

PRINCETON: Carnegie Lake dam repairs to begin soon

- By Lea Kahn, Staff Writer
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All of the mandatory permits have been issued and work to repair Carnegie Lake dam will get under way in the next week or two. The goal is to finish the project by September. (Staff photo by Phil McAuliffe)

The Carnegie Lake dam has been in place for more than 100 years, but even the sturdiest structures need to be repaired.

That's why Princeton University is set to embark on a project to repair about 195 feet of the dam on the western — or Princeton — side, said Princeton University Facilities engineer Robert Ortego.

The repair work consists mostly of applying new coats of cement where it is needed, and rebuilding several buttresses on the north — or exposed — side of the dam, Mr. Ortego said Tuesday night, as he outlined plans for the repair before the Kingston Historical Society.

All of the mandatory permits have been issued, and preparation work for the project began this week, Mr. Ortego said. Work will get under way in the next week or two. The goal is to finish the project by September.

Mr. Ortego explained that there are steel beams inside the dam, which spans 575 feet from the east side to the west side of Carnegie Lake. All of the work on the dam was done by hand, around the turn of the 20th century.

The dam undergoes periodic inspections, Mr. Ortego said. It is well constructed, but over the years, it has been patched. Recent inspections showed there are pieces of cement that are falling off the dam, he said. It does not have many leaks, but there are signs of wear and tear.

The plan calls for restoring the curve to the top of the dam, and repairing several buttresses, he said. The cement will be applied over what essentially amounts to steel lattice. Although he declined to cite a specific cost, the project will not be cheap.

Workmen will install a cofferdam, which is a temporary barrier that keeps water out of the area where the work is to be conducted. The water will be pumped out of the cofferdam area, creating a dry work environment for the workmen.

This is not the first time that the dam has been repaired, Mr. Ortego said. There have been repairs to it in 1966, 1980 and 1990. But the goal this time is to ensure that the repairs that are being made now will last for another 50 years or so, he said.

An exhibit that reviews the construction of Carnegie Lake and information on the dam repairs is on view at the Lockett's House at the D&R Canal State Park in Kingston. It is open weekends, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. ▣