



COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY  
TRANSPORTATION CABINET  
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**Gov. Beshear Announces Project to Soon Begin to Stabilize Panbowl Lake in Jackson**

*Transportation Cabinet awarded contract to begin work in September*

**FRANKFORT, Ky. (Aug. 25, 2022)** – Governor Beshear today announced a contract has been awarded to stabilize and strengthen the dam impounding Panbowl Lake and carrying KY 15 through the city limits of Jackson in Breathitt County.

“KY 15 is a major north-south thoroughfare linking southeastern Kentucky with the central part of the state and this much-needed infrastructure project is a prime example of our state’s shift from emergency response to stabilization in flood-impacted communities,” said **Gov. Andy Beshear**.

The Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) awarded the \$5.9 million low-bid contract to Schnabel Foundation Company.

During flooding events in February 2021 and July 2022, water from the North Fork of the Kentucky River seeped through the earthen roadway embankment that separates the river from Panbowl Lake. The river reached a record level during the July flood, and nearly overtopped the road. As precautionary measures, portions of Jackson near Panbowl Lake were evacuated and KY 15 was temporarily closed.

“This project is the next step in a series of short and long-term recommendations to ensure the safety and soundness of the dam,” said **KYTC Secretary Jim Gray**.

“I am so excited to hear that they’re going to fund the dam repairs, or the reinforcement of this embankment that has caused us so much grief over the years,” **Jackson Mayor Laura Thomas** said. “We definitely want our residents to feel safe in their homes, and we want the businesses to feel safe, and we’re very grateful that the Transportation Cabinet and our Governor have recognized that this is important for the safety and well-being of our travelers as well as our residents.”

The improvement project is the result of a 2021 hydrologic and hydraulic study by KYTC officials and engineering consultants of the earthen embankments and Panbowl Lake. KYTC Department of Highways District 10 personnel have already replaced a debris gate over the standpipe riser in Panbowl Lake. They also removed vegetation along embankments before this year's flooding in preparation for this project that includes the installation of a vertical cutoff wall drilled into the ground to prevent river water from seeping into the lake.

That wall will remain in place when KY 15 is widened to four lanes in a future project. That work will essentially double the width of the dam, providing further reinforcement. That project is currently under development with no projected start date.

Work will begin in the next few weeks and is scheduled to be completed by June 1, 2023. Drivers can expect lane closures and traffic delays while the work is ongoing.

More than 12,000 vehicles use this section of KY 15 each day. Panbowl Lake was impounded when the current alignment of KY 15 was built in the early 1960s. The dam is adjacent to a cut-through project done as a flood control measure by the Army Corps of Engineers in the late 1950s. Prior to the cut-through and the impoundment of the lake, the North Fork of the Kentucky River flowed in a seven-mile loop that was separated only by a few feet where KY 15 currently runs.

EDITORS NOTE: Click [here](#) for an illustration of the west embankment cross section.

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