2023 FECM/NETL SPRING R&D PROJECT REVIEW MEETING – 4/18/2023

An Autonomous Robotic Inspection System for Coal Ash and Tailings Storage Facilities (FE0032177)

University Training and Research for Fossil Energy and Carbon Management – UCR

PI: Guilherme A. S. Pereira (Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering) Co-PI: Ihsan "Berk" Tulu (Mining Engineering)

West Virginia University

Benjamin M. Statler College of Engineering and Mineral Resources

Team

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 - Department of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering – WVU
 - Specialist in Robotics
- Ihsan "Berk" Tulu Co-PI
 - Department of Mining Engineering WVU
 - Specialist in Geomechanics/Mine Safety and Health
- Paulo Galvão Simplício PhD student
 - Mechanical Engineering
- Mustafa Can Suner PhD student
 - Mining Engineering









Coal Ash and Tailing Dams

- Tailings dams, impoundments, slurry ponds, or ash ponds are facilities that store waste by-products from coal mine and coal-fired power plants.
- The US has more than 700 coal ash ponds.
- In WV only, at least 52 impoundments¹ are classified as high hazard level
 - failure may result in loss of life, significant economic losses, and/or environmental damage.
- Ash ponds contain contaminants like mercury, cadmium, and arsenic.

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Map of dams in Northern and Central Appalachia







Source: US Army Corps of Engineers, National Inventory of Dams, Geographic Information System (GIS). <u>https://nid.usace.army.mil/</u>

Impound Construction

 Impounds are often embankment dam structures incrementally raised with the same waste they store.



MSHA Handbook Series, Dam Inspection and Plan Review Handbook, Number PH21-V-6, January 2021

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Lumbroso, D., Collell, M.R., Petkovsek, G. *et al.* DAMSAT: An Eye in the Sky for Monitoring Tailings Dams. *Mine Water Environ* **40**, 113–127 (2021).

Impound Liquefaction (Failure)





Pacheco, R. L. R. (2019). Static liquefaction in tailings dam and flow failure. *Madrid, SP*.

Impound Liquefaction

- Iron mining tailing dam, Brumadinho, Brazil, Jan. 2019
- 11.7 million m³ of tailings were released
- 363 people died or are missing

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https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NK6EDKOys5E

Closer accidents



Jan. 2014 - About 74,000 tons of coal ash and 27 million gallons of contaminated water flown through drainage pipe into Dan River.



https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/01/us/coal-ash-spill reveals-transformation-of-north-carolina-agency.html

Closer accidents



Dec. 2008 – A retention wall failed. The wave of coal ash and mud toppled power lines, covered roads and ruptured a gas line. It damaged 12 homes, and one person had to be rescued, though no one was seriously hurt.



Image: https://www.nrdc.org/

Closer accidents



Feb. 1972 - collapse of tailings dam after heavy rain; the tailings traveled 27 km downstream, 125 people lost their lives, 500 homes were destroyed. Property and highway damage exceeded \$65 million.

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Image: <u>https://www.herald-dispatch.com/</u>

Main causes of accidents

- Clogged drains;
- Obstructed spillways;
- Settlement of the dam crest;
- Settlement and slope instability;
- Inadequate Maintenance
 - excess of vegetation, erosion, animal burrows;
- Cracking;
- Sink holes in the dam;
- Seepage.

Result in Overtopping (34% of accidents)

May result in Piping





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https://damsafety.org/dam-failures

Prevention: Inspection!

MSHA Dam Inspection Frequency

Condition	Inspection Frequency	Inspector				
All dams associated with underground	Once each	Mine S&H Inspector				
mines.	quarter					
All dams associated with surface mines.	Once every 6 months	Mine S&H Inspector				
All high hazard potential dama	At least once	Impoundment				
An figh hazaru potentiar danis.	each quarter	Specialist/Inspector				
All significant hazard potential dams.	At least every 6	Impoundment Specialist/Inspector				
	months					
Critical construction activities at high and significant hazard potential dams. +	As needed *	Impoundment Specialist/Inspector				
Unusual event (weather or seismic).	As needed **	Mine S&H Inspector or Impoundment Specialist/Inspector				



