

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

2008

Annual Report



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation

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On the Cover: Flaming Gorge Dam jet bypass tubes releasing water.

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Letter from the Commissioner

It is my pleasure to present the Bureau of Reclamation's 2008 Annual Report to the Congress and the American people.

In fiscal year 2008, Reclamation worked with State, local, tribal, and other Federal partners, continuing to carry out our role in developing and maintaining one of the most impressive water management infrastructures in the world, which brings water and power to the people of the West and supports the region's economy.

Our core mission, to deliver water and generate power in the 17 Western States, has remained constant for a century. The way we accomplish our mission has evolved considerably. Today, we focus more broadly on the management of water resources to ensure the safe and effective performance of our facilities, to implement innovative approaches to meet multiple current and future needs, and to bring additional benefits such as habitat restoration and recreation.

Much of our work today involves looking ahead to anticipate future challenges and develop future solutions. For almost a decade, we have experienced drought in major river basins while population and resulting demand for water has increased. We are bracing for a situation where demand continues to increase while supplies grow scarce.

As part of our efforts to ensure continued success with water resource challenges, we continue to implement the *Managing for Excellence* action plan to improve the way we carry out our mission. When I came in as Commissioner, I made the implementation of *Managing for Excellence* my top priority. This comprehensive framework, which we developed with significant stakeholder input, will better position us to meet the challenges of 21st century water resources management and to get the job done.

Reclamation made substantial progress on many initiatives to help the people of the West meet current and future water needs. One of our most popular and most successful programs has been the *Water 2025 Challenge Grant* program. This year, Secretary of the Interior



Kempthorne awarded \$4.5 million in *Water 2025* Challenge Grants to help fund 15 projects to improve systems and conserve water in 8 Western States. The 2008 projects are expected to save more than 50,000 acre-feet of water annually. The Challenge Grants were leveraged with \$27.3 million in non-Federal funds to bring nearly \$32 million in improvements that will enable more efficient use of existing water supplies. For every \$1 of Federal investment, the return was \$6 of non-Federal investment. In FY 2009, *Water 2025* and the Challenge Grant program will be incorporated into the Secretary of the Interior's *Water for America* initiative.

Managing our aging facilities has been an increasing challenge, and addressing this challenge has been made more complex by urbanization and the population growth around facilities that were previously in remote areas. When the Truckee Canal breach occurred, we responded quickly and decisively.

We continued research to foster innovative solutions to water management challenges. Research at the Brackish Groundwater National Desalination Research Facility in Alamogordo, New Mexico, promises significant advances in new technologies to help meet water needs in a cost-effective manner for people in rural and remote areas. We made significant progress to get reliable supplies of high-quality water to people in remote rural areas. The Oglala Sioux Tribe and Reclamation celebrated the first delivery of water to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation and the community of Wanblee, South Dakota, from the Mni Wiconi Rural Water Supply Project.

Reclamation also made significant progress on other major construction projects. With the completion of the Ridges Basin Dam, the Animas-La Plata Project is on track to completed construction within budget by 2012, with project closeout in 2013. In August, Reclamation awarded a construction contract for the Drop 2 Reservoir Storage project, with construction to begin early in fiscal year 2009. The project will enable more efficient use of water from the Colorado River. Reclamation substantially completed the first phase of the Joint Federal Project at Folsom Dam, a collaboration with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the State of California to bring much improved flood control to Sacramento and address dam safety at a significant cost savings.

Reclamation collaborated with other action agencies, sovereign parties, and the National Marine Fisheries Service to develop a new

proposed action and Biological Opinion for the Federal Columbia River Power System and Reclamation's Upper Snake River Projects. There is broad regional consensus, as evidenced by the historic Columbia Basin Fish Accords, signed this year with various States and tribes that this plan will work.

Last December, we reached a historic milestone in managing the Colorado River system when Secretary Kempthorne signed the Record of Decision for the *Colorado River Interim Guidelines for Lower Basin Shortages and the Coordinated Operations for Lake Powell and Lake Mead*. The Record of Decision implements the environmental impact statement on new guidelines to address potential shortages in the Lower Colorado River Basin and operation of Lakes Powell and Mead under a wide range of hydrologic conditions.

The signing of the Truckee River Operating Agreement on management of water in the Truckee River basin by Secretary Kempthorne and 16 other parties ended 18 years of negotiations among numerous Federal and non-Federal entities. Last year, the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program Agreement was signed by the Governors of Colorado, Nebraska, and Wyoming and the Secretary of the Interior, ending 12 years of negotiations; this year, legislation was passed authorizing the Secretary of the Interior to implement the program, which will provide assurance for water operations in the basin and protection for endangered species. In two river basins facing extremely complex issues, Reclamation is helping to balance water user and environmental needs through the Klamath Conservation Implementation Program and the Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Act Collaborative Program.

To understand whether higher flows can rebuild eroded beaches downstream of Glen Canyon Dam, Reclamation, agency partners, and the Adaptive Management Work Group triggered high flows from the dam. The experiment was in keeping with a long-term investment in scientific study involving dam operations and downstream resources in Glen Canyon and the Grand Canyon. For the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program, key accomplishments included completing six ponds for endangered fish species habitat at the Imperial National Wildlife Refuge and the securing land and water in the Cibola Valley Conservation Area.

In May, we lost an important member of the Reclamation family, former Commissioner John W. Keys III. John Keys loved the Bureau of Reclamation—its mission, its people, and the people we serve. I know that he would continue to take great pride, as I do, in the collaborative work we do with our partners to meet water resources management challenges. Reclamation has always been dedicated to getting the job done, and our commitment remains steadfast to serve our customers and the public to get water and power to the people of the West.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert W. Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "R".