

Overview

Pick-Sloan Missouri Basin Program

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PREFATORY NOTE

Established in 1902, the Bureau of Reclamation is one of the major Federal water development agencies. Historically Reclamation developed water projects to "reclaim" arid Western lands for irrigated farming. The concept of "homemaking" was integral to Reclamation's early projects, i.e., homes would be made for settlers on new, irrigated farms. Over the years Reclamation's responsibilities expanded to multiple uses including water development for municipal and industrial uses, generation of hydroelectric power, flood control, and recreation.

Reclamation built about 180 projects and is currently completing the last authorized major construction on those projects. The bureau is now concentrating on management of its existing water development projects.

In the summer of 1993 Reclamation's history program began a multi-year research project. The intention is to develop a basic narrative history of each Reclamation project. Each narrative will outline the historic/prehistoric setting, the reasons for authorization, basic construction history, the aftermath of project development, and a rudimentary bibliography. These brief narrative overviews are not intended to be definitive or deeply interpretive. Each narrative is expected to be further edited for inclusion in a publication, about 2002, on the history of Reclamation projects.

In the meantime, we plan to distribute these narrative essays both to make the basic information available, and to encourage independent research in Reclamation's history.

This essay is in second draft. It is not Reclamation's final product. It is distributed in the hope it will make basic information available and stimulate further interest in Reclamation's history. We encourage the reader to do supplemental research and arrive at their own interpretive conclusions. The final edited version of this narrative likely will vary widely from this draft.

If you would like additional information about Reclamation's history program or about other narratives available, please contact:

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The Pick Sloan Missouri Basin Program Overview

The Pick-Sloan Missouri Basin Program (PSMBP)¹ is a cooperative project of the Bureau of Reclamation and the Army Corps of Engineers. The PSMBP, intended as a compromise between the two agencies, resembles a marriage of convenience rather than a true effort to reconcile the two programs. Originally, each bureau presented an independent Plan to Congress outlining its intentions in regards to the resources of the Missouri River. In 1944, Major General Lewis A. Pick outlined the Corps' report to the House. William G. Sloan presented Reclamation's report to the Senate. In an effort to avoid favoritism and promote coordination between Federal agencies, Congress ordered a compromise of the two Plans. The outcome of Congress' directive less resembles a compromise, than a melding of the two proposals resulting in each bureau getting what it originally wanted.²

Soon after his inauguration in 1933, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt pushed his New Deal program. These programs created numerous public works projects and agencies to employ Americans during the Great Depression (1929-1940). New Deal programs encouraged government-funded construction activities, including dams and related facilities. Construction of several Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) and the Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) public works projects, including Grand Coulee Dam in Washington, Parker Dam on the Colorado River between Arizona and California, and Fort Peck Dam in Montana. Roosevelt also supported

1. Originally called the Missouri River Basin Project, the project name was changed to the Pick-Sloan Missouri Basin Program in 1970, "in honor of two great men who contributed so much to the development of the water resources of the nation." For the sake of consistency, the project will be referred by its current name, Pick-Sloan Missouri Basin Program (PSMBP), throughout this essay.

2. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Missouri River Division, *Big Dam Era: A Legislative and Institutional History of the Pick-Sloan Missouri Basin Program*, by John R. Ferrell, (Omaha, Nebraska: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Missouri River Division, 1993), 179; William E. Warne, *The Bureau of Reclamation*, (Praeger Publishers, Inc., 1973; reprint, Boulder: Westview Press, 1985), 162.

existing construction programs such as Hoover Dam on the Colorado River.

Roosevelt created several new government agencies while strengthening existing ones, to create jobs for struggling Americans. The Public Works Administration (PWA) oversaw construction activities around the nation, the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) promoted additional development of underused lands in the Tennessee Valley, and the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), established in 1937, marketed the federal power produced by Reclamation and Corps projects along the Columbia River, like Bonneville and Grand Coulee Dams.

