

# RECLAMATION

*Managing Water in the West*

August 2018  
Dakotas Area Office

## Belle Fourche Reservoir Resource Management Plan

### Reclamation Initiates Resource Management Plan: WE NEED YOUR HELP!

The Bureau of Reclamation's Dakotas Area Office (Reclamation), in cooperation with South Dakota Game Fish and Parks (GFP) is preparing a Resource Management Plan (RMP) for Belle Fourche Reservoir. In addition to the Belle Fourche Reservoir RMP, Reclamation is responsible for management of lands around Angostura Reservoir, Belle Fourche Reservoir, and Shadehill Reservoir.

The RMP will be used by Reclamation and GFP to guide management of lands surrounding Belle Fourche Reservoir. The RMP will provide a blueprint for managing recreation, wildlife habitat, vegetation, roads, cultural resources, and natural resources. The RMP document will include long-term management goals and objectives for Belle Fourche Reservoir and associated lands. Reclamation is directed to accomplish land management with a Federal, state or local managing partner.

We need your help during the planning process to ensure that you, members of the public, have ample opportunity to express your interests, concerns, and ideas, and to review and comment on the RMP as it develops.

Newsletters will be sent to everyone on our mailing list, and will also be distributed around the local area. The purpose of these newsletters is to keep you informed of the RMP progress and to provide opportunities for you to participate.

### Project Background

The Belle Fourche Unit is one of Reclamation's earliest irrigation projects with the first irrigation water delivered to anxious farmers on project lands in 1908. Completion of construction of the Belle Fourche Dam followed three years later in 1911. Individuals came together in the next decade to form the Belle Fourche Irrigation District in 1923.

While the Belle Fourche Project was Federally authorized for construction in 1904, reauthorization as the Belle Fourche Unit of the Pick-Sloan Missouri Basin Program in 1983, under Public Law 98-157, further provided construction money for rehabilitation and betterment of irrigation facilities, recreation, and fish, and wildlife. Water releases from Belle Fourche Reservoir for irrigation range from approximately 50,000 to 120,000 acre feet per year, depending on the irrigating farmer's need for



(Above) The above photograph was captured during construction of Belle Fourche Dam's main Inlet Canal at Station 110 on August 22, 1905.

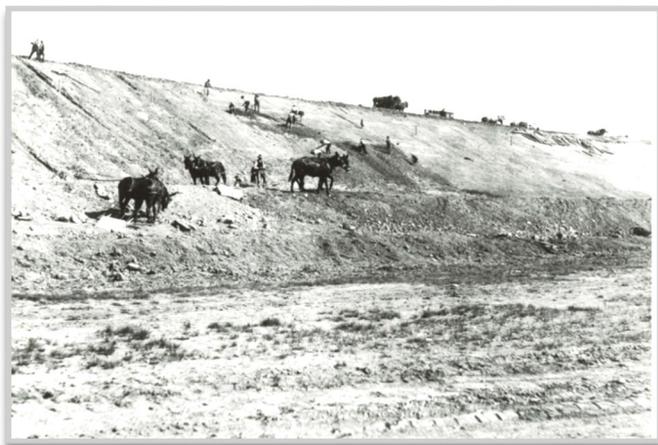


U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Reclamation

water. Reclamation has a contract with the Belle Fourche Irrigation District that is in effect until 2035, allowing them to deliver irrigation water to approximately 57,000 acres.

The main features of the Belle Fourche Unit are the Belle Fourche Dam and Reservoir, Belle Fourche Diversion Dam, Inlet Canal, North Canal, South Canal, laterals, drains, and 57,000 irrigated acres. The Belle Fourche Diversion Dam is located on the Belle Fourche River about 1.5 miles northeast of the city of Belle Fourche, South Dakota. The water diverted from the Belle Fourche River is carried by the Inlet Canal to the Belle Fourche Reservoir.

The resource area that will be included in the RMP will include the Belle Fourche Diversion Dam lands and Belle Fourche Reservoir lands (See map on page 5). **The RMP will not address operation of the dams, irrigation distribution Facilities, or lands located in the Belle Fourche Irrigation District.**



(Above) Shaping the slope of the upstream face of Belle Fourche Dam as a foundation for the pavers, May 15, 1909.

