

COLORADO WATER CONSERVATION BOARD
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DALLAS CREEK PROJECT

The Dallas Creek project is located in the Uncompahgre River basin of west central Colorado. 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 Act. The Tri-County Water Conservancy District was organized in 1957 to act as a sponsoring and contractual agency for the project. This district includes portions of Delta, Montrose and Ouray counties.

Plan of Development (As Revised)

The Dallas Creek project would develop flows of the Uncompahgre River, Dallas Creek, and other tributaries for municipal, industrial and irrigation use and recreation and fish and wildlife enhancement. The plan as covered in this statement differs from the plan in the feasibility report.

Storage will be provided by Ridgway reservoir on the Uncompahgre river and Dallas Divide reservoir on Pleasant Valley Creek. Both reservoirs will provide significant recreation and fishing opportunities because of large minimum pools and planned operational patterns that will require only moderate drawdown of the reservoirs during the prime summer recreation seasons.

Natural inflow in Ridgway reservoir will be augmented by diversions from Cow Creek through the Cow Creek feeder canal. Water will be released from Ridgway reservoir through a dual-level outlet to the Uncompahgre River for fishery purposes and for downstream diversion for irrigation, municipal, and industrial uses. Water exchanges will also make additional water available above Ridgway reservoir. The reservoir would be operated on a snowmelt-prediction basis for control of spring floodflows.

Dallas Divide reservoir will regulate the natural inflow of Pleasant Valley Creek and water that will be diverted from the East and West Forks of Dallas Creek by the Dallas feeder canal. Reservoir releases will be made to Pleasant Valley Creek for irrigation uses downstream.

Plan changes since the authorizing report include (1) relocation of Ridgway reservoir downstream for geological and environmental considerations and to avoid inundating the town of Ridgway, Colorado, (2) an increase in the municipal and industrial water supply from 15,000 acre-feet to 57,000 acre-feet, and (3) a reduction of the acreage to be irrigated from 23,620 acres to 7,350 acres.

Although the project has always been considered multipurpose, the primary emphasis has now been redirected from irrigation to provide a substantial amount of municipal and industrial water for the development of the natural resources of the area, providing a supply for the already developed valley distribution system and providing a supply for potential developments in the area, such as Log Hill Mesa community and proposed conversion of coal to other energy forms.

Recreational facilities will be provided at the project reservoirs and flows will be maintained below Ridgway reservoir and stream diversion points to preserve fishery values. Improvements will be made to big game rangeland in surrounding areas to compensate for range losses that will be caused by development of the project. Big game crossings will be provided at various points along project canals.

A pumping system will provide additional water supplies to Log Hill Mesa and an area near the town of Ridgway. Ridgway Pumping Plant No. 1 will pump water from the Uncompahgre River for use in the Ridgway area and for conveyance by the Ridgway canal to Pumping Plant No. 2 on Dallas Creek. A buried pressure pipe system will distribute the irrigation water to lands on Log Hill Mesa. The Tri-County Water Conservancy District will provide other facilities for treatment and distribution of the municipal and domestic water.

Estimated Costs (July 1974 prices)

Municipal and industrial water	\$52,881,000
Irrigation	17,733,000
Fish and wildlife enhancement	2,144,000
Recreation	7,833,000
Flood Control	979,000
Highway improvement	<u>1,330,000</u>
Total	\$82,900,000

Water allocations

Municipal and industrial	57,000 a.f.
Irrigation	<u>8,800</u>
Total	65,800 a.f.
Annual depletion of the Colorado River	46,000 a.f.
Annual salinity increase to Colorado River at Imperial Dam	3.5 mg/l
Benefit-cost ratio:	2.04 to 1
Total annual benefits	\$7,251,000

Environmental Impact

1. Temporary disturbance of water quality during construction.
2. Use of project water will deplete the flows of the Colorado River by 46,000 acre-feet and result in 3.5 mg/l of additional salinity at Imperial Dam. There will be a decrease in salinity of 1.2 mg/l due to salt loading and an increase of 4.7 mg/l due to stream depletion.
3. Fishery quality of the Uncompahgre River will be increased by including a variable outlet in Ridgway Dam for temperature control of water released and by providing minimum flows substantially in excess of what has historically occurred in 11 of 12 months during the year.
4. Significant secondary impacts will result from sale of water to a proposed urban development on Log Hill Mesa.
5. Secondary impacts will occur if project water is made available for a coal-fired thermoelectric generating station; such as, air, water, and esthetic quality degradation. Depending on methods of coal extraction, some impact on big game winter habitat could occur. Effects of project development on big game habitat is of some concern and is being studied.
6. Minor impacts on esthetics inhibiting big game movement and reduced stream flows as they affect fisheries are expected to be resolved.

