

WATER PLANNING AND THE U.S. BUREAU OF RECLAMATION

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Today marks a milestone of sorts for the reorganization of the Bureau of Reclamation. It is also a special moment for me personally because it is the first formal appearance I have made in New Mexico as regional director of the newly expanded Upper Colorado Region of the Bureau of Reclamation.

This past summer we implemented the consolidation of most of New Mexico into the Upper Colorado Region. It has been a summer filled with learning about New Mexico's projects and water issues, meeting water leaders, and brushing up on my Spanish language skills.

Assuming the responsibility for Reclamation's activities in New Mexico is a special privilege for me. I am well aware that this state is one of the true birthplaces of irrigation in North America. Long before the farmers along the Animas and Vermejo Rivers inspired William Smythe in 1890 to carry the standard of irrigation to Nebraska, the early inhabitants used the waters of the Rio Grande to grow their crops. I marvel at the fact that irrigation systems are as ancient as habitation in New Mexico. Many remain in service today, and rehabilitation of those systems with great sensitivity to their historic character and values is just one of our challenges.

Through planning and construction efforts, reclamation has played an integral role in the development of New Mexico's water resources. In the early 1900s, we worked closely with irrigation districts on the Pecos and Rio Grande. Carlsbad Project Reservoirs on the Pecos and Elephant Butte Reservoir on the Rio Grande were important elements of the irrigation projects that were planned, and developed, and are still in productive use today.

The list of Reclamation projects also includes the Tukumcari Project on the Canadian River; the Vermejo Project farther up in the Canadian Basin; the Fort Sumner Project on the Pecos; and the Hammond Project on the San Juan.

Reclamation and Corps of Engineer planners developed the basis for the Flood Control Act of 1948 that provided for flood and sediment control and river maintenance that continues today from Velarde to Elephant Butte and Caballo. In northwest New Mexico, Reclamation planning is also evident as seen at Navajo Reservoir and the Navajo Indian Irrigation Project. The San Juan-Chama Project, constructed in the 1960s and early 1970s, was a result of decades of planning and cooperation between Reclamation and state and local leaders. Also, we have completed construction of Brantley Dam, which is now in the initial filling process. We anticipate dedicating that facility early next May.

I'd like to address some of our current challenges here in the "Land of Enchantment." But first, I should bring you up to speed on where we stand in the reorganization and redirection of the Bureau of Reclamation. The results of that reorganization will affect how we do our upcoming work.

I take a lot of pride in both the thoroughness and speed with which the reorganization has occurred. In many ways, what we accomplished defies the so-called "Law of Bureaucratic Motion." Within the space of one year, we examined the history, current workload, and future needs of the Bureau of Reclamation in harmony with the nation's water development and management needs. We organized to meet those challenges, and actually moved offices and people to put the organization in place to do the job.

The bottom line is that management and most of the policy functions of the bureau are now headquartered in Denver while the commissioner and a small support staff remain in Washington. In addition, we have centralized our high cost technical skills staff in a common talent pool, reducing costs and duplication for each region and field office.

In Denver, we now have Deputy Commissioner Joe Hall who serves as the chief operating officer of Reclamation. In addition, there is an assistant

Clifford I. Barrett

commissioner for resource management, an assistant commissioner for engineering and research, and an assistant commissioner for administration and liaison.

You may be assured that management of all Bureau of Reclamation activities in the field, be it planning, construction, or operation and maintenance, will continue at the local and regional level. Denver will only supply the support as it is needed. Your contact will remain with our field office managers.

With those organizational items behind us, let's look at what all this has done for you. We think we can do a better job, quicker, and at less cost than before. We have a goal to continue to plan for and build authorized projects, and maintain our historic relationships with the water and power communities while looking to expand our relationships with the rest of the public. We will:

- seek to modernize and improve efficiencies of older systems;
- seek to automate more effectively and otherwise improve efficiencies at bureau-operated power plants;
- work in partnership with the water users to manage water resources more effectively;
- work with the states to manage, effectively develop, and conserve ground water sources;
- turn federal systems over to the water and power users to operate and maintain.

We are now putting the new planning organization to the test in New Mexico. Current planning efforts being carried out in our Albuquerque office include the Eastern New Mexico Water Supply study; the Alamogordo Water Supply study (both added to Reclamation's fiscal year 1989 program with the strong support of the New Mexico congressional delegation); and studies where Reclamation is supplying technical assistance to the state. An ongoing study of the salinity control options on the San Juan River is a part of our Colorado River Water Quality Improvement Program.

Early in this talk I referred to the historic development of water in New Mexico and our involvement with those systems. Reclamation is privileged to work on the rehabilitation of the acequias in northern New Mexico under the Velarde Community Ditch Project. This program came about because of the efforts of the New Mexico congressional delegation. Some of these canals are over 300 years old and still doing the job the Spanish settlers built them to do.

So far we have designed and constructed seven diversion dams to replace rock and brush structures

that had to be rebuilt each year. Soon we will proceed with work related to rehabilitating the acequias and in-line structures. During all this, water has continued to be delivered. We are very aware of the historic aspects of the acequias and we are doing our best to preserve their character while improving efficiencies. There are currently nine acequias which involve over 500 landowners.

Our partnership with the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission (ISC) in the middle valley of the Rio Grande has resulted in significant water salvage projects. Today this cooperative agreement continues with special emphasis on improving drainage features in the Bosque Del Apache National Wildlife Refuge and the La Joya State Waterfowl Refuge. These efforts, fully funded by the state, will increase water conservation and improve waterfowl management.