MSHA Handbook Series, Dam Inspection and Plan Review Handbook, Number PH21-V-6, January 2021

Inspection

Common Inspection Frequencies for High or Significant Hazard Potential Dams

Inspection and Monitoring Category	Inspection and Monitoring Frequency
Construction inspections	Daily - Weekly
Informal inspections during operation	Daily
Normal inspections during operation	Every 7 days
Formal inspections during operation	Yearly
Extreme weather or first filling	As needed per occurrence
Seismic event	As needed, and see table below

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MSHA Handbook Series, Dam Inspection and Plan Review Handbook, Number PH21-V-6, January 2021

Abandoned dams

- The long-term stability of the embankment and any seepage containment system is critical.
- To be considered abandoned, tailings dams need to be modified to ensure it is not capable of impounding water above the tailings.
- Inspection at its normal frequency should continue until the site is abandoned according to the design plan.



MSHA Handbook Series, Dam Inspection and Plan Review Handbook, Number PH21-V-6, January 2021

Suggested inspection (MSHA)







Sinkhole in pool area



Cracks on embankment slope

MSHA Handbook Series, Dam Inspection and Plan Review Handbook, Number PH21-V-6, January 2021



This project

MSHA recommended inspection equipment

- Note pad / Inspection form
- Weir and pipe flow charts
- Camera and extra batteries
- Calculator
- Global Positioning Unit (GPS)
- Measuring tape and 6-foot ruler
- Range finder or Abney level
- Water level indicator
- Survey ribbon
- Graduated bucket or container of known volume
- Clear container for checking clarity of flow
- Watch or timer
- Binoculars
- Handheld spotlight



Our proposed equipment



Objectives

- Develop a robotic drone, equipped with several complementary sensors, that will autonomously inspect several structures of a storage facility;
- Create AI-based hazard detection algorithms that will use multispectral and georeferenced images (i.e., thermal and visual) and 3D Point Clouds to detect hazards in the storage facility structure.



Previous work



Previous work

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Autonomous Robotic Early Warning System for Underground Stone Mining Safety

Field and Aerial Robotics (FARO) Lab and Navigation Lab (NavLab)

https://youtu.be/L iY3vGgxQ8





This project: Technical Approach

- Task 1.0 Project Management and Planning
- Task 2.0 Configuration assessment of coal refuse facilities and programming of autonomous inspection logics
 - 2.1 Preliminary facility configuration assessment
 - 2.2 Detailed assessment of inspection structures and locations
 - 2.3 Development of autonomous inspection logics
- Task 3.0 Drone assembly and programming
 - 3.1 Drone assembly
 - 3.2 Inspection of open-channel spillways and principal spillway inlets/outlets
 - 3.3 3D mapping of dam's crest and slopes
 - 3.4 Detection of leaking due to seepage through embankment slope and foundation
- Task 4.0 Development of hazard detection software and user interface
 - 4.1 Hazard detection
 - 4.2 User Interface application



2.1 – Preliminary facility configuration assessment

- Database with some characteristics of coal waste facilities in WV and neighboring states.
- Source: US Army Corps of Engineers, National Inventory of Dams (NID)





Dams in WV

Distribution of WV Dams







Characteristics of the database

- Tailing dams in WV and 100 miles radius from Morgantown
 - 65 from WV
 - 29 from OH
 - 4 from PA
 - 1 from VA

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Characteristics of the database

- The database consists of
 - 1. Keyhole Markup Language (KML)
 - used to visualize storage facilities and their NID data on Google Earth
 - 2. shapefile with NID (National Inventory of Dams) data of the facilities
 - 3. csv files with NID data of the facilities
 - 4. pdf and drawing files with the imported google image
 - will be used for detailed analysis.



Characteristics of the database

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- Hazard levels (Tailing Dams in WV)
 - 52 High
 - Failure would likely result in loss of human life, extensive property damage to homes and other structures, or cause flooding of major highways such as State roads or interstates
 - 8 Significant
 - Failure could possibly result in loss of life or increase flood risks to roads and buildings, with no more than 2 houses impacted and less than six lives in jeopardy
 - 1 Low
 - Failure is unlikely to result in loss of life and only minor increases to existing flood levels at roads and buildings is expected.
 - 4 Undetermined



 some of the facilities in the database were reclaimed and are not active.



 parameters relevant to the project objectives: dam height, dam length, hydraulic height, structural height, and surface area.



