Reclamation's
Missouri Basin Region

Yellowtail Dam, Montana
Photo by Reclamation Staff

BUREAU OF
RECLAMATION

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Fresno Dam, Montana
Photo by Cody Kelly

Published & Designed by
Missouri Basin Public Affairs Staff

BRENT C. ESPLIN

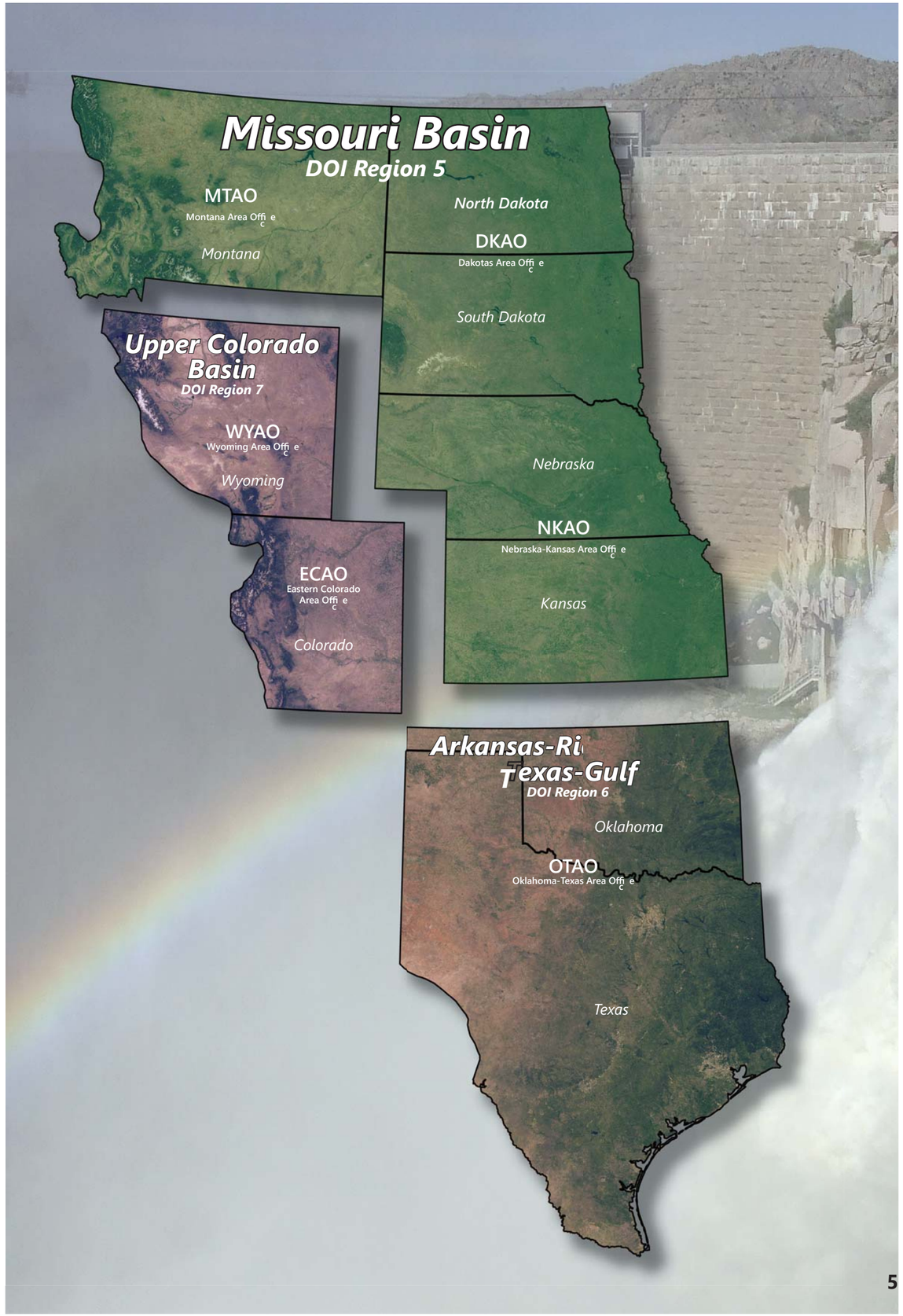
Regional Director, Missouri Basin

Brent C. Esplin is the regional director for the Missouri Basin (Interior Region 5) and Arkansas-Rio Grande-Texas Gulf (Interior Region 6), which collectively are the largest and most ecologically diverse regions in Reclamation.

