Q: Do I need a permit to repair my dock or bulkhead?

A: If your structure is already permitted, a permit is not required for repairs or replacement but the owner shall notify GBRA of such maintenance performed.

Owner may, without paying additional permit fees, perform routine or preventative maintenance. Routine maintenance includes small-scale work done on a regular basis that is associated with the general upkeep of the structures and protects against normal wear and tear. Preventative maintenance includes inspection, detection, correction and prevention of major deterioration or failure of such structure or its components.

Q: Do I need a permit to construct a new bulkhead, dock or structure in the lakebed?

A: Yes, a GBRA permit is required in addition to required “no-rise” certifications from the County or City Floodplain Administrator along with permits from the US Army Corps of Engineers, as applicable. GBRA is not assessing a fee for permits.
Q: Do contractors need a GBRA permit to work on my structures or “rescue” my boat?
A: Owners of existing structures are required to follow the provisions of their dock permits for maintenance. There are no permit requirements for “rescuing” boats.

Q: Can I cut the stumps around my dock?
A: Yes, GBRA and TPWD are working in partnership to prioritize public safety and navigation. Contact GBRA first so the area can be defined. This will enable GBRA and TPWD to implement habitat mitigation strategies afterwards.

Q: Is the lake closed?
A: No, GBRA has not restricted access to the lakebed or the river.

Q: Who do I call if people are under my dock or in my backyard?
A: Call 911 or local law enforcement immediately if anyone trespasses on your private property (steps into your yard) or is accessing or taking personal property on and around your dock.
Q: Will vegetation take over the exposed lakebed like at Lake Wood?
A: Some vegetation growth is expected in Lake Dunlap. This is not anticipated to be on the same scale as Lake Wood due to the different characteristics of the lake bed. GBRA, PLDA, and TPWD are discussing options for vegetation control.

Q: Can I make and burn debris piles in the lakebed?
A: Not at this time; GBRA will consult with USACE to determine options, if any, for creating piles within the floodplain.

Q: Can I make a beach/put sand down between my property and river?
A: Any fill, including sand, added into the floodplain (including the lakebed) must still receive a permit from USACE.

Q: Will my trees die?
A: Some trees may die depending on the root systems proximity to the water table.
Q: What is the cause of the spillgate failures at Lake Dunlap and Lake Wood?

A: Both were related to failures in the original structural steel components.

• The 2016 spillgate failure at Lake Wood is believed to have occurred when a “tie-bar” section that connects the upstream and downstream pieces of the spillgates together failed, causing a chain reaction that resulted in a portion of the downstream section of the spillgate breaking away from the dam’s concrete superstructure.

• After reviewing the video of the spillgate failure, it is believed the failure at Lake Dunlap was also related to a failure of original structural steel components.

• Repairs completed in 2011 were done on the “tie-bars” and can be seen remaining intact and holding the two sections together as the spillgate breaks away from the dam.
Q: Can the damaged gate be recovered and repaired to restore Lake Dunlap sooner than a replacement gate and 3+ years?
A: Unlikely.
• Crews have not been able to access or evaluate the condition of the damaged spillgate due to current river flows, but given the overall condition prior to failure GBRA determined total replacement gates were required. In addition, the time, cost, and complexity of recovering, repairing, and reinstalling the failed gate would be greater than required to fabricate and install a new gate.
Q: Why can’t GBRA use concrete or put in a temporary “wall” to hold in the water at Lake Dunlap?

A: Adding a temporary wall in the place of the failed spillgate would reduce the amount of flow that can be passed through the spillway of the dam, which has the effect of increasing water levels upstream of the dam above what the dam was designed for. Therefore, this strategy adds additional flood risk to properties upstream of the dam and also increases the risk of overtopping the earthen dam during a flood event.

- The original design of the dams did not include provisions to install a temporary bulkhead that could be used to impound the lake during maintenance activities. GBRA’s consulting engineers have evaluated the dam and determined it does not have sufficient structural strength to support the loads that would result from placing a bulkhead on the immediate upstream face of the dam.

- An option to place sheet piling in the river to block off flow to the failed spillgate was considered, but not selected for implementation due to the added flood risk to the dam and upstream properties, the high construction costs, and because this option would still rely on the integrity of the adjacent spillgates to impound the lake.
Q: What is GBRA’s plan to repair the spillgate at Lake Dunlap?

A: GBRA is currently progressing with the design for the replacement spillgates along with modifications to the concrete structure of the dam.

- The design, which will take approximately a year to complete, will be similar for the other dams in the system, each location and river conditions are unique and require specific engineering and design.

- As design advances, GBRA is working with stakeholders to develop a sustainable funding solution and partnership needed to begin construction.

- GBRA’s revenue from the hydroelectric operations alone cannot support this level of investment at Lake Dunlap or the remaining dams in the system. GBRA does not receive state appropriations, revenue from property taxes, or revenue from recreational activities on the lakes to maintain, operate or support the hydroelectric dams. The revenue GBRA receives from other operations are contractually specific to the services provided in that individual operation.
Q: Why is the engineering design for the Lake Wood spillgate and Lake Dunlap taking a year or more to complete?

A: The design process involves more than just the design of the replacement gates. The work also involves design of structural reinforcements and additions to the dam, electrical and control systems, hydraulic power systems, cofferdam systems, and selection of a gate manufacturer. The dam configurations, underlying soil conditions, river flow conditions, power availability, and access considerations are different for each dam site, so a single design cannot simply be done at one location and repeated at the others.
Q: Why didn’t GBRA put money aside for the maintenance, repair or replacement of the hydroelectric dams?