Dam Height: vertical distance between the lowest point on the crest of the dam and the lowest point in the original streambed

Mean height: 193 ft (59m) Max height: 780 ft (238 m)



• parameters relevant to the project objectives: dam height, dam length, hydraulic height, structural height, and surface area.



Dam Length: *length along the top of the dam*

Mean Length: 1,624 ft (0.3 miles) Maximum Length: 13,000 ft (2.5 miles)



 parameters relevant to the project objectives: dam height, dam length, hydraulic height, structural height, and surface area.



Surface Area: Surface area, in acres, of the impoundment at its normal retention level

Mean Area: 53 acres Maximum Area: 292 acres



2.2 – Detailed Assessment of inspection structures and locations

- field survey of some coal waste facilities in WV
- use of drones, hand-held devices and cameras.



- 2.3 Autonomous inspection logics
 - Development of drone inspection logics according to *MSHA Dam Inspection and Plan Review Manual,* and consultation with a MSHA inspector and facility operators
 - Determination inspection parameters of each critical structural component
 - flight path
 - flight distance to the structure
 - type of sensor and monitoring data



3.1 – Drone assembly

- Purchase, assembly, test, and initial programing of the drone.
- Ground control station (laptop)
 - Robot Operating System (ROS)
 - Data collection and storage
 - Motion planning and execution





Drone selection - criteria

Required

- Made in USA (to comply with DOE FOA)
- Remote ID (to comply with FAA)
- Programable by a computer with SDK (necessary for automation)
- RGB Image (required for Dam inspection)
- Thermal Image (required for Seepage detection)
- Lidar (required for 3D Mapping)

Desirable

- NDAA & TAA compliant (to facilitate use by governmental agencies)
- RTK (for precise positioning)
- Easy operation (to facilitate transfer of technology)
- Affordable (to facilitate transfer of technology)

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FAA - Federal Aviation Administration NDAA - National Defense Authorization Act TAA - Trade Agreements Act

Drone selection

Model	Company	Country	SDK Control	SDK Payload	RGB Resolution	Gimbal	Thermal	RTK	Payload (for LIDAR)	Price
M300 RTK	DJI	China	Yes	Yes	20 MB Zoom	Yes	Payload H20T	Yes	2.7 kg	\$29,500
M210 RTK	DJI	China	Yes	Yes	12 MP	Yes	Payload XT2 FLIR	Yes	1.4 kg	\$15,100
Anafi USA	Parrot	France	Ground SDK	Yes	21 MP	Yes	Included	No	00 kg	\$7,000
Anafi USA GOV	Parrot	USA	Ground SDK	Yes	21 MP	Yes	Included	No	00 kg	\$14,000
Anafi Al	Parrot	France	Yes	Yes	48 MP	Yes	No	No	00 kg	\$ 4,500
Anafi Thermal	Parrot	France	Ground SDK	No	21 MP	Yes	Included	No	00 kg	\$3,500
Siras	Teledyne Flir	USA	No	No	16 MP	Yes	Included	No	00 kg	\$9 <i>,</i> 695
X2D - Thermal	Skydio	USA	No	No	12.3 MP	Yes	Included	No	00 kg	\$10,999
Astro Map	Freefly	USA	MAVSDK	No	61 MP	Yes	No	Yes	1.5 kg	\$24,109
Alta X	Freefly	USA	MAVSDK	Wiris Payload	RGB Payload	Yes	No	Yes	15.87 kg	\$24,220
Commander 2	Draganflyer	Canada	No	No	RGB Payload	Yes	Payload Thermal	Yes	1.0 kg	\$17,107
EVO II DUAL										
640T V2	Autel	USA/China	Mobile SDK	Mobile SDK	48 MP	Yes	Included	Optional	150 g	\$4,800
EVO II RTK V2	Autel	USA/China	Mobile SDK	Mobile SDK	48 MP	Yes	Included	Yes	150 g	\$4,800
EVO II 640T V3	Autel	USA/China	Mobile SDK	Mobile SDK	50 MP	Yes	Included	Optional	150 g	\$5 <i>,</i> 999
EVO II 640T RTK	Autel	USA/China	Mobile SDK	Mobile SDK	50 MP	Yes	Included	No	150 g	\$7,699
EVO Max 4T	Autel	USA/China	Mobile SDK	Mobile SDK	50 MP	Yes	Included	Optional	150 g	\$8,999
Accent X/X8	CamFlite	USA	No	No	RGB Payload	Yes	No	Yes	4.5 kg	\$26,673
H520E-RTK	Yuneec	China	No	No	20 MP	Yes	Payload CGORTX	Yes	??	\$16,300