Esplin began this position June 21, 2020. He provides leadership for the management, development and protection of water and related resources across nine states. This includes 80 Reclamation reservoirs, 20 powerplants and 93 recreational areas that host more than 14 million visitors each year. Reclamation facilities in the region deliver water to rural and urban communities, providing drinking water to more than three million people, in addition to irrigating more than two million acres of agriculture. This complex region which is inclusive of nine western states has an annual appropriated budget of approximately $180 million and a workforce of 650 employees.

Esplin has more than 20 years of service with the Bureau of Reclamation, most recently serving as Upper Colorado Basin Regional Director; prior to that position he served as Deputy Regional Director for the Upper Colorado Basin. He also served as Area Manager for Reclamation's Montana Area Office in Billings, Montana; Deputy Area Manager for the Phoenix Area Office in Arizona; and Deputy Area Manager for the Nebraska-Kansas Area Office in McCook, Nebraska. His years of experience include successfully addressing complex water supply and hydropower production issues; working with endangered species recovery programs; implementing American Indian water rights settlements; overseeing important facility construction, upgrades and safety of dam improvements; and collaborating on key river compact issues across multiple western river systems. Esplin first joined Reclamation in 1997 as a civil engineer in the Montana Area Office.

A native of Smithfield, Utah, Esplin holds a Bachelor of Science degree in civil engineering and a Master of Science degree in civil engineering, both from Utah State University.



Gibson Dam, Montana
Photo by Jeff Ticknor

VALUE TO THE AMERICAN WEST

The Bureau of Reclamation's mission is to manage, develop, and protect water and related resources in an environmentally and economically sound manner in the interest of the American public.

Established in 1902, Reclamation is best known for the dams, powerplants, and canals it constructed in the 17 Western states. These water projects led to homesteading and promoted the economic development of the West.

Reclamation is the largest wholesaler of water in the country, bringing 10 trillion gallons of water to more than 31 million people, and providing 20 percent of Western farmers with irrigation water for 10 million acres of farmland that produce 60 percent of the nation's vegetables and 25 percent of its fruits and nuts.

Additionally, Reclamation is the second largest producer of hydropower in America, providing enough energy to power 3.5 million homes. Reclamation produces 14,000 megawatts and 40 billion killowatt hours annually. Hydropower operations generate $700 million in revenue for the U.S. Treasury.

Reclamation manages 245 recreation sites that average approximately 90 million visits every year. Activities that fall under Reclamations' areas of respsonsbility contribute $63.9 billion to econmic output and support more than 456,000 jobs.

A top priority of Reclamation is to operate and maintain projects in a safe and reliable manner to protect the health and safety of the public and employees. Furthermore, Reclmation ensures their dams do not create unacceptable risk to the public by monitoring, evaluating, and performing risk reduction modifications if needed.

Geographically, the Missouri Basin Region is Reclamation's largest region. The Region encompasses all or parts of nine states including Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, Colorado, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas.

The Region's programs have constantly changed to meet the needs of a changing society. Facilities once created and operated solely for irrigation now need to meet other demands placed on the finite water resource. Managers recognize the need to constantly evaluate more efficient ways of working with others to solve water resource problems.

WATER IN THE WEST

The Bureau of Reclamation began in response to the need for stable water supplies in the semi-arid American West. Water was often not available when needed for crops, livestock, and people. At first, settlers simply diverted water from streams, but in many areas demand outstripped supply as rivers diminished following high spring flows.