Current Status

Advance planning studies were initiated on the Dallas Creek project in F.Y. 1971. These studies are nearing completion and the definite plan report is scheduled for completion in March, 1975.

Total federal investigation costs to June 30, 1974, including feasibility and advance planning, amount to \$1,550,132. Approximately \$75,000 has been expended by the state of Colorado on the project. By far, the greatest sum has been spent by the Tri-County Water Conservancy District, which to date has expended approximately 4.5 million dollars on the project. This includes the construction of a domestic water system, which is predicated upon the eventual construction of the Dallas Creek project.

After Congress authorized the project, the people of the Uncompahgre Valley approved a bond issue to construct a rural water system. This system has now been completed at an approximate cost of 4.5 million dollars and serves 1,432 rural families in three counties. This rural water system was constructed on the basis that project water from the Dallas Creek project would be available by 1979. In the interim period, the water conservancy district entered into a temporary arrangement with the city of Montrose to purchase water from the city for a ten-year period, provided that such water would be available.

At the present time, the Montrose area is expanding rapidly. In recent years, the Bureau of Reclamation has constructed a power operation center in Montrose which controls the distribution of power from the entire Colorado River Storage project. The operating headquarters for the Colorado-Ute Electric Association is also situated in Montrose. A major candy-making facility has been constructed in the area by the Russell Stover Company and employs about 600 people. A major residential subdivision, Log Hill Mesa community, is now being developed in the area which plans to get water supplies from the Dallas Creek project.

Development of the project is vital to economic growth in the Ridgway-Montrose-Delta area of western Colorado, which will require substantial additional municipal and industrial water supplies. The Kemmerer Coal Company is actively planning a large thermal generating power plant in the area and has contracted for a substantial amount of water from the project.

Repayment contract negotiations have begun. The cost of municipal and industrial water has not yet been finalized. It appears that the cost of such water will probably range from 45 to 150 dollars per acre-foot.

Local Interest

Local residents, western slope interests in Colorado, state officials, and outside interests are urgently backing the development of the Dallas Creek project as a means of utilizing undeveloped land, mineral, and water resources in the Uncompahgre River Basin. Project supporters were influential in having the project included in the list of potential developments designated by Congress as having priority in the completion of planning reports in the Colorado River Storage Project Act of April 11, 1956. Project sponsorship was the primary purpose for organization of the Tri-County Water Conservancy District in September, 1957, by local residents. The district has actively supported the project investigation and is obtaining water rights needed for the development. The Colorado Water Conservation Board has made financial contributions for project investigations and has helped coordinate activities of the various agencies engaged in the investigations. The city of Montrose is energetically supporting the project and meeting with various interests to promote its development.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The Dallas Creek project appears to be one of the better projects now under consideration in Colorado. Its primary purpose would be to provide a municipal and industrial water supply for a predominantly rural area which is now experiencing considerable residential and industrial growth. The project would also stabilize the irrigation supplies for presently irrigated lands.

The environmental impact of the project will be minimal. The existing Uncompahgre river below the proposed reservoir site at the present time has very little fishery value. As a matter of fact, the entire Uncompahgre River has very little fishery value. However, with the construction of the reservoir and subsequent controlled releases, fishery values of the river would increase many times over. The recreational aspect of the reservoir itself would have a high value to the area.

Additional municipal and industrial water for the area is most obviously required for the immediate future. This is evidenced by the fact that the Tri-County Water Conservancy District has already constructed a domestic pipeline at a cost of approximately 4.5 million dollars, based upon the anticipated construction of the Dallas Creek project.

The particular problems which need immediate solution are the execution of a repayment contract, a firm decision on the

disposition of the D&RGW railway through the reservoir area, and a firm decision on the needs and purposes of the Kemmerer Coal Company concerning project water. It is assumed that these problems will be solved within the next few months.

The President has requested that the sum of \$1,271,000 be appropriated to initiate construction of the Dallas Creek project during F.Y. 1976 and the further sum of \$450,000 for the transition quarter. It is therefore recommended that the Governor and the members of Colorado's congressional delegation be urged to support that request.