



Frequently Asked Questions – July 17, 2025

With the HCA legal actions behind us, construction restarted June 2, 2025 on Secord Dam.

While the delay of over a year was “excruciating long” for most to experience, in the “legal world” the journey through the Circuit Court, MI Court of Appeals and ruling by the MI Supreme Court was relatively fast. We also need to remember the two Federal lawsuits with a hearing after which the judge dismissed all the HCA arguments.

Here are three questions we continue to receive:

Q1: FLTF indicated over the past years the construction schedule had Secord returning before Sanford or Wixom. Now it appears Sanford will be completed a couple months before Secord. What happened?

Multiple events over the past two years resulted in construction schedule changes. We provide a bullet point summary of key reasons, as well as a more detailed answer below.

Summary

- HCA lawsuits delayed the ability of FLTF to secure the funds required to complete all projects.
- There was no money available to complete work on any of the dams.
- EGLE required specific work phases on each of the dams to allow construction to safely suspend.
- The work shutdowns were planned, and communicated, based on completion of major construction phases, where it was most efficient to safely suspend and then re-start the work. No one at the time knew how long construction would be delayed.
- Secord’s final phase (upgrading the Primary Spillway and installing the new gates) could not be started as planned in June 2024 and completed due to lack of funds caused by the HCA delay.
- Sanford was required to complete a key phase of work to safely suspend. This phase included the completion of the primary spillway concrete work to allow the river to be routed back through the dam. Prior to the completion of this phase, the river was diverted around the dam.
- Due to the response from the MI Supreme Court (April 11, 2025) there was no need to remove the crew or equipment from the Sanford job site. Doing so would have only added to the cost of delay.
- Sanford appears to still be on schedule for summer 2026. HCA construction suspension will delay Secord until mid to late 2026. FLTF will have more details on timing in October.

The Rest of the Story . . .

To add to the confusion of a complex series of construction projects, there have been several changes to the construction schedule over the past year or so due to the uncertainty of the HCA delay.

In summer 2023, FLTF projected Secord would be completed in late 2024 / early 2025 with full lake level in summer 2025. Sanford would be completed in late 2025 / early 2026 with full lake level summer 2026.

In 2023 FLTF indicated there is not enough grant money left to complete any of the dam projects. Since FLTF could not issue bonds to continue construction as planned in June 2024 due to HCA legal action, FLTF was forced to suspend construction on all 4 dams.

Work could not simply stop, rather EGLE required each of the dams to be to a certain point of construction to ensure they could safely suspend. No one knew in early to mid-2024 how long work would be suspended. There were some lawyers that predicted multiple years of delay as HCA spokespeople threatened to go all the way to the Supreme Court. Edenville was suspended in June 2024 as there was no funding available for the required construction phases and the limited state funding available was required to bring Secord, Smallwood and Sanford to a point where EGLE would allow each project to safely suspend.

At Secord, as we were informed and witnessed, work suspended in October 2024. Secord safely suspended after an upgraded embankment, functioning Axillary Spillway and coffer dams to protect the Primary Spillway. Secord suspended with a slightly elevated lake level due to the diversion of water through the Axillary Spillway in June 2024 to prepare for the final phase to upgrade the Primary Spillway and gates.

The Sanford construction phase required completion of work on the Primary Spillway to allow the water to be redirected back through the dam’s spillway. Recall the flood re-routed the river around the dam. Moving the flow of the river back was required by EGLE to safely suspend. While FLTF projected in summer 2024 they believed the project would be completed with work suspension in January 2025, this project phase took longer than planned to complete for a variety of reasons to include weather conditions.

With the April 11, 2025 MI Supreme Court ruling, there is no reason for Spence Brothers to remove their equipment or crew from the Sanford job site as work can continue. Doing so would add to the cost of delay.

Back to the question, the timeline for Sanford does not appear to be impacted to the same degree as Secord by the HCA construction suspension. The construction delay will impact Secord by at least a year according to the most recent FLTF schedules that estimate Secord Dam to be complete in mid to late 2026 with a potential lake fill that year.

FLTF indicates they will have updated construction schedules in October.

THIS IS ONE OF OUR FAQ’S PUBLISHED IN 2024.

Q2: Did FLTF have enough MI Grant money to compete Secord?

NO. FLTF indicated in 2023 that as we moved into summer 2024, with construction at all 4 dams, the state grant money for construction would be exhausted with the need for additional funds to continue construction.

The plan was to establish the “not to exceed” assessment to start with the winter tax bill Dec 2025, due Feb 2026. Having the “not to exceed” assessment in place could have allowed FLTF to issue bonds or seek loans in June 2024 to complete the project.

The HCA lawsuits did not allow the FLTF to issue bonds or seek loans resulting in suspension of the construction projects.

FLTF was forced to use existing grant money to prepare all 4 dams for construction suspension with safety a priority. As the table on the right indicates, there is no grant money available to complete any of the dam restoration projects.

	Projected Budget	Estimated Spend*
Edenville	\$125 Million	\$20 Million
Sanford	\$90 Million	\$50 Million
Smallwood	\$50 Million	\$40 Million
Secord	\$68 Million	\$54 Million
All Lakes Costs	\$21 Million	\$6 Million
	\$308 Million	\$170 Million
There is a \$10 Million contingency remaining from the state of MI construction grant available of \$180 Million .		

*Estimated spend by projects suspension
Source FLTF OCT 2024 informational webinar

Q3: What work is required to be completed at Secord dam?

In 2021, EGLE described Secord as requiring three significant work phases: 1) Enforcement of the Embankment, 2) the Axillary Spillway and 3) the Primary Spillway and Gates.

The Embankment and Axillary Spillway phases are complete.

The Axillary Spillway is complicated from an engineering perspective due to the constraints of Secord Dam Road and the Secord Dam Road bridge. Meeting the required capacity needs while protecting the road and bridge created the design we see today rather than the simple, traditional, less expensive Axillary Spillway as can be used at the other dams. The crews also encountered dewatering issues as they prepared to pour concrete for the Auxiliary Spillway that created additional complexity as reported in the summer of 2023.

The Primary Spillway currently has a coffer dam around it. That concrete spillway requires significant work to bring it to safety standards and to allow the new gates to be installed. This work is complicated by the coffer dam holding back the Secord Lake impoundment. There is a smaller footprint for crews and equipment to work resulting in more time required to complete the Primary Spillway work. There are also safety hazards for the crew that make their work more difficult.

Conversely, similar Primary Spillway work at Sanford and Edenville is easier and less costly to complete as there is no lake impoundment to hold back resulting in a larger work area. Crews have more flexibility to work.

To read more about the work required to complete Secord dam, please view the [Secord Lake Association Secord Dam Construction Update from June 18th](#).

We continue our commitment to provide accurate, timely information to the Secord Lake Community. Should you have additional questions, please contact us at SecordLakeAssociation@gmail.com We will do our best to research your question to provide an answer.

Visit us at www.SecordLakeAssociation.org

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