Belle Fourche Dam (known locally as Orman Dam) is an earthen dam constructed across Owl Creek, a stream tributary to the Belle Fourche River. The dam forms the Belle Fourche Reservoir which has a water surface area of 8,040 acres and stores 192,000 acre-feet of water.

There are 6,503 acres of land surrounding Belle Fourche Reservoir. The GFP manages 359 acres on Rocky Point for recreation and 164 acres on Owl Creek below the dam for wildlife purposes. Reclamation manages the remaining 5917 acres around the Reservoir for primitive recreation and wildlife habitat. The Belle Fourche Irrigation



(Above) Rocky Point Recreation Area managed by South Dakota Game Fish and Parks.

District is responsible for 63 acres around the dam and outlet works.

Recreation management of the Reservoir varies drastically from fully developed recreation at Rocky Point Recreation Area to primitive on Reclamation managed lands. Reclamation policy limits recreation development without a managing partner to minimum basic facilities only. Minimum basic facilities provided on Reclamation managed lands around the reservoir include vault toilets, fire rings, gravel roads and parking areas, garbage dumpsters and informational kiosks. Not only does Reclamation lack the authority to develop recreational facilities without a managing partner, annual funding is not sufficient to develop facilities.

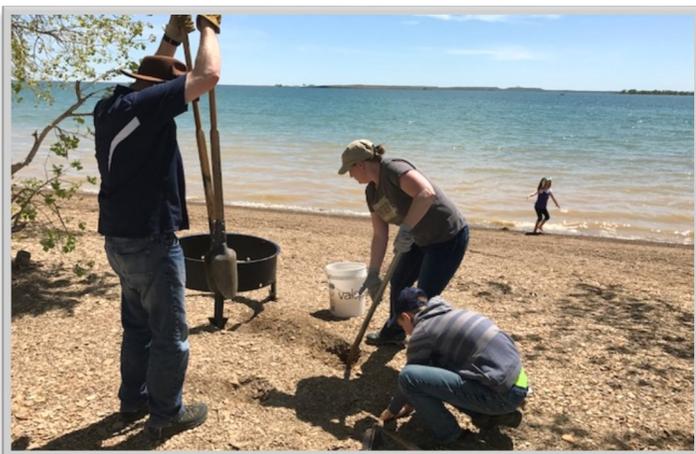


(Above) South Dakota Army National Guard constructing Bird Island View Road.

Reclamation utilizes the South Dakota Army National Guard, the Montana Conservation Corps, local scout troops, and volunteer groups to accomplish improvements. Some of these recent projects include:

- ◆ **New Bird Island View Road and access routes**  
South Dakota Army National Guard
- ◆ **New Middle Point Road loop**  
Reclamation contract, SDARNG assisted with culvert installation
- ◆ **Tequila Beach parking lot**  
Reclamation contract
- ◆ **Gadens Point shoreline stabilization**  
Reclamation contract, SDARNG assisted with rip-rap stockpiling
- ◆ **Owl Creek culvert installation, Inlet Canal parking lot, Warm Water Slough parking lot**  
SDARNG
- ◆ **Warehouse Compound chain link fence install, internal fence removal**  
Montana Conservation Corps
- ◆ **Fire ring install**  
Reclamation, Boy Scouts, and Montana Conservation Corps
- ◆ **Miles of internal fence removal and wildlife friendly fence conversion**  
Reclamation and Montana Conservation Corps

Currently, recreation activities at Belle Fourche Reservoir are free of charge to the public, outside of Rocky Point Recreation Area. Reclamation charges no fees for entrance, camping, or day use activities. There is currently no registration process for visitors to Reclamation managed lands around the Reservoir.



(Above) An Eagle Scout and his family installing fire rings on Gadens Point.



(Above) An aerial view of Belle Fourche Dam and Reservoir.



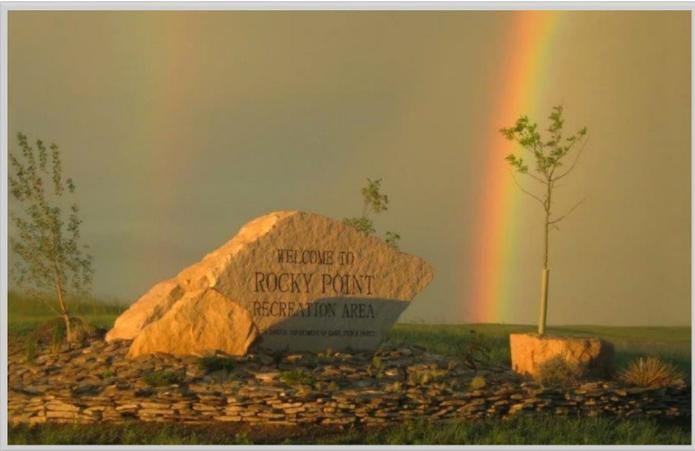
(Above) South Dakota Army National Guard troops constructing Bird Island View Road.