As demand for water increased, settlers wanted to store "wasted" runoff from rains and snow for later use to make more water available in drier seasons. The stored runoff would also limit damage from flooding that occurred along rivers and streams where the most successful irrigation was practiced.

It is important to remember that agriculture was the dominant industry in the West. The continued settlement of the West depended upon stable farm economies. Following the example of Native American irrigation and their own experience, the western public often strongly supported large-scale development of water projects.

In 1867 John Wesley Powell began a series of expeditions to further explore the West. He is often considered the father of reclamation because he not only detailed the land, natives, and conditions he encountered but also advocated water development and mapped locations for future dams and irrigation.

Congress passed the Reclamation Act of June 17, 1902. From 1902 to 1907, Reclamation began about 30 projects in Western states with many of them in the Missouri River Basin. Among them was Buffalo Bill's project on the Shoshone River in Wyoming. The Belle Fourche Project in South Dakota, Huntley in Montana, North Platte in Wyoming and Nebraska, and others began in the early years of Reclamation in the Great Plains.

Early Reclamation works began as single-purpose projects that were designed to store and deliver irrigation water. Other benefits such as flood control, municipal water, hydropower, and fish & wildlife habitat were secondary to irrigation or were not planned during the construction of these projects.

Single-purpose projects serving mere thousands to tens of thousands of acres gave way to those that served hundreds of thousands of acres of irrigation along with municipal water, hydropower, and flood control for many communities.

One example of a complex program that was created and has evolved to meet the needs of the west is the Pick-Sloan Missouri Basin Program.

The program was a national response to severe drought and the severe flooding cycles that marked the basin. The development of facilities to tame the Missouri River and its tributaries were divided between the two federal organizations. As the Corps of Engineers developed mainstem reservoirs primarily for flood control and hydroelectric generation, Reclamation was developing features on tributaries as multipurpose projects with and emphasis on irrigation. The Pick-Sloan program gradually became increasingly complex and now encompasses a host of services not originally envisioned such as small (in population served) rural municipal water supply systems.

Similarly, the Great Plains Region organization has repeatedly adapted to meet the changing needs of the American West. Initially Reclamation projects were administered by local offices managing their construction and settlement.

The nine state Great Plains area was served by three Reclamation regions: the Southwest, Lower Missouri, and the Upper Missouri regions. The last two regions were merged in 1985 to form the Missouri Basin Region. This allowed for better planning and administration of projects (especially the Pick-Sloan Missouri Basin Program). In 1988 declining Reclamation budgets and fewer demands for construction activities led to much of the Southwest and the Missouri Basin regions merging to create the Great Plains Region. Further organizational refinements included the creation of area offices (Montana, Wyoming, Oklahoma-Texas, Nebraska-Kansas, Dakotas and Eastern Colorado) to effectively administer Reclamation activities.

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION

DAKOTAS AREA OFFICE

The Dakotas Area Office is responsible for administering Reclamation programs in North Dakota and South Dakota. The Area Office is located in Bismarck, North Dakota, with two field offices in South Dakota. The Area Office manages nine dam and reservoirs, three of which are in North Dakota. Activities include operation and maintenance of Reclamation facilities; contract renewals; water conservation; and oversight of the construction, and operation and maintenance of rural water systems – including those for tribes in the two states.

Reclamation projects in both states provide a water supply to a total irrigated acreage of 97,000 acres producing an average of $16 million worth of crops annually. Municipal, rural and industrial water supply projects will serve over 700,000 people when completed. Over a million visitors participate in recreation activities in Reclamation reservoirs in the states.