A: For the past two decades changes in regulations and economics have restricted GBRA’s ability to charge enough in electricity rates to GVEC to recover costs to operate the system, much less generate additional revenue to cover maintenance and replacement.

- From 1963 to 2019, GBRA has spent more than $25 million in repairs on all the hydroelectric dams, spillgates, and associated system components.

- While repair and replacement costs can be justified, upon deregulation of the state’s electricity market and proliferation of natural gas further driving down electricity costs, GBRA does not have a customer base or revenue mechanism to collect the funds required to sustain the system.

- GBRA has provided “interfund” loans in the past, but in evaluating the system’s inability to further generate sufficient long-term revenue GBRA is unable to continue to advance funds to support the system.

- Since GBRA’s water supply and wastewater treatment customers’ rates are based on the costs and needs of each individual system, GBRA cannot assess additional costs into those rates to support the hydro system.

- Operational costs of the system are also associated with high flow events, which usually limit electricity production but require 24-hr onsite operations. The replacement hydraulic crest gates will enable operations to be automated reducing staff overhead and costs.
Q: Doesn’t New Braunfels Utilities (NBU) buy power from GBRA? Couldn’t some of that revenue be used to fund repairs to Lake Dunlap?
A: Yes, NBU does buy power from GBRA; however, that power is generated at Canyon Lake, which is completely separate from the operation of these older hydroelectric lakes.

Q: Are there any grants or loans available from the federal government or the State of Texas to help solve the funding issue?
A: GBRA has spent a great deal of time looking for available grant funding. Unfortunately, we have not found any available grant opportunities to resolve this type of infrastructure problem.

- There are available loans, but loans require GBRA to demonstrate it has sufficient revenues to cover the repayment of the loan. GBRA’s revenues from its power sales are not sufficient to finance the amounts needed for Lake Dunlap or the other dams in the system.
Q: Could FEMA flood relief programs be able to help finance this project?
A: So far, because the dams and spillgates were not designed as flood storage structures, we have not found an eligible or qualifying funding source.

Q: Why can’t GBRA use money from its water sales to fund the spillgate replacements at Lake Dunlap and Lake Wood?
A: GBRA’s water sales customers do not receive a direct benefit from the water in the hydro lakes, and if we were to charge water customers for the repair of the spillgates, we would likely be challenged with a rate case at the Public Utility Commission.

Q: Does GBRA have the ability to increase taxes on property around the lakes to raise revenue?
A: GBRA does not collect any tax revenues. Any taxing of property around the lakes would have to come through the applicable county government or a locally created taxing district. Counties are potential partners in this endeavor but tax policy is up to the elected officials and would have to be voter approved.
Q: Why can’t GBRA transfer the money for its new building in New Braunfels to the replacement of the spillgates?

A: GBRA identified the need and funded an office expansion in 2015. In order to continue to grow and serve our growing customer base, funds from rates paid by GBRA customers are funding GBRA’s ability to accommodate GBRA’s growing staff and resources.

- GBRA has already subsidized the operation of the hydro system with revenues in excess of the costs associated with an office expansion.
- GBRA cannot further limit its ability to support the utilities and operations funded by customers.
- Funds from the hydro system are not sufficient to support itself and are not used to support other GBRA operations.
- GBRA’s Rural Utility Division, Laboratory and Hydro Operations crews will be able to expand their capacities and continue to operate in Seguin.
- Apart from GBRA’s Calhoun County operations, New Braunfels provides a central location in closer proximity to GBRA’s facilities and staff operating in Hays, Kendall, Caldwell, and Comal counties.
Q: Why are the hydro lakes not considered flood control lakes?
A: The GBRA hydro lakes are often referred to as “constant-level” lakes, but really are acting as “pass-through” lakes. There is no room for temporary storage of flood waters in these lakes, so during a flood event all flood water is released from the dam at the same rate it flows into the lake upstream.

- Unlike Canyon Lake, which has an additional 34 feet of space above the water supply storage to store and hold approximately 355,000 acre-feet of flood water for a managed release, Lake Dunlap only impounds approximately 5,900 acre-feet of water. The Guadalupe River has experienced multiple flood events with flows well in excess of 100,000 acre-feet per day, which grossly exceeds the storage that can be provided by the lake. Lake Dunlap would need a significantly higher storage volume to provide any flood control benefits.

- Since the hydro lakes can’t moderate flood flows to minimize downstream impacts, the hydro lakes do not qualify as traditional “flood control” reservoirs.
Q: Who owns the now exposed land on Lake Dunlap? Can we access the water?
A: Technically, GBRA owns the land exposed by the draining of Lake Dunlap; however, we are not currently restricting access to the exposed land or to the water.

Q: Is GBRA liable for potential damages to our boats, boat docks, and bulkheads?
A: No, each GBRA permit states: All structures should be designed and constructed to withstand varying lake levels including high water elevations, fast moving water, and low lake levels for short or extended periods of time.

Q: Is the water supply for GBRA’s customers secure?
A: Water, including raw water diverted from Lake Dunlap, stored in Canyon Lake ensures water supply is available to GBRA’s customers.

Q: What happens if my water well goes dry?
A: GBRA is not responsible for individual for water wells. Individuals need to contact a local water supplier or a well driller.

Q: What is the current state of repairs now being made?
A: All repairs are indefinitely postponed until it can be determined how the work can progress safely.