The success of TVA in the south and BPA on the Columbia River prompted President Roosevelt to recommend additional comprehensive river basin developments throughout the United States. The Missouri River Basin, as yet relatively undeveloped, offered an ideal opportunity for Roosevelt's ideas. The problem became who would oversee the development project. Both the Corps and Reclamation developed plans for large scale development of the Missouri River basin, including flood control, irrigation, and power generation.

The Missouri River originates in the high mountains of the Continental Divide on the north slopes of Yellowstone and Glacier national parks in western Montana. It flows for nearly 2,500 miles, first north then east, then southeast before joining the Mississippi River near St. Louis. Varying in length from 100 to 1,000 miles, thirty tributaries feed the river along its 2,500 mile course. The River's main tributaries are the Bighorn, Milk, Yellowstone, Little Missouri, Cheyenne, James, Platte, Kansas, Grand, Osage, and Gasconade rivers. The River flows through all of Nebraska and parts of six additional states (Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota) while its tributaries drain another three (Colorado, Minnesota, and

Wyoming). Together with a small portion of Canada these ten states form the Missouri River Basin.

The largest single river basin in the United States, the Missouri River Basin covers 528,000 square miles of drainage area, a land area equal to one-sixth of the continental United States. The smaller sub-basin areas of the tributaries range in size from 2,000 to 90,000 square miles. The Basin can further be divided, roughly along the one-hundredth meridian which separates the humid Midwest and the arid West, into two smaller basins, the upper basin (Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota) and the lower basin (Minnesota, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, and Missouri).³

Comprehensive study of the Missouri River basin began in 1927, following a series of damaging floods. Congress directed the Corps to conduct an extensive hydrological survey of the Missouri River. After four years of extensive research, the Corps published the 308 Report in 1933; a publication that subsequently became an unrivaled technical source book. The Report concluded, among other things, that Fort Peck, Montana, provided the best site for a reservoir on the river. The Roosevelt Administration capitalized on this recommendation and began construction on Fort Peck Dam under the provisions of the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933 (NIRA), signaling the start of large-scale construction activities on the main stem of the river by the Corps. Congress later formally authorized the project in 1935. Reclamation explored projects in the basin during many of its early investigations, however the agency did not formulate a comprehensive plan for development and present it to Congress for consideration.

3. Alfred R. Golze, *Reclamation in the United States* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1952), 200-1; John E. Thorson, *River of Promise, River of Peril: The Politics of Managing the Missouri River*, (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1994), 8, 14, 18.

In 1936, Congress addressed a bill authorizing the creation of a Missouri Valley Authority (MVA). Originally MVA, an organization similar to the existing Tennessee Valley Authority, was planned to coordinate development of the river basin. However, the governors of the ten states and others were violently opposed to the MVA idea. Opponents feared that giving control to a regional entity would result in additional conflict among the agencies and states within the river basin. FDR actually envisioned less conflict if the region was controlled by a single agency. At the same time none of the states or Federal agencies involved wanted to relinquish control of the resources within the basin. A 1937 proposal for a Central Valley Authority (CVA) in the Central Valley of California met similar opposition and subsequently failed when presented to Congress. The MVA bill did not pass either, and the contest between the Corps and Reclamation for development of the Missouri River quietly continued. Neither one gained control of the river basin and both bureaus continued to generate their own proposals for development.

The U.S. entrance into World War II in 1941, as well as a partial recovery from the Depression, turned national attention away from public works and river basin development. Then in 1943, a severe flood along the Missouri River renewed interest in development of the river valley. At the same time, the Missouri River Basin States, and to a certain extent the nation as a whole, began to address the issue of a return to a peacetime economy; though the war was not yet over, an eventual victory seemed fairly certain. Taking a proactive stance, the states attempted to initiate several publicly funded construction projects to put returning soldiers to work. In addition, many of their proposed construction activities took the form of dams and irrigation works, which also provided homesteads and farming opportunities for returning

veterans.⁴

On May 13, 1943, following the floods on the Missouri River, the House Flood Control Committee ordered the Corps to study flood-control needs in the basin and prepare a plan of action. The task of preparing a report to Congress fell upon Colonel Lewis A. Pick, the Missouri Basin division engineer in Omaha, Nebraska. Even though he had minimal experience in flood-control construction, Colonel Pick wasted little time preparing his report, largely based on the 308 report. Roughly ninety days later, in August of 1943, he submitted a ten-page report, which became known as the Pick Plan, to the Chief of Engineers in Washington, D.C.