PROJECTS

NORTH DAKOTA

Buford-Trenton Dickinson Unit
Fort Clark Unit
Garrison Diversion Unit
Heart Butte Unit
Jamestown Dam & Reservoir

SOUTH DAKOTA

Angostura Division
Belle Fourche
James Diversion
Rapid Valley
Rapid Valley Unit
Shadehill Unit

DAMS

NORTH DAKOTA

Dickinson
Heart Butte
Jamestown

SOUTH DAKOTA

Angostura
Belle Fourche
Deerfield
James Diversion
Pactola
Shadehill

Deerfield Dam, South Dakota
Photo by Todd Potter

Bell Fourche Reservoir, South Dakota
Photo by William Domagall

Reudi Dam, Colorado
Photo by Kara Lamb

Marys Lake Powerplant, Colorado
Photo by Reclamation Staff

EASTERN COLORADO AREA OFFICE

The Eastern Colorado Area Office manages the Colorado-Big Thompson (C-BT), the Fryingpan-Arkansas (Fry-Ark), the Leadville Mine Drainage Tunnel and Treatment Plant which removes heavy metals resulting from mining activity before they can enter into the Arkansas River.

C-BT contains 20 dams and dikes, and 22 tunnels and canals. Its 6 hydroelectric power plants produce 759,000,000 kilowatt hours annually. It provides supplementary water to 30 cities and towns or roughly 925,000 people, and 640,000 irrigated acres.

Fry-Ark contains five large reservoirs, five major dams, and 22 tunnels. It provides supplementary water to 12 Colorado counties, a population around 650,000, and 200,000 irrigated acres.

PROJECTS

Animas-La Plata
Armel Unit
Bostwick Park
Collbran
Colorado-Big Thompson
Grand Valley Unit
Lower Gunnison Basin Unit
McElmo Creek Unit
Meeker Dome Unit
Paradox Valley Unit
Dallas Creek
Dolores
Florida
Fryingpan-Arkansas
Grand Valley
Mancos
Navajo-Gallup
Paonia
Pine River
San Luis Valley
Silt

DAMS

Carter Creek
Carter Lake
Chapman Diversion
Dille Diversion
Dixon Canyon
East Portal Diversion
Flatiron Afterbay
Fryingpan Diversion
Granby
Granite Creek Diversion
Green Mountain
Halfmoon Diversion
Horsetooth
Hunter Creek Diversion
Ivanhoe Diversion
Lily Pad Diversion Inlet
Little Hell Creek Diversion
Marys Lake Dike
Middle Cunningham Creek Diversion
Midway Creek Diversion
Mormon Creek Diversion
Mt Elbert Forebay
No Name Creek Diversion
North Cunningham Creek Diversion
North Fork Diversion
Olympus
Pole Hill Afterbay
Pueblo
Rattlesnake
Ruedi
Satanka Dike
Sawyer Diversion
Shadow Mountain
Soldier Canyon
South Cunningham Creek Diversion
South Fork Diversion
Spring Canyon
Sugar Loaf
Twin Lakes
Willow Creek Co

POWERPLANTS

Smith Fork
Uncompahgre
Big Thompson
Blue Mesa
Crystal
Estes
Flatiron
Green Mountain
Lower Molina
Marys Lake
McPhee
Morrow Point
Mount Elbert
Pole Hill
Towaoc
Upper Molina

MONTANA AREA OFFICE

Some of Reclamation's earliest projects were built in Montana. Work began on the Lower Yellowstone Project in 1905 just three years after the agency was created.

Today there are 13 projects east of the Continental Divide - the portion of the state managed by the Missouri Basin Region. There are 13 dams and reservoirs, 9 diversion dams, 10 pumping plants and 2 power plants which provide a variety of benefits and meet multiple needs, including recreation.

The Montana Area Office (MTAO) in Billings manages Reclamation's projects and programs in this part of the state and spends $7.5 million annually for operation and maintenance. Most of the Montana development occurred under the Pick-Sloan Missouri Basin Program, including the large Yellowtail and Canyon Ferry units. Both provide considerable storage for irrigation and power generation and are popular recreation areas. Yellowtail and Canyon Ferry power plants produce about 43 percent of the Missouri Basin Region's annual power generation, resulting in about $15 million in revenue each year. The Montana projects provide water to 352,915 acres of agricultural land. Principal crops are sugar beets, hay, corn, wheat and barley. More than 1 million visitor days are spent at Reclamation facilities in Montana each year.

