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For Immediate Release

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NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS COMMEMORATE NATIONAL DAM SAFETY AWARENESS DAY - MAY 31ST

May 31st is National Dam Safety Awareness Day in America.

Today we commemorate the significant role dams play in American life. From providing nearly half of the nation's clean, renewable electricity, water supplies, and access to water for agricultural production, to other benefits including recreation and industrial support, dams serve multiple purposes across the U.S.

There are over 87,000 dams in the U.S. – every state has hundreds of dams. Like bridges, levees, roads, and airports, dams are an important part of this nation's infrastructure.

Each year, this day is set aside to bring attention to the importance of safely and effectively managing dams. When designed, operated, and maintained properly, the benefits of dams are untold. When it rains, dams and good river management help to minimize the potential of flood damage. And during times of drought and intense heat, cold-water releases from dams provide flows and relief for fish populations.

"Millions of people depend on watersheds and dams for protection from floods and to provide safe drinking water. With a changing and shifting climate, dams are also vital to holding stores of water for use during drought," Agriculture Secretary Vilsack said. "By investing in this critical infrastructure, we are helping to ensure a safe, resilient environment for agricultural producers and residents of rural America."

***Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack,
April 9, 2015, Announcing 150 Critical
Dam Rehabilitation and Assessment
Projects in 23 states***

Yet dams can pose a risk to communities if not designed, operated, and maintained properly. To ensure dams throughout the nation are safe requires a greater investment in inspection, maintenance, rehabilitation and assessment programs. The American Society of Civil Engineers' *2013 Report Card for America's Infrastructure* gave the nation's dams a grade of "D" and the number of dams determined to be unsafe or deficient is currently more than 4,000.

On May 31st, we join together to commemorate National Dam Safety Awareness Day, remembering the lessons learned from past dam and levee failures, pushing for strong dam and levee safety programs, investing in America's critical infrastructure and rededicating ourselves to the effective public-private partnerships that work to keep America's dams and levees safe, operational and resilient.

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