

ADDENDUM TO HYDROPOWER PROJECT APPLICATIONS
UNDER THE
MAINE WATERWAY DEVELOPMENT AND CONSERVATION ACT

REVIEW STANDARDS FOR
EARTHFILL COFFERDAMS

The construction, maintenance and repair of hydropower project dams often requires the use of temporary cofferdams. Cofferdams are used to provide access to work areas for personnel and equipment, to allow dewatering of the work area, and to provide protection from flooding while in-stream work is underway.

The DEP has found that the use of earthfill cofferdams can result in significant sedimentation into rivers, streams and great ponds. This is especially true during cofferdam installation and removal. Sedimentation can cause a decline in water quality, the loss of fish spawning habitat, and damage to aquatic organisms, and can interfere with scenic, aesthetic and recreational uses.

The DEP believes that avoidance of a potential adverse environmental impact is the best form of mitigation. The DEP also believes that activities which have the potential to result in significant sedimentation should be avoided to the maximum extent feasible and possible.

Therefore, the following additional information will be required whenever an applicant proposes the use of an earthfill cofferdam as part of a hydropower project construction/reconstruction application (hydro2) or a hydropower project maintenance and repair application (hydro3) under the Maine Waterway Development and Conservation Act:

1. Provide a description of the available alternatives to the proposed earthfill cofferdam, including use of non-earthfill cofferdam material (such as sheet steel, wood, concrete, sand bags, or PortaDam-type structures) and alternative design/operational methods to avoid the need for a cofferdam.
2. If alternatives are available, then provide a discussion of the feasibility of utilizing available alternatives to the proposed earthfill cofferdam, including an explanation of any technological, logistical, or site-specific physical limitations to the use of available alternatives.
3. If alternatives are available and feasible, then provide a discussion of the practicality of utilizing available and feasible alternatives, including an explanation and comparison of the costs, effectiveness, environmental impacts, and timeliness associated with the use of an earthfill cofferdam and the use of available alternatives.
4. An explanation of why the proposed earthfill cofferdam is the most feasible and/or practical alternative for the construction or maintenance/repair activity under consideration.