



# FEMA

## Mitigation Project Reunites a Town Divided

**Cambria, WI** - Cambria, population 792, is one of many pleasant spots in the middle of Wisconsin corn country, about 33 miles north of Madison. It is quiet, clean, and well managed by experienced and energetic individuals. And, although no sign announces it, it is recognized by many in and around Cambria as the lima bean capital of the world. However, flooding is a common occurrence in Cambria's history, as it is in many Wisconsin towns.

Settled in 1844 by Dutch immigrants, residents built a dam forming what is now Tarrant Lake. They also built a sawmill and gristmill, both powered from the dam's spillway. Cambria experienced its first destructive flood in 1858. Both mills were destroyed. Years later, a roadway was built over the old dam, which the Dutch settlers had constructed of earth, rock, and brick. Culverts at lake level under the roadway provided outlets for the lake water. The roadway subsequently was paved and designated Wisconsin Route 146.

The roadway and dam are about 70 yards from the end of Cambria's main business district. The road is a major thoroughway for everyone including farmers, school buses, and trucks serving Cambria's three food processors. Any closure of Route 146 requires a five-mile detour around the town.

The 10-acre, man-made Tarrant Lake is fed by two small tributaries and underground springs. Land on either side of Tarrant Lake slopes upward into farmland, contributing runoff to the lake's water levels.

In 1993, the Cambria Dam suffered a major washout. Damage to the old earthen constructed roadway was extensive. Repairs included the installation of two new five-foot culverts under the road and flood gates to control the release of water from the lake to prevent water from overtopping the dam and roadway.

Eleven years later, floodwaters assaulted the Cambria dam again. In late May 2004, heavy rain began soaking the Cambria area and continued for weeks. The heavy rains caused dams elsewhere in the state to burst, forcing people out of their homes. Department of Public Works (DPW) Director Tom Tietz and members of the Cambria Volunteer Fire Department kept close watch on their dam.



Columbia County,  
Wisconsin



### Quick Facts

- Year:  
**2004**
- Sector:  
**Public**
- Cost:  
**\$1,500,000.00 (Actual)**
- Primary Activity/Project:  
**Flood Control**
- Primary Funding:  
**State sources**