(Above) Rocky Point Recreation Area.



(Above) Montana Conservation Corp boundary fence project.



(Above) Entrance to Rocky Point Recreation Area.

## RMP Purpose

The overall purpose of a Resource Management Plan is to foster proper stewardship of public lands. RMPs enable managers to make land use and resource management decisions that are consistent with overall management objectives and the needs of the public. They assist land managers in minimizing conflicts among users, in following environmental and cultural resource objectives, Federal law, agency policies and guidelines, and in obtaining public support for the management of public resources.

## Public Involvement

Reclamation and GFP has been conducting a recreation user survey since May 1, 2018. The survey will be available to the public through October 1, 2018. Reclamation and GFP has attempted to capture as many users as possible

through personal contacts or by placing a survey on vehicle windshields around the Reservoir. There are user survey drop boxes on informational kiosks located around the Reservoir. Surveys may be deposited in these drop boxes prior to departure.

User surveys have also been placed at the Rocky Point Recreation Area entrance booth. The user survey is also available online thru Reclamation’s website at [www.usbr.gov/gp/dkao](http://www.usbr.gov/gp/dkao).

The information gathered from the surveys is important and will assist in the RMP development and future management of Belle Fourche Reservoir.

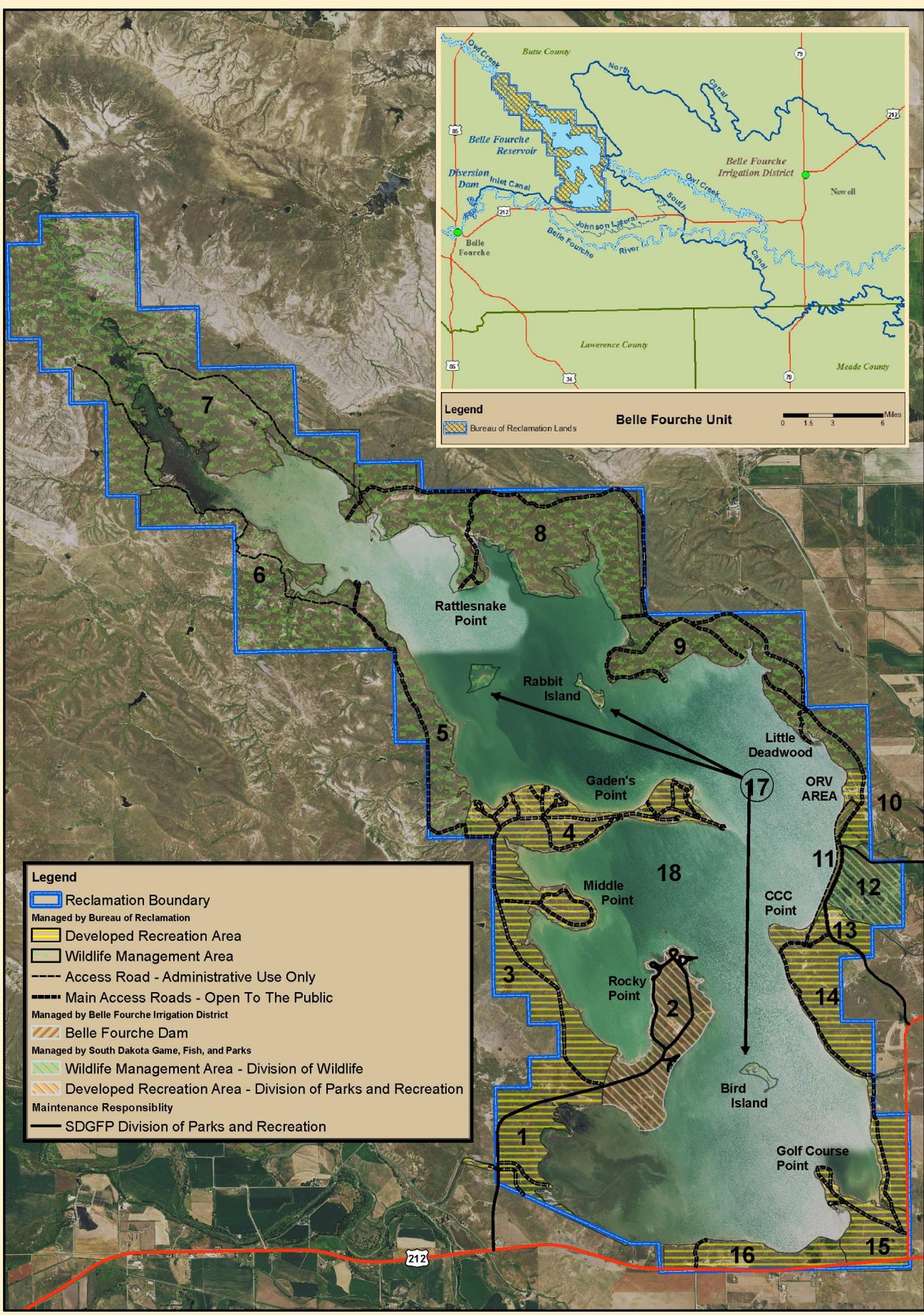
An informal open house meeting is scheduled for August 23, 2018, from 5:00-8:00 pm MDT at the Rocky Point Recreation Area warehouse. Those attending the open house meeting will be able to meet staff, provide comments on future development, ask questions about the RMP and the RMP process. Reclamation will consider any opportunities and ideas brought up by the public providing they fall within Reclamation policies and regulations. Additional open house meetings will be scheduled once management alternatives are developed.