The Pick Plan called for construction, by the Corps, of three groups of projects. The first portion of the project Plan called for construction of 1,500 miles of protective levees from Sioux City to the Mississippi, to help alleviate future flooding. The second portion of the project Plan included construction of eighteen tributary dams. Congress previously authorized eleven of the eighteen tributary dams. Five of the seven proposed new tributary dams lay on the headwaters of the Republican River in the lower basin. The remaining two new tributary dams were high on the Yellowstone and Bighorn rivers in Montana and Wyoming, respectively. The third and last portion of the project Plan outlined a series of five huge multipurpose dams on the main stem of the Missouri River above Sioux City, Iowa. All inclusively the Pick Plan proposed construction of 1,500 miles of levees and twenty-three dams.

Though Pick's Plan addressed many of the problems along the river as well as the concerns of the lower basin states, the overall plan remained somewhat vague. Issues notably missing from the Plan included exact flowage estimates, reservoir specifications, and procedures for distribution of power and irrigation water. Pick also left out a justification of project costs in

4. Corps, 3.

relation to the anticipated benefits, and failed to answer the overriding question of whether there would be enough water available for all intended purposes. Largely relying on his own public-relations experience, Pick formulated an extensive set of proposals and presented them in such a way that the ordinary citizen could easily comprehend the overall plan, which also served to facilitate Congressional review. His Plan asserted the Corps dominance in the river basin and directly challenged the rival Bureau of Reclamation.

In February of 1944, seven months before the Army submitted the Pick Plan to Congress, Colonel Pick, without authorization, began promoting his plan throughout the basin. Because his proposal received nationwide attention prior to executive review, Pick upset President Roosevelt. On February 6, 1944, Roosevelt ordered the Director of the Budget, currently reviewing the Plan, to return it to the Secretary of War for revision; pointing out, among other things, that the Plan did not fit current presidential objectives and it conflicted with existing Reclamation plans in the upper basin. Roosevelt also criticized the Plan for failing to maximize power development. During the Depression and World War II, the Federal government had emerged as a major producer of electricity, especially hydropower, and FDR wanted to ensure that this trend continued following the conclusion of the War. The House Flood Control Committee, without awaiting further executive action, began hearings on the Army Plan. Not surprisingly, governors of the upper basin states attending the meeting echoed the President's objections, seeing the Plan as a threat to their own desire for irrigation development.

The hearings on the Pick Plan pitted the upper and lower basin States against one another, much like what occurred among the upper and lower Colorado River Basin states during the 1920s. The lower Missouri Basin states believed in the necessity of additional flood control

along the river while the upper basin States advocated construction of irrigation works to further develop the region. The two factions created a stalemate because neither side had enough Congressional power and influence to pass a bill addressing its needs. At a somewhat opportune moment the Bureau of Reclamation stepped into the fray with its own comprehensive plan for development of the basin.

Intending to formulate an all-inclusive development plan, Reclamation had conducted a five-year study of the region's water needs. Presentation of the Corps Pick Plan to Congress caught Reclamation somewhat off-guard and prompted a speedy completion of the "Sloan" Plan. Responsibility for completion of the plan fell to William Glenn Sloan, then assistant regional director of the Upper Missouri Region in Billings, Montana, who had already done considerable work on the project.

