



NEWS

Columbus Mom Wants All Low-Head Dams Removed

There is beauty in water. But the tranquil scenes from a low-head dam also hide a hidden danger.



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There is beauty in water. But the tranquil scenes from a low-head dam also hide a hidden danger.

Columbus mom Christa Ansley calls them “killers.” “They need to come out,” she says

In July 2008, her son, 20-year old Christian Hallam, was in an inner tube when he came upon a low-head dam. He tried to get out, but ended up going over the dam.

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"Most of the low head dams are 8-foot drops and under these drops are hydrologics and they churn," Ansley explains. "My son is a 6'4," 250 pound football player and he couldn't get out of it."

Hallam died going over what was then the 5th Avenue dam. Christa threatened to sue the city to remove it, and won.

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Ansley says everyone is now safer with the dam removed.

That low-head didn't have any utilities running through it, but the Dodridge dam does. It's where [two step brothers lost their lives this week](#). The city says it has no plans to remove it because of the cost to taxpayers.

Still, Ansley says, they all need to go. "My message to the city is 'get these things out! They are killing children and adults'"

Attorney Daniel Abrahams' handled Ansley's case and calls the dams "death traps." He says history proves low head dams are a threat to public safety nationwide, with more than 440 reported deaths by drowning since the 1950s.

When Christa Ansley learned of another family grieving the loss of their sons to a low head dam, she knew exactly what they were feeling.

"It broke my heart. I know what these people are going through. They've lost their family. Their life will never be the same; mine isn't."

The Dodrigde dam has a clear warning sign about the dangers of drowning, but critics argue they don't do enough to warn people and suggest the dams should also include a barrier to prevent people from going over.

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources says it has grant money for the city buy navigational devices. It provided Columbus more than \$2,000 to buy buoys to warn people about low-head dams.

However, none of the city's dams have them. A spokesperson for the city confirmed the grant money was spent, but couldn't say why they're not at the dams