PROJECTS

Bitter Root
Buffalo Rapids
Canyon Ferry Unit
Crow Creek Pump Unit
East Bench Unit
Frenchtown
Helena Valley Unit
Hungry Horse
Huntley Intake
Lower Marias Unit
Milk River
Missoula Valley
Savage Unit
Sun River

DAMS

Anita
Barretts Diversion
Canyon Ferry
Clark Canyon
Dodson Diversion
Fort Shaw Diversion Dam
Fresno
Gibson
Helena Valley
Hungry Horse
Lake Sherburne
Lower Yellowstone
Nelson
Paradise Diversion
Pishkun Dikes
St. Mary Diversion
Sun River Diversion
Swift Current Dike
Tiber
Vandalia Diversion
Willow Creek
Yellowstone Diversion
Yellowtail Afterbay
Yellowtail

POWERPLANTS

Canyon Ferry
Hungry Horse
Yellowtail

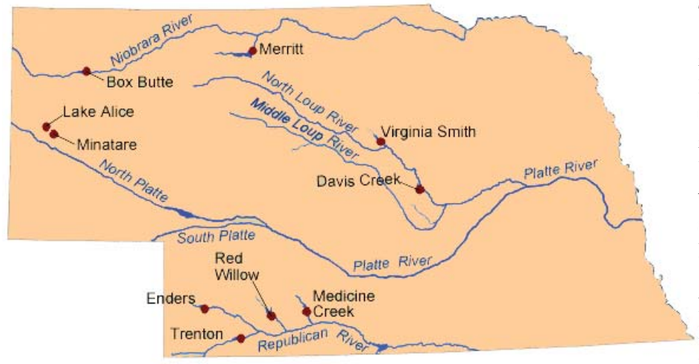
Glacier National Park, Montana
Photo by Jim Mogen

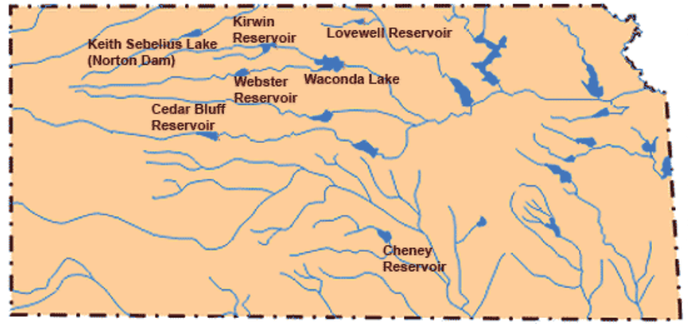
Yellowtail Dam Spillway, Montana
Photo by Jeff Ticknor

Box Butte Dam, Nebraska
Photo by Ken Tiffany

Webster Dam, Kansas
Photo by Samantha Bartz

NEBRASKA-KANSAS AREA OFFICE





The Nebraska-Kansas Area Office (NKAO) is in McCook, Nebraska with a field office in Grand Island, Nebraska. NKAO manages Reclamation projects in Nebraska, Kansas, and Colorado. The management area for NKAO includes all of Nebraska, except the North Platte Project Area, the northern portion of Kansas within the drainage basin of the Missouri River, and a portion of northeast Colorado that encompasses Bonny Reservoir.

NKAO projects provide water for approximately 264,000 acres of farmland as well as flood control; municipal and industrial water; recreation, and fish and wildlife benefits. The reservoirs provide approximately 56,000 acres of water surface at normal pool and 75,000 acres of adjacent land for public use. The reservoir areas are managed by several Federal, State, and local entities for fish and wildlife, and recreational purposes.

Reclamation's work in Nebraska began soon after the agency was created in 1902. Facilities in Nebraska provide water to over 250,000 acres of farmland which provide about $170 million worth of crops each year.

Located in the country's heartland, Kansas was settled during the late 1880's primarily by farmers. Today, about 95 percent of the state is devoted to agricultural production. Dryland farming was marginally successful, but farmers were soon digging wells and banding together to sink deep wells for irrigation. The Bureau of Reclamation's first involvement in Kansas came in the mid-1940's as projects were started to provide storage for irrigation and to protect the land from devastating floods.