Sloan submitted his 211-page Missouri Basin Report, which soon became known as the Sloan Plan, to Congress on May 4, 1944. Much more detailed than the Pick Plan, the Sloan Plan proposed ninety projects emphasizing irrigation and power development rather than flood control and navigation. By this time the House of Representatives had approved the Pick Plan. Sloan's Plan called for roughly the same amount of total reservoir capacity as the Pick Plan, however Sloan spread the storage out over a series of smaller dams located in the headwaters and on tributaries as opposed to downstream and on the main stem. Sloan eliminated three of the large Pick projects on the Missouri and modified three other Army structures including newly constructed Fort Peck Dam, changing the original purpose of the structure from flood control and navigation by giving priority to irrigation and power. Two main-stem dams remained and Sloan added another to permit construction of massive diversion systems to irrigate the areas of the

Dakotas hardest hit by drought. Sloan did not completely overlook the flood-control and navigation provisions in the Pick Plan; he incorporated into his Plan the massive navigation channel proposed in part one of the Pick Plan and added water for municipal and domestic supply. Similar to the Pick Plan, the Sloan Plan made no attempt to assure adequate water supplies for all project purposes, though it did acknowledge that shortages might eliminate future navigation. Sloan, however, did provide economic justification for his Plan in the form of federal sales of irrigation water and hydroelectric power which he theorized would more than cover all project costs.

The Sloan Plan exacerbated an already hostile situation between the upper and lower basin states. In somewhat logical fashion the upper basin states wholly supported Reclamation and the Sloan Plan while the lower basin states favored the Pick Plan. The impasse between the two sides remained. However, the upper basin States could now champion the Sloan Plan instead of just challenging the Pick Plan. The battle lines still very much in evidence, the *St. Louis Dispatch* offered another alternative, establish a unified water development plan under the direction of a Missouri Valley Authority.

Though plans for a MVA failed when first presented to Congress in the 1930s, a federal mandate for coordinated development of the region seemed like an ideal solution to the stalemate between the Corps and Reclamation. The news of renewed interest in a MVA caused both the Corps and Reclamation concern. Neither bureau liked the idea of turning control of the river basin over to a different federal entity. Realizing that the continuing feud had to end and faced with growing public, Congressional, and Presidential support for the MVA, the Corps and Reclamation scheduled a conference in Omaha, Nebraska, to draft a “joint engineering report.”

The result of the two-day Omaha Conference was a one-page agreement created on October 17, 1944, which merged the two plans. Representatives of the Corps and Reclamation combined over 1,400 pages of technical data and specified an exact number of projects and determined their precise jurisdiction. With a few minor exceptions, each group of engineers merely accepted the other's proposed projects. Reclamation accepted the five new main stem dams proposed by the Corps (Garrison Dam in North Dakota, and Oahe, Big Bend, Fort Randall, and Gavins Point dams in South Dakota) while the Corps agreed to Reclamation's twenty-seven dams in the Yellowstone basin as opposed to the two it proposed. Everyone agreed on the improvement and incorporation of Fort Peck Dam. The two bureaus exchanged sites on the Niobrara, Platte, and Kansas rivers. Overall, the Corps retained jurisdiction over its main-stem dams, the key structures of the project, and the tributary projects primarily designed for flood control and navigation. The development of hydropower, irrigation, and other benefits fell to both agencies at their respective sites. Of the 113 projects proposed in the original two plans, 107 made it into the new Pick-Sloan Plan. When fully developed the comprehensive plan, officially labeled the Missouri River Basin Development Program, aimed to eliminate all flooding of any consequence on the Missouri and its tributaries at the same time providing irrigation water to over five-million acres in the upper basin. Once Reclamation and the Corps completed the joint plan, the two newly allied agencies wasted little time presenting it to Congress, which received the new plan favorably.

Not everyone reacted positively to the joint Pick-Sloan Plan. James S. Patton, president of the National Farmers Union described the merger as "a shameless, loveless shotgun

wedding.”⁵ The Plan made no attempt to justify or consolidate costs, specify project dimensions, or remove project overlap. Neither agency even tried to determine if enough water existed to provide for both irrigation and navigation. The new plan notably lacked were any details concerning the development and distribution of hydroelectric power and the problems of administrative coordination. Despite its opponents, many of whom still supported a MVA, the Pick-Sloan Plan passed through Congress with relative ease. The MVA supporters, while vocal in their dislike of the compromise plan, had neither an alternative proposal which might have delayed passage of the Pick-Sloan Plan nor the political support necessary to block the legislation.

