

COLORADO WATER CONSERVATION BOARD
823 State Centennial Building
1313 Sherman Street
Denver, Colorado 80203

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ANIMAS-LA PLATA PROJECT

The Animas-La Plata Project is located in southwestern Colorado and northwestern New Mexico in the San Juan River Basin. The project was authorized by the Congress in 1968 under the provisions of the Colorado River Basin Project Act as a participating project of the Colorado River Storage Project. The Colorado River Basin Project Act authorized the Central Arizona Project and five projects in Colorado; to wit, Animas-La Plata, Dallas Creek, Dolores, San Miguel and West Divide. Section 501(b) of the act (Public Law 90-537) provides as follows:

"The Secretary is directed to proceed as nearly as practicable with the construction of the Animas-La Plata, Dolores, Dallas Creek, West Divide, and San Miguel participating Federal reclamation projects concurrently with the construction of the Central Arizona Project, to the end that such projects shall be completed not later than the date of the first delivery of water from said Central Arizona Project: Provided, That an appropriate repayment contract for each of said participating project shall have been executed as provided in section 4 of the Colorado River Storage Project Act (70 Stat. 107) before construction shall start on that particular project."

The La Plata Water Conservancy District was organized in 1944 to act as the sponsoring and contractual agency for that portion of the project located in the State of Colorado. The district includes a portion of La Plata County. The Southern Ute and Ute Mountain Ute Indian tribes are also project sponsors.

Plan of Development

The Animas-La Plata Project has been conceived as a multiple purpose water resource development. It would provide municipal and industrial water for the Cities of Durango, Aztec and Farmington and for the development of coal resources on the Southern Ute Indian Reservation. The project would provide irrigation water for lands in the La Plata River drainage, some of which are dry and others which have been historically irrigated, but are presently dry due to insufficient water supplies. Recreational opportunities and fish and wildlife enhancement would also be project objectives.

The following paragraphs describe the current plan. It appears to be more environmentally acceptable than the plan presented in the authorizing document and would contribute less salinity to the Colorado River.

The main storage feature of the project would be Ridges Basin Reservoir, located southwest of the City of Durango. The Durango Pumping Plant, south of the city, would pump Animas River water to Ridges Basin Reservoir. Stored water would be released as required back to the Animas River for Aztec, Farmington and other potential municipal and industrial users in New Mexico. Durango and surrounding communities would construct a treatment plant immediately north of the reservoir and would also obtain their additional municipal and industrial water from Ridges Basin Reservoir.

In addition to storing a portion of Durango's municipal and industrial water, Ridges Basin Reservoir would also provide storage for the Ute Mountain Ute Indian tribe's industrial and irrigation water, the Southern Ute tribe's irrigation water and water for the Colorado irrigators.

The Ridges Basin Pumping Plant, located on the western edge of the reservoir, would pump water from the reservoir into Dry Side Canal which would then convey the water to the La Plata drainage. Southern Ute Reservoir would store La Plata River flows diverted into the reservoir through a diversion dam and canal. The reservoir would be the storage facility for Southern Ute Indian municipal and industrial water and New Mexico irrigation water.

Various methods of providing irrigation water to lands above the Dry Side Canal are being considered. Sprinkler irrigation is currently planned for all project lands below the Dry Side Canal. The lateral systems would provide sprinkler pressure at each farm turnout. Project drainage would also be furnished, where required, on project land. Fisheries would be created in the inactive pools of project reservoirs. In addition, recreational facilities would be provided at those reservoirs. A minimum stream flow of 125 cubic feet per second is planned in the Animas River below the Durango Pumping Plant.

Project costs, including operation and maintenance, have been estimated for plan formulation purposes only. No detailed engineering sizing and costing have been done for project facilities.

Project Statistics

Estimated project cost (January 1976)	\$270,000,000
Water supply (Colorado only)	
Municipal and industrial	49,900 a.f.
Irrigation (59,300 acres)	98,600 a.f.
Annual depletion of the Colorado River	120,000 a.f.
Annual salinity increase at Imperial Dam	7.5 mg/l
Benefit-cost ratio	1.12:1

Environmental Impact

The feasibility plan has been altered to eliminate Howardsville Reservoir and the Animas Diversion Canal, both of which would have a detrimental impact on the environment from the standpoint of their effect on water quality and aesthetics of the area. The alternate plan for pumping water from the lower Animas River to serve the project lands would significantly reduce the environmental impact of the project. Sufficient water would be released downstream to maintain a fishery in the Animas River below the diversion. The environmental impact of irrigation will be minor as most lands in the project are either presently irrigated or dry farmed. There may be some increases of salinity in the Colorado River from irrigation and M&I use of water by the project. Secondary effects of providing water for private developments, such as a thermal powerplant in the area, will need to be determined and remedial measures identified to reduce pollution.

Current Status

Advance planning studies were initiated in FY 1971 with funds contributed by the State of Colorado and local water user organizations. Federal funds in the amount of \$225,000 were appropriated in FY 1971 and placed in budgetary reserve. Total investigation costs to September 30, 1976, including feasibility and advance planning studies amount to \$1,945,966.

Present advance planning activities are centered around completion of the Definite Plan Report by April 1978.

The La Plata and Southwestern Districts have joined in a campaign to organize a new conservancy district in Colorado. The present La Plata Water Conservancy District will be dissolved if the new district is organized.