PROJECTS

NEBRASKA

Ainsworth Unit
Frenchman-Cambridge Division
Mirage Flats
North Loup Division

KANSAS

Almena Unit
Cedar Bluff Unit
Glen Elder Unit
Kirwin Unit
Wichita Project

DAMS

NEBRASKA

Bartley Diversion
Box Butte
Cambridge Diversion
Culbertson Diversion
Davis Creek
Dry Spotted Tail Diversion
Dunlap Diversion
Enders
Kent Diversion
Lake Alice No 1
Lake Alice No 1 and 1 Half
Lake Alice No 2
Medicine Creek
Merritt
Minatare
Red Willow Creek Diversion
Red Willow Dam
Superior Courtland Diversion
Trenton
Tub Springs Creek Diversion
Virginia Smith

KANSAS

Almena Diversion
Cedar Bluff
Cheney
Glen Elder
Kirwin
Lovewell
Norton
Webster
Woodston Diversion

COLORADO

Bonny

OKLAHOMA-TEXAS AREA OFFICE

The Oklahoma-Texas Area Office is responsible for oversight of 11 Reclamation dams located in southern Kansas, all of Oklahoma, and all of Texas, except the southwest portion located west of the Pecos River. All the dams and facilities are operated and maintained under contracts by water districts, river authorities, or cities.

The primary purpose of most Reclamation reservoirs in Oklahoma is to provide municipal and industrial water supply. The only exception is the W.C. Austin Project whose primary purpose is agricultural irrigation. This Project provides irrigation water to over 40,000 acres of farmland.

As with the Oklahoma projects, the primary purpose of the three Reclamation reservoirs in Texas is to provide municipal and industrial water supply.