President Roosevelt maintained his faith in the necessity of a Missouri Valley Authority, even as he signed the Flood Control Act of December 22, 1944, approving the Pick-Sloan Plan. He stated “my approval of this bill is given with the distinct understanding that it is not to be interpreted as jeopardizing in any way the creation of a Missouri Valley Authority, the establishment of which should receive the early consideration of the next Congress.”⁶

After passage of the bill authorizing the Pick-Sloan Plan the controversy surrounding the project increased. The new opposition to Pick-Sloan, for the most part also pro-MVA, formulated more effective criticism of the project, to little avail; their efforts solidified too late to be politically influential. Undaunted, in 1945, opponents made another gallant, though ineffective, effort to place the program under centralized control.

In 1945, in what became a last ditch effort on the part of MVA supporters, Senator James

5. Quoted in Michael L. Lawson, *Dammed Indians: The Pick-Sloan Plan and the Missouri River Sioux, 1944-1980*, (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982), 19.

6. Quoted in Warne, 164.

Murray and Congressman John J. Cochran of Missouri introduced new MVA bills to Congress. The Cochran bill never made it out of committee. At the same time, Harry S. Truman inadvertently killed the Murray bill, though he supported the idea of a MVA during the 1944 presidential election. Influenced by Senator Josiah W. Bailey of Louisiana, an avid MVA critic, Truman agreed to a resolution requiring the Murray bill to be dispatched to three separate committees for successive review—Commerce, Irrigation and Reclamation, and Agriculture and Forestry—a move that effectively destroyed the measure. The Commerce Committee and the Irrigation and Reclamation Committee issued adverse reports on the bill and the Agriculture and Forestry Committee stalled on its report until January of 1946. Murray, completely discouraged, did not press for further consideration of the bill and it died without a floor debate. Though the bill itself faded into obscurity, the issue remained for another ten years as Murray and others continued unsuccessfully to introduce bills for Congressional consideration.

The final blow for MVA occurred in April of 1945 with the death of President Roosevelt. Though Truman endorsed the program as part of his new Fair Deal policy, the measure never achieved the necessary support for its passage. Before its inadvertent demise, the Murray bill was probably the best chance for passage of a MVA.

Slowly federal engineers began to heed various criticisms of their Pick-Sloan Plan. In April of 1945, sensitive to commentary that their plan lacked an integrated and dynamic view of the entire basin, the Washington-based Federal Inter-Agency River Basin Committee established the Missouri Basin Inter-Agency Committee (MBIAC). The Federal Inter-Agency Committee originally evolved out of a need for structure in water resources development planning in general. Specifically procedures needed to be established for the estimation of benefits and costs

for economic feasibility and to properly allocate costs among functions of multipurpose projects, an issue for various Federal agencies including Reclamation and the Corps.

A voluntary body, the MBIAC provided a forum in which the field representatives of the participating federal agencies could effectively exchange information and coordinate their activities throughout the basin. Representatives from the Corps, Reclamation, Department of Agriculture, Federal Power Commission, Federal Security Agency, the Bureau of Indian Affairs and other Interior agencies, and governors of four of the ten states comprised the original membership of the Committee; the Committee later expanded to include the governors of all ten of the basin states. The Committee functioned through numerous subcommittees, or *ad hoc* committees, to study specific problems.

The MBIAC presented itself as a MVA type organization, however it carried little actual weight when it came to decision making about the basin. Soon the Corps representatives took control of the organization rendering it ineffective as far as its original purpose went. Overall the Committee, and its successors, made little difference in development of the basin or implementation of the Pick-Sloan Plan. Eventually, general interest in the body waned.

In 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower replaced the Federal Inter-Agency River Basin Committee with the Federal Inter-Agency Committee on Water Resources. The new Committee on Water Resources issued a revised charter for the Missouri Basin Inter-Agency Committee, though the actual purpose of the organization remained the same. In the mid-1960s Congress created the Water Resources Council to succeed the Federal Inter-Agency Committee on Water Resources, though this change did not impact the MBIAC.

