



# Sumner Dam Spillway Bridge Realignment Project

## Background

State Road NM 203 crosses the spillway bridge over Sumner Dam, approximately 16 miles northwest of Fort Sumner, in eastern New Mexico. Sumner Dam was built by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) in 1937 for the purposes of irrigation and flood control as part of the Carlsbad Project. The spillway bridge over Sumner Dam is a one-lane bridge with a load rating of 15 tons.

- The load limit on the spillway bridge is regularly exceeded, creating a public safety hazard.
- The spillway bridge is near the dam operating equipment and spillway, and requires periodic closure for operations, maintenance, and emergency activities.
- The proximity of the bridge to operating equipment poses a security threat to the dam.
- Where the bridge transitions to a single lane around a corner is a location where multiple vehicle accidents have occurred.
- The bridge has provided access to houses, ranches, and Sumner Lake State Park on the west side of Sumner Dam since 1937.

## Project Activity to Date

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), in coordination with Reclamation, received a Federal Lands Transportation Program (FLTP) grant to develop a realignment of NM 203 off the spillway bridge of Sumner Dam. Reclamation has been working with project partners to develop a design and source additional funding for construction.

- Reclamation received funds for an Appraisal Study Report (Appraisal) in 2021 through the FLTP. The Appraisal was completed in March 2022, and concluded that rehabilitation of the existing bridge was not feasible due to significant risks and potential unforeseen costs associated with modifying the existing dam and spillway. The selected alternative is to relocate the road from the spillway bridge to land owned by Reclamation just downstream.
- In 2024, Reclamation received additional FLTP funds for completion of the design and environmental compliance of the preferred option identified in the 2022 Appraisal. Design work began through FHWA in 2024.
- Reclamation applied for U.S. Department of Transportation Bridge Investment Program (BIP) funds for construction of the new alignment once FLTP funds were secured for the design and environmental compliance. This was also part of the cost share requirement.
- As of March 2025, the FHWA design team has developed the 30% design for the project.

## Project Funding Status

- Reclamation was notified in January 2025 that BIP funding was not granted because the project was determined ineligible due to the extent of the realignment. Completed studies have determined that using the existing alignment for the new bridge is not feasible and therefore BIP funding is not an option.
- Reclamation has sought alternative funding sources through various grant programs however no opportunities have been identified to date.

## Pause of Design Work and Project

Reclamation has determined that continuation of design work on the NM 203 realignment project would be improper given the current unavailability of funds for construction.

- The project will pause at the 30% design stage. The 30% field review has been cancelled and no new task orders will be executed for geotechnical investigations, utility relocations, or environmental compliance studies.
- Reclamation will return any unused funds for design work to the FLTP for redistribution.

## Funding Opportunities

There may be opportunities for non-federal sponsors to apply for various transportation grants to continue work on this project; most require a significant cost share. Reclamation is willing to partner with a sponsor to navigate these grant programs should a sponsor identify matching funds.