

## FLOOD PROTECTION RESERVOIR ORDERED 100 YEARS AGO

### *Board of the Hudson River Regulating District Voted to Construct Conklingville Dam on May 7, 1924*

On May 7, 1924, at its offices at 23 South Pearl Street in Albany, the Board of the Hudson River Regulating District voted to construct the Conklingville Dam and form the Great Sacandaga Lake – then referred to as the Sacandaga Reservoir – for the purposes of regulating the flow of the Sacandaga River, and the Hudson River below its confluence with the Sacandaga River, for flood protection and flow augmentation.

The Hudson River Regulating District had been formed in 1922 pursuant to legislation adopted in 1915, following devastating flooding which impacted infrastructure and property throughout the region in 1913. Within weeks of that flood's crest in Albany on March 28, 1913, a typhoid epidemic caused by the contamination of Albany's public water supply by flood waters started to sweep through the city. The event galvanized support for a legislative measure to create river regulating districts, leading to the creation of the Black River Regulating District in 1919 and the Hudson River Regulating District in 1922. (The two entities were statutorily combined in 1959 to create the Hudson River – Black River Regulating District.)

After evaluating various options for regulating flows in the Hudson River area, the Board determined in January, 1924 that the public interest and welfare would be served by an impoundment of the Sacandaga River, necessitating construction of the dam at Conklingville in Saratoga County. In March of that year, the Water Control Commission approved the preliminary plans, specification, estimates and statements of the Board for the creation of the Sacandaga Reservoir. Construction of the dam began in 1927 and was completed on March, 27, 1930. Since that time, the Great Sacandaga Lake – New York State's largest reservoir – has been continuously providing important flood protection benefits to downstream communities, primarily in the spring when rainfall and snowmelt typically combine to increase the risk of flooding.

In September, 2021, Governor Kathy Hochul [announced](#) that the State of New York would make a generational investment in the Conklingville Dam to ensure it can continue to provide these important benefits for decades to come. The project, with major construction scheduled to begin in 2025, will include:

- foundation and concrete structural repairs to minimize and eliminate leakage through the rock base and at the rock-concrete interface, and the removal and replacement of deteriorated concrete on all concrete surfaces;
- replacement and repair of spalling and damaged concrete along wing walls, outlet channel, and tailrace concrete structures;
- replacement of original low level "Dow valve" outlets with modern outlet valves;
- and other structural improvements to the dam.

Beginning in 2025, rehabilitation of the Conklingville Dam is projected to take place over the course of two years, and not expected to necessitate any change to normal water levels or result in any other impacts on recreational use of Great Sacandaga Lake, or diminishment of its role in providing downstream flood protection, during construction.

Mark Finkle, Chair of the Regulating District, said, "We are privileged to be carrying on the legacy of visionary New Yorkers who, a century ago, voted to construct this important public work for the safety of residents in downstream communities like Fort Edward, Mechanicville, Troy, Waterford, Cohoes, Green Island, and Albany."

John Callaghan, Executive Director of the Regulating District, said, "As stewards of this critical flood protection infrastructure, we are committed to maintaining and operating it in the years ahead to keep area residents safe."

Robert S. Foltan, P.E., Chief Engineer of the Regulating District, said, “The construction of the Conklingville Dam and creation of the Sacandaga Reservoir was an incredibly ambitious and complex project for its time, and the enduring legacy of the Board which authorized its construction 100 years ago is present in the continued flood protection and flow augmentation benefits this reservoir continues to safely and reliably provide a century later.”

Today, the Great Sacandaga Lake also provides significant economic benefits to Saratoga and Fulton County communities along its shores, and quality of life benefits to area residents. An access permit system allows adjacent properties owners recreational access to the 29-mile-long reservoir, which provides innumerable ecological benefits as well.

The construction of the Conklingville Dam and creation of the Great Sacandaga Lake remains one of the most ambitious and consequential public works projects ever undertaken in the area. The story of its construction was told in the 2017 documentary film [Harnessing Nature: Building the Great Sacandaga](#), produced by the Great Sacandaga Advisory Council.

#### **FINAL ORDER – SACANDAGA RESERVOIR – MAY 7, 1924**

*Therefore be it Resolved, that pursuant to Section 451 of the said Conservation Law, the Board, after a careful consideration of the evidence and arguments given at a hearing for the purpose on April 9<sup>th</sup>, 1924, and of the objections and other exhibits and documents filed with the Board, does hereby determine that the public welfare requires that the proposed Sacandaga Reservoir should be built and that no modifications should be made in the said plans, maps, specifications, estimates and statements except as modified by the Water Control Commission, and be it*

*Further Resolved, that the Board does hereby order and direct that the said Sacandaga Reservoir shall be built in accordance with the said preliminary plans, maps, specifications and estimates as approved as modified by the Water Control Commission and as filed.*