PROJECTS

OKLAHOMA

Arbuckle
McGee Creek
Mountain Park
Norman
W.C. Austin
Washita Basin

TEXAS

Balmorhea
Canadian River
Lower Rio Grande Rehabilitation
Nueces River
San Angelo

DAMS

OKLAHOMA

Altus
Arbuckle
Bretch Diversion
Fort Cobb
Foss
McGee Creek
Mountain Park
Norman

TEXAS

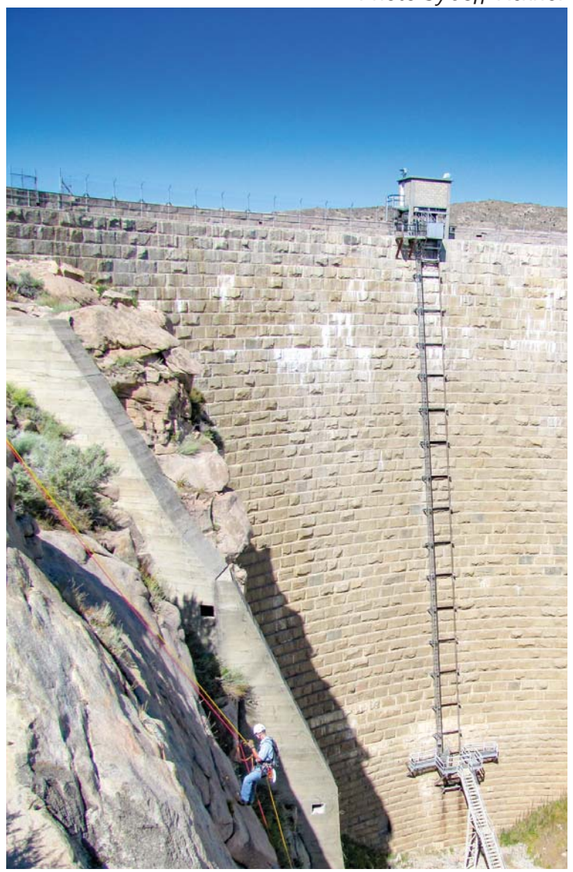
Choke Canyon
Sanford
Twin Buttes

Choke Canyon Dam, Texas
Photo by Thomas Michalewicz

Altus Dam, Oklahoma
Photo by Adam Milligan

Shoshone Powerplant, Wyoming
Photo by Joe Rohde

Pathfinder Dam, Wyoming
Photo by Jeff Ticknor



Buffalo Bill Dam, Wyoming
Photo by Laura Hertz

WYOMING AREA OFFICE

Reclamation has been involved with the conservation and development of Wyoming's water resources for more than 100 years. The Wyoming Area Office service area includes the states of Wyoming east of the Continental Divide and extends into western Nebraska.

The Wyoming Area Office in Mills, Wyoming, manages multipurpose projects including 20 reservoirs, 3,800 miles of canals and laterals, and 11 operating hydroelectric power plants. The collective storage capacity is more than 4.5 million acre-feet and the combined installed power capacity is over 280 megawatts.

Approximately 2.8 million acre-feet of water is released annually. Water is supplied to 60 irrigation entities for irrigation of 680,000 acres of land and to 20 cities, municipalities, and companies for municipal and industrial purposes. An average of 800 gigawatt-hours of hydroelectric power generation is produced annually and supplies the needs of 73,000 households. The Wyoming Area Office manages over 500,000 acres of land for beneficial uses. Other benefits include flood control, fish and wildlife enhancement, and recreation.

PROJECTS

Boysen Unit
Eden
Hanover-Bluff Unit
Kendrick
Keyhole Unit
Kortes Unit
Lyman
Owl Creek Unit
Riverton Unit
Seedskadee

DAMS

Alcova
Anchor
Big Sandy
Boysen
Buffalo Bill
Bull Lake
Corbett Diversion
Deaver
Eden
Fontenelle
Glendo
Grassy Lake
Gray Reef
Guernsey
Horse Creek Diversion
Jackson Lake
Keyhole
Kortes
Meeks Cabin
Pathfinder
Pathfinder Dike
Pilot Butte
Ralston
Seminoe
Whalen Diversion
Willwood Diversion
Wind River Diversion

POWERPLANTS

Alcova
Boysen
Buffalo Bill
Fontenelle
Fremont Canyon
Glendo
Guernsey
Heart Mountain
Kortes
Pilot Butte
Seminoe
Shoshone
Spirit Mountain

Big Horn River, Montana
Photo by Jeff Ticknor

Mountain Park Dam, Oklahoma
Photo by Reclamation Staff

Guernsey Powerplant, Wyoming
Photo by Sam Braverman

PROJECTS

COLORADO
Animas-La Plata
Armel
Bostwick Park
Collbran
Colorado-Big Thompson
Grand Valley
Lower Gunnison Basin
McElmo Creek
Meeker Dome
Paradox Valley
Dallas Creek
Dolores
Florida
Fruitgrowers
Fryingpan-Arkansas
Grand Valley
Mancos
Navajo-Gallup
Paonia
Pine River
San Luis Valley
Silt
Smith Fork
Uncompahgre

KANSAS
Almena
Cedar Bluff
Glen Elder
Kirwin
Wichita
Montana
Bitter Root
Buffalo Rapids
Canyon Ferry
Crow Creek Pump
East Bench
Frenchtown
Helena Valley
Hungry Horse
Huntley
Intake
Lower Marias
Milk Rive
Missoula Valley
Savage
Sun River

NEBRASKA
Ainsworth
Frenchman-Cambridge Division
Mirage Flats
North Loup Division

NORTH DAKOTA
Buford -Trenton
Dickinson
Fort Clark
Garrison Diversion
Heart Butte
Jamestown
Oklahoma
Arbuckle
McGee Creek
Mountain Park
Norman
W.C. Austin
Washita Basin

SOUTH DAKOTA
Angostura Division
Belle Fourche
James Diversion
Rapid Valley
Rapid Valley
Shadehill