In 1972, a Presidential Executive Order created the Missouri River Basin Commission

(MBRC). The MBRC was charged with maintaining a comprehensive plan for basin development and being the principal coordinator of federal, state, interstate, local and non-governmental entities for water and related land resource development in the basin. The Commission was comprised of a chairman appointed by the President; the Governors of the ten Missouri River Basin States; representatives of the interstate commission for the Big Blue River and Yellowstone River Compacts; the Canadian Government as an observer; and representatives of ten Federal agencies—Departments of the Interior, Army, Agriculture, Commerce, Health, Education and Welfare, Housing and Urban Development, and Transportation, the Energy Research and Development Administration, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC).

In 1981, President Ronald Regan abolished the MBRC, and five other river basin commissions. The governors of the ten Missouri basin states then formed the Missouri Basin States Association (MBSA) to continue the activities of the MBRC. Incorporated as a nonprofit organization, the MBSA conducts, encourages, and participates in activities which promote interstate coordination of water resources management in the Missouri River basin.

In the early 1950s, long before the various committees and commissions were established to coordinate development of the river basin, Congress became disenchanted with the comprehensive Missouri River Basin Project. An early signal of Congressional concern included the requirement of separate feasibility reports on four units scheduled for construction after 1953. Then on August 14, 1964, Congress canceled the blanket authorization under the Flood Control Act of 1944 for all units of the project not already under construction; any new construction required reauthorization by Congress. However, the necessity of reauthorizing

projects did not halt new construction activities on the Pick-Sloan Missouri Basin Program. Construction work continued on the previously authorized projects while Congress reauthorized several units between 1955 and 1972. Congress authorized construction of several new units including the Angostura Unit in South Dakota (1955), the Red Willow Dam of the Frenchman-Cambridge Division in Nebraska (1958), the Gray Reef Dam of the Glendo Unit in Wyoming (1959), the North Loup Division in Nebraska (1972), the O'Neill Unit in Nebraska (1972) and modifications to the Buffalo Bill Dam and Reservoir, Shoshone Project, in Wyoming (1982). Congress reauthorized the Glendo Unit in Wyoming (1954), the Farwell Unit in Nebraska (1956), the Garrison Diversion Unit in the Dakotas, in a somewhat revised form (1965), the Oahe Unit in South Dakota (1968), the Narrows unit in Colorado (1970), and the Lake Andes-Wagner-Marty II project in South Dakota (1992).⁷ Also in 1986, Congress reformulated the Garrison Diversion Unit, deauthorizing over eighty-five percent of the original acreage originally withdrawn for settlement.

In 1970, Congress officially changed the name of the Missouri River Basin Program to the Pick-Sloan Missouri Basin Program acknowledging the coordination of the Pick Plan and Sloan Plan into the comprehensive plan authorized in 1944.⁸ Altogether the Corps and Reclamation constructed or investigated approximately 150 units. The benefits of these water resources include: aids to navigation, flood control, irrigation of over three-million acres of previously undeveloped land, municipal and industrial water supplies, stream-pollution abatement, sediment control, supplemental water for an additional 700,000 acres of land,

7. Lawson, 4, 12-3, 15-8, 20, 25; Warne, 161-8; Corps, 11, 18-9, 173-89; *Project Data*, 843, 880, 948, 956, 962; United States Department of Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, *Federal Reclamation and Related Laws Annotated*, Volume IV of IV, 1967-82, eds. Louis D. Mauro and Richard K. Pelz, (Denver: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1989.), 3332.

8. *Federal Reclamation and Related Laws Annotated*, 2601.

preservation and enhancement of fish and wildlife, recreation opportunities, and power generation from plants with a total installed capacity of about 2.5-million kilowatts.

Reclamation integrated the power system of the Colorado-Big Thompson, Kendrick, North Platte, and Shoshone Projects with the transmission facilities of the Missouri Basin Program to facilitate power production, distribution, and marketing on the various projects. Through the sale of surplus power, the program returns to each project revenues sufficient to cover annual operating expenses and a reserve for replacement of facilities, while at the same time repaying construction costs obligated for repayment from power revenues.