We have another interesting, and unusual, activity going on here. The state of New Mexico has identified the need at Santa Cruz and Costilla Dams for some safety modifications. As you know, those are state facilities. However, Reclamation, under contract to the state, is providing modification designs and handling construction activities. Our experience and expertise has been made available for the state of New Mexico to draw upon and we are more than happy to assist. The design work on this project is coming from our Denver office while construction supervision for Costilla is provided by our office in Alamosa, Colorado, and at Santa Cruz, New Mexico by our field office in Espanola.

Both are interesting jobs. At Santa Cruz, there will be a roller compacted concrete section built on the downstream side of the concrete arch dam to reinforce the arch and to allow the maximum probable flood to overtop safely the dam. Bids will be opened November 10th for that job.

Costilla Dam is now under construction. There we are removing the upper 40 feet of the dam and replacing it with an impermeable material. Also, the spillway will be replaced and the outlet works rehabilitated. I am also pleased to report that we are making progress toward completing the Navajo Indian Irrigation Project in San Juan County.

As you will probably remember, Reclamation is actually acting as the construction agent for the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). Money is contained in the BIA's appropriation rather than Reclamation's. Congress seems to be making a renewed effort to finish the project. In the FY 1989 budget, Congress requested \$11 million, up from the 1988 request of \$3.5 million. When completed, the project will provide significant benefits to the Navajo

Water Planning and The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation

nation. According to information provided by the tribe, the completed project will:

- add \$875 million to the economy;
- more than double employment and trade benefits to the area;
- increase opportunities for private sector investments;
- continue development of a diverse and agriculturally-based self-sustaining economy.

By the end of this year, we will have completed six blocks totaling 60,000 acres. Next February, we expect to start construction of Block 7 with about 5,000 acres coming into production by the end of 1989. The entire project will involve eleven blocks totaling 110,630 acres.

One final project of interest is the Animas-La Plata Project. While the bulk of development activity will take place in Colorado, the positive impacts and water supply will also benefit the Farmington-Bloomfield-Blanco area too.

We went right down to the wire in getting the Indian water rights settlement legislation through Congress two weeks ago. Without it, the Animas-La Plata Project would have been in serious trouble. All of you in the New Mexico water community who assisted in that intense effort are to be congratulated. We still need to get contracts in place with the Indian tribes, along with an escrow agreement with the state of Colorado for its cost-sharing funds, but we have cleared what was probably the most difficult hurdle.

The impact of Reclamation projects is vivid. Cities and towns have reliable water supplies; Indian pueblos and reservations have economic development opportunities through irrigation projects; and irrigation districts have prospered. The 1986 (latest) figures show 205,000 acres of irrigated land produced \$136.8 million worth of crops on Reclamation projects in New Mexico.

Regardless of how we are organized, our commitment to this state is unwavering. Also, we pledge to place emphasis on local input and participation to meet your needs. In concert with that goal, is a pledge to continue to work together to seek ways to manage our projects more effectively.

One way Reclamation is meeting that goal is by fulfilling a congressional mandate to ensure proper water deliveries under the terms of the Reclamation Reform Act or RRA as it is commonly called. This year, agricultural water users were notified through their districts that failure to comply with reporting requirements would result in reassessment of charges for water at the full-cost rate plus interest as well as the shutoff of water in

extreme cases. By enforcing the law, Reclamation is conserving water for authorized users. The latest information I have indicates that compliance with the law is widespread with only minor problems to iron out.

The next major step in meeting RRA objectives is to develop and implement approved water conservation plans prior to the 1989 irrigation season. These plans are mandated by Congress and, quite frankly, the public is demanding significant conservation in lieu of new major water developments. Failure to provide good conservation management over time will only play into the hands of those who question the wisdom and need for water projects.

This past year we worked to help the nation better manage its fiscal resources by recouping funds for the treasury through the liquidation of existing loan portfolios under three separate loan programs. Nationally, we had a target to move \$130 million worth of loans off the bureau's books. We topped that by \$62 million with a final total of \$192 million.

Reclamation is now providing its planning, engineering, design, contracting, and construction expertise to the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Superfund Program. We have six projects in our region. Also, we have two ongoing projects underway to do the same type of work for the Air Force, including one such project in New Mexico at Kirtland Air Force Base. We have recently signed an agreement with the U.S. Geological Survey and the Bureau of Mines to provide significant problem solving talent to many hazardous waste situations.

Similar to the EPA programs for technical assistance, Reclamation is prepared to assist other interior agencies as they deal with surface water, ground water, and other resources associated with federal lands. For instance, we have recently completed a memorandum to provide technical assistance to the National Park Service.

Finally, I'd like to recognize that for both you and me, the reorganization of what was the old southwest region into the Upper Colorado Region has created the opportunity for new personal and professional working relationships. Many of you know me from the work we've done together on San Juan River issues. Others of us have never met but have a long history of relationships with the former region. While we are making and renewing friendships, let me suggest that we continue to build upon the cooperative spirit that has for so long existed between Reclamation and the people of New Mexico.

Clifford I. Barrett

Let me assure you that I have given the highest priority to making the reorganization work. Internally, my staff and I have worked hard to make sure within the employee ranks there are no "them and us" relations between the two old regions. I also pledge my commitment to make sure we give you, our constituents, our very best efforts in planning and managing water resources. My office door at the regional office, and all our doors here in the field, are open to you. I am excited to work with you as we continue in an historic partnership to make the quality of life better for all of New Mexico's citizens.