

Reservoir-induced seismicity in Kerala.

When you alter the fault line's mechanical state it can cause fault activity to intensify and induce earthquakes. Many scientists believe this link between temblors and dams—called reservoir-induced seismicity.

Water first seeps into the loose soil at the base of the area's rocky cliffs, destabilizing the land and making it prone to slides. Then the reservoir water level fluctuates—partially drain the reservoir in summer to accommodate flood waters and raise it again at the end of flood season to generate power—and the abrupt change in water pressure further disturbs the land.

The effects of the dam's disturbance of whole ecosystems could reverberate for decades. Landslides caused by increased pressure on the surrounding land, a rise in waterborne disease, and a decline in biodiversity. That biodiversity is threatened as the dam floods some habitats, reduces water flow to others, and alters weather patterns. The dam further imperils delicate fish populations. The reservoir could also break up land bridges into small islands, isolating clusters of animals and plants.

Once you dramatically change the climate and change water patterns you change a lot of environmental variables. Almost all infectious diseases are up for grabs. Researchers found that rotting vegetation in the water means that the dams emit about a billion tonnes of greenhouse gases every year. This represents 1.3% of total annual anthropogenic (human-caused) global emissions. When considered over a 100-year timescale, dams produce more methane than rice plantations and biomass burning.

Dams are declining to favor several factors such as strong concerns about dams' environmental and social impacts and emerging ideas for alternative types of water storage, nature-based solutions, and alternative energy sources. It appears that new dam construction globally will continue at a slow pace in the decades to come, and thus an addition to total global water storage behind dams in the future will be relatively small.

According to the Hydropower Reform Coalition (HRC), a consortium of 150 groups concerned about the impact of dams, degraded water quality is one of the chief concerns. Organic materials from within and outside the river that would normally wash downstream get built up behind dams and start to consume a large amount of oxygen as they decompose. In some cases this triggers algae blooms which, in turn, create oxygen-starved “dead zones” incapable of supporting river life of any kind. Also, water temperatures in dam reservoirs can differ greatly between the surface and depths, further complicating survival for marine life evolved to handle natural temperature cycling. And when dam operators release oxygen-deprived water with unnatural temperatures into the river below, they harm downstream environments as well.

Decommissioning dams is a relatively recent phenomenon. The scale of decommissioning varies globally and regionally; for example, it has become quite common in the USA and Europe. The dams removed are, however, primarily of smaller size. Removal of large dams is still in its infancy, although a few cases have been recorded mostly in the last ten years. Decommissioning will also have various positive and negative economic, social, and ecological impacts to be considered. The nature of the implications and feasibility of dam removal will differ between low-income and high-income countries. Therefore, assessing dam removal in a local and regional social, economic, and geographic context is critical to protect the broader, sustainable development objectives for a region.

Removing a medium-size dam requires years (sometimes decades), continuous experts, and public involvement and is often subject to lengthy regulatory approvals. It is essential to develop protocols and policies that will guide and speed up dam removal. Delaying the removal of certain aged dam structures could lead to catastrophic consequences with millions of people and their economies affected. Simultaneously, the magnitude of some large dam removal projects is merely prohibitive, and they will likely continue to operate much longer with recurring investments into repairs despite their advancing age.

Citizenry growth stands still, for culture and creativity take the back seat when fear reigns. Some may say that there is no fear but the man who is so told, may appear to be consoled though his heart or mind may not be convinced. Therefore, it is the duty of the States involved to create a sense of confidence in the real sense of the term and ensure that adequate measures have been taken so that in any event safety of the individuals shall not be affected and well preserved and their life and liberty remain protected.

A SIGMA model can be used as an effective early warning system for the region. Ultimately, value judgments will determine the fate of many of these large water storage structures. It is not an easy process, and thus distilling lessons from and sharing dam decommissioning experiences should be a common global goal.

Images below are few Landslides recorded between October 18-28 , 2021. The distance from the nearest reservoir is plotted using Google Earth, measure. The distance can be viewed as radius with equally likely probabilities depending on the top soil. Building intelligence around the reservoirs and a monetary network using IOT is easily doable solution that only help the people around it.

[Courtesy]

1. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/chinas-three-gorges-dam-disaster/>
2. <http://www.indiaenvironmentportal.org.in/files/Mullaperiyar%20Dam%20de-commission%20Supreme%20Court%20Judgement.pdf>