TEXAS
Balmorhea
Canadian River
Lower Rio Grande Rehabilitation
Nueces River
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McPhee
Morrow Point
Mount Elbert
Pole Hill
Towaoc
Upper Molina

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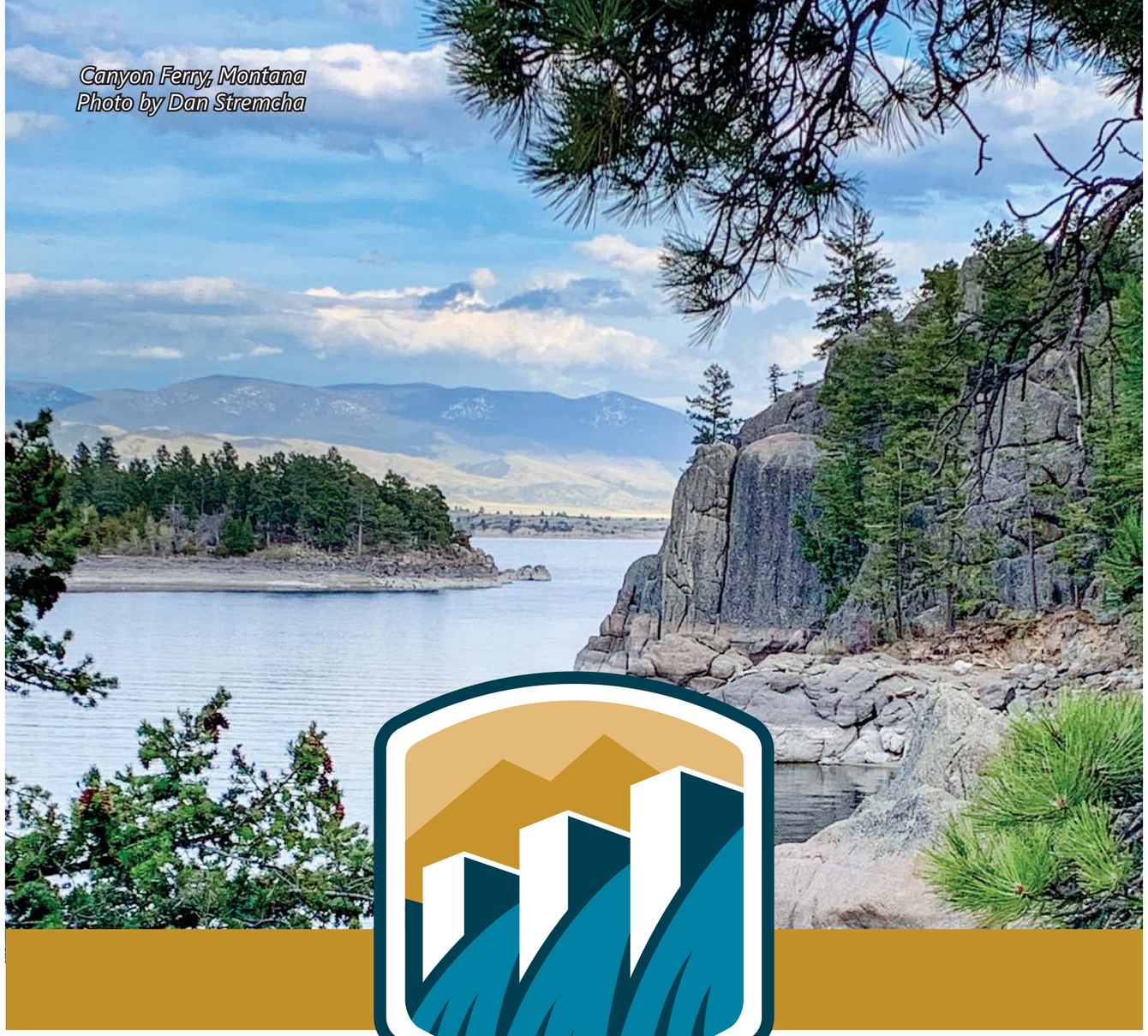

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