The aid to irrigation program dates back to the Town Site and Development Act of 1906 and the long-term development of hydropower on Reclamation projects. Aid to irrigation involves the use of surplus power revenues to repay any residual irrigation costs remaining after irrigators made payments based upon their “ability to pay.” Reclamation based repayment schedules on the capability of the land to generate revenues under irrigated crop production; when revenues failed to repay total construction costs, revenues from the sale of commercial power made up the difference. The repayment rules on the project stipulated that irrigators must repay irrigation costs of the project within forty years, plus an additional ten-year development period during which Reclamation deferred payment beginning just after the start of water delivery on the project. Originally Reclamation law stipulated that power revenues could only be applied to unpaid irrigation investment after the commercial power development was repaid, however due to the coinciding length of the repayment schedules this idea proved impractical.⁹ In 1963, Reclamation adopted a new rule on power assistance delaying repayment on the project until after completion of the first unit constructed after the rule went into effect. In addition, the

9. *Federal Reclamation and Related Laws Annotated*, 645.

rule stipulated that before power revenues can be applied to any new units, all outstanding aid on previously constructed units must be repaid, at the same time increasing the repayment period on new projects by an additional ten years. As a result, as the first project completed after the changed in the repayment policy, the North Loup Unit completed in 1991 triggered the repayment program for all outstanding projects.

The last change to the repayment schedule on the Pick-Sloan Project occurred in 1996 when the Garrison Diversion Unit Reformulation Act of 1996 altered the repayment schedule for that particular unit. The 1996 Act waved the ten-year deferment period and set a repayment schedule of forty annual installments in a straight line amortization of the debt—a change from the original guidelines which dictated that aid only needed to be repaid by its due date in a series of balloon payments.

Though the Pick-Sloan Plan did not fit anyone's ideal of comprehensive development of the Missouri River Basin, the two agencies charged with its implementation, the United States Bureau of Reclamation and the United States Army Corps of Engineers, made the best of the situation. Forging new alliances with one another the agencies helped develop a workable, if somewhat overblown, plan to aid in development of the river basin. All told the Corps and Reclamation each got what they wanted in the Missouri River Basin without allowing the other agency to gain control of the area. Reclamation furnished water for irrigation while the Corps provided much-needed flood control. Both agencies developed the vast hydroelectric potential within the Basin to the ultimate benefit of the entire region.

The passage of the Flood Control Act of 1944, including the Pick-Sloan program, reflects the boundless optimism that existed at the conclusion of World War II. An allied victory

appeared certain in the not too distant future and the national economy continued to be strong. Partially intended to provide opportunities for returning veterans, both as homesteaders and construction workers, the Pick-Sloan program addressed a perceived need in the United States. The fact that returning veterans had no desire to return to an agriculturally based lifestyle proved to be one of the first stumbling blocks for the program. Additional challenges arose as the program progressed, including conflicts between irrigation and domestic water uses, addressing water needs throughout the basin, and meeting established water rights while still providing necessary water throughout the basin. Pick-Sloan was a project fraught with compromise dating back to its inception; nothing ever went quite as planned. However, the Corps and Reclamation readily adapted to changing conditions and made the best of the situation. Almost more famous for its failures than for its successes, the Pick-Sloan program nevertheless impacted the residents in the Missouri River Basin favorably. As a whole, the program reduced flooding along the river and its tributaries, which in itself proved the program's worth, supplied low-cost hydroelectricity to basin residents, and provided new recreational opportunities throughout the region.

About the Author

Toni Rae Linenberger, a Colorado native, received her B.A. in History from The Colorado College in Colorado Springs, Colorado in 1996. In 1998, she earned a MS in Western American History from Utah State University in Logan, Utah. Ms. Linenberger's final paper, a case study entitled *A Dam for All Seasons: Hollywood, the Bureau of Reclamation, and Construction of Parker Dam*, explored the relationship between the growth of a small town in California and the development of the Colorado River.

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