ANAFI USA GOV drone

- Required Made in USA (to comply with DOE FOA) Remote ID (to comply with FAA) Programable by a computer with SDK (necessary for automation) RGB Image (required for Dam inspection) Thermal Image (required for Seepage detection) Lidar (required for 3D Mapping)
 - Desirable
 - NDAA & TAA compliant (to facilitate use by governmental agencies)
 - RTK (for precise positioning)
 - Easy operation (to facilitate transfer of technology)
 - Affordable (to facilitate transfer of technology)



FAA - Federal Aviation Administration NDAA - National Defense Authorization Act TAA - Trade Agreements Act

Do we need Lidar and RTK?



nttps://youtu.be/2cBsiPxzV44



Lidar - Light Detection and Ranging (creates 3D point clouds) RTK - Real-time kinematic positioning (increase positioning accuracy)

Do we need Lidar and RTK?

Results from COLMAP¹ free software





¹Schönberger, J. L., Zheng, E., Frahm, J. M., & Pollefeys, M. (2016). Pixelwise view selection for unstructured multi-view stereo. In *Computer Vision–ECCV* 2016: 14th European Conference, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, October 11-14, 2016, Proceedings, Part III 14 (pp. 501-518). Springer International Publishing.

Do we need Lidar and RTK?



Original image





3.2 – Inspection of spillways

- development of software to autonomously inspection openchannel spillways and principal spillway inlets/outlets with the drone.
- Structure position using GPS.
- Object detection using computer vision and AI.







https://dnr.nebraska.gov/dam-safety/common-problems-dams https://www.ars.usda.gov/



3.3 – 3D mapping of dams

- development of a software that creates tri-dimensional maps of coal waste facilities with a drone
- Focus on crest and slope
- Investigations on required resolution, optimal coverage,

etc.

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- 3.4 Seepage detection
 - development of software to detect leaking and infiltration in the embankment slope and foundation of coal waste facilities using the drone.
 - Computer vision based on thermal images.
 - Investigation of the best weather, season, time of day, distance to the structure, etc.



- 4.1 Hazard detection
 - development of algorithms for hazard detection in coal waste facilities using data collected by the drone
 - AI-based software
 - Comparison of time-lapse data (images, LIDAR point clouds)
 - Erosion and crack
 - Excess of vegetation
 - Animal activity, etc



4.2 – User interface

 development of a user interface to facilitate drone control and hazard detection





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2.0	Configuration assessment of coal refu	ise fac	ilities a	and pr	ogran	nming	of aut	onom	ous ins	pectio	n logio	cs	1	
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4.0	Development of hazard detection soft	ware	and us	e <mark>r int</mark> e	erface									
4.1	Hazard detection						/							
4.2	User Interface application						1		/ /					



Timeline

Project Benefits

- At least 4 students trained in multidisciplinary technology
 - 2 PhD students
 - At least 2 undergraduate students (to be hired)
 - Recruitment focused on underrepresented groups
- Efficient methodology/technology for coal storage facility inspection
 - Reduced time of inspection
 - Increase in inspection frequency
 - Automatic logging and archiving



Project Benefits

- More efficient inspection may help prevent accidents
 - Social impact
 - Environmental impact
- Technology transfer
 - TRL 5 expected at the end of the project (Technology validated in relevant environment)
 - Stakeholders feedback and use



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Thank you!

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