



**AMERICAN
RIVERS**
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Former Milburnie Dam, Neuse River, North Carolina | Restoration Systems

Low Head Dam Safety

What is a low head dam?

A low head dam is a human-made structure that spans the full width of a river and is designed to allow water to continuously flow over it. These dams are typically less than 25 feet high and don't provide flood control.

Are low head dams dangerous?

Low head dams are very dangerous. They earned the nickname “drowning machines” because they create a recirculating washing machine-like feature called a hydraulic at the base of the dam that does not allow people to swim out of it.

What should I do if someone is caught in a low head dam?

If you see someone caught in a low head dam, call 911 immediately. DO NOT attempt to enter the water to help, you could also become a victim.

Learn more



**AmericanRivers.org/
LowHeadDams**