## National Environmental Policy Act

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is a law that directs Federal agencies to inform the public about Federal actions. While the Belle Fourche Reservoir RMP is being developed, Reclamation will prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) which describes the impacts to the human and natural environment of the proposed RMP and any alternatives. The EA and RMP will be separate documents

A draft EA and RMP will be available to the public for a 30-day comment period. If the effects described in the EA are not found to be significant, Reclamation will issue a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) along with the Final RMP. If the effects are found to be significant, Reclamation will then prepare an Environmental Impact Statement.

**Be Sure to Participate by Taking the Belle Fourche Reservoir User Survey**  
[www.usbr.gov/dkao](http://www.usbr.gov/dkao)  **CLICK HERE**



2014 NAIP Aerial Photo

## Belle Fourche Reservoir Land Management

0 0.5 1 2 Miles

This map was prepared from the best available information and is subject to certain inaccuracies. Created by Bureau of Reclamation Dakotas Area Office: August, 2018

## How to Stay Involved

Public involvement is one of the most important aspects of planning during the RMP development process. The public is encouraged to stay involved by providing comments and suggestions at any time during the RMP development process.

How to participate in the public involvement process:

- ◆ Complete the User Survey
- ◆ Attend Open House Meetings
- ◆ Visit the RMP Website to Review New Information
- ◆ Watch and Listen for Media Coverage on Upcoming Events
- ◆ Read Newsletters
- ◆ Provide Comments

### Comments may be submitted to:

Mail: Jay Leasure  
 Bureau of Reclamation  
 515 9th Street, Room 101  
 Rapid City, SD 57701

Phone: (605)519-5504

E-mail: [jleasure@usbr.gov](mailto:jleasure@usbr.gov)



Be Sure to Participate by Taking the Belle Fourche Reservoir User Survey  
[www.usbr.gov/dkao](http://www.usbr.gov/dkao)

## Project Timeline

Recreation User Survey Begins  
 May, 2018

RMP Newsletter Distributed  
 August 15, 2018

**We Are Here.**

Public Scoping Meeting  
 August 23, 2018

Agency Scoping Letters Sent Out  
 September 1, 2018

Public and Agency Scoping Ends  
 September 30, 2018

RMP Team summarize comments and develops management alternatives  
 Winter 2018

Distribution of 2<sup>nd</sup> Newsletter with management alternatives  
 Spring 2019

2<sup>nd</sup> Open House Meeting to delivery management alternatives  
 Spring 2019

Draft RMP/EA Completed and 30 day Public Comment Period Begins  
 September 1, 2019

End of Draft RMP 30-day Public Comment Period  
 October 1, 2019

Final RMP Completed and Distributed to the Public  
 November 1, 2019