has the ability to finance the needed repairs. That's one of the things that we have been trying to work on the last several years: getting a rehab bill through Congress, to hopefully at least get a jumpstart on trying to finance some of these rehab projects that are needed.

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February 2013