

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

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FRUITLAND MESA PROJECT

The Fruitland Mesa Project is located in the Gunnison River Basin of west-central Colorado. Project lands are located south of the Smith Fork of the Gunnison River and east and north of the Black Canyon of the Gunnison national recreation area near the Town of Crawford. The project was authorized in 1964 as a participating project of the Colorado River Storage Project Act. The Fruitland Mesa Water Conservancy District was organized in 1960 as the sponsoring and contractual agency for the project. This district includes portions of Delta, Gunnison, and Montrose Counties.

Plan of Development

Water provided by a storage reservoir on Soap Creek and from Curecanti Creek will be diverted through the Black Mesa Conduit to supplement the flows of Crystal Creek, all tributaries of the Gunnison River. The releases from Black Mesa Conduit and direct flows from Crystal Creek will be diverted by existing systems and by the proposed Fruitland Canal. The initial portion of the Fruitland Canal will be a replacement for the existing Gould Canal, from which water is presently supplied to the Gould Reservoir and Gould Canal.

The Fruitland Canal would continue westward to provide irrigation for 6 proposed new farm units and 26 units for the enlargement of existing small farms and to provide water for private lands not now being irrigated. A pipeline will be constructed for the National Park Service to provide the Black Canyon monument area with approximately 15 acre-feet of water annually. Irrigation laterals from the Fruitland Canal will be constructed as needed to serve the new lands.

Recreational facilities will be provided at the Milly K. Goodwin Lake. Fisheries will be created at the reservoir along Soap Creek and at the privately owned Gould Reservoir. Irrigation replacements for the maintenance of a fishery pool at Gould Reservoir will be made to the reservoir owners from Fruitland Canal. Minimum flows for fish will be maintained along Soap Creek and Curecanti Creek.

Project Costs (January 1976 prices)

Irrigation	\$ 84,789,000
Recreation, fish and wildlife	2,586,000
Land acquisition and disposition	<u>925,000</u>
Total Cost	\$ 88,300,000

Water allocation:

Irrigation (18,250 acres)	45,400 a.f.
Public water supply (Black Canyon National Monument)	15 a.f.
Annual depletion of the Colorado River	21,300 a.f.
Benefit-cost ratio	0.92 to 1
Total annual benefits	\$ 2,965,000

Environmental Impact

1. Construction of a reservoir (Milly K. Goodwin Lake) in Big Soap Park will create aesthetic changes to the landscape by access roads, dam construction, and increased human activity that will affect the experience of those persons using the West Elk Wilderness. The area adjacent to the proposed reservoir development is being considered for inclusion in the wilderness system.

2. Water quality of Soap Creek will be enhanced and minimum flows will be maintained to support stocked and native trout populations.

3. The establishment of a minimum pool in Gould Reservoir, where one presently does not exist, will establish a year-round fishery in the reservoir.

Current Status

Advance planning studies were initiated in FY 1965 and the definite plan report was completed in 1967. The repayment contract between the United States and the Fruitland Mesa Water Conservancy District was executed in 1969. Petitions for project irrigation have been essentially completed.

Archaeological surveys have been completed for the reservoir and tunnel sites and the rest of the project area now in public ownership. The draft environmental statement was filed with CEQ on September 3, 1976. The definite plan report and the final environmental statement are scheduled for completion in March 1977. Preconstruction drilling of the Black Mesa Conduit has been completed.

The outgoing President included \$7,702,000 in his proposed budget for FY 1978 to continue construction of this project. President Carter has proposed total elimination of this allocation.

Replacement of two inadequate and failing siphons in the existing Gould Canal was completed in FY 1972.

Total investigation costs to September 30, 1976, including feasibility and advance planning studies and a completed drainage and minor

construction contract for the Gould Canal siphons, amount to \$2,180,853.

Local Interest

State and local interests are actively encouraging construction of the project. The Fruitland Mesa Water Conservancy District was organized in 1960 to be the administrative and contractual agency for the reclamation features of the project. The State of Colorado, through the Colorado Water Conservation Board, supplied \$14,000 to the Bureau of Reclamation to aid in the investigations. The Colorado River Water Conservation District has assisted in the investigations and has secured the necessary water rights for the project.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This section of Colorado is semi-arid and is presently undergoing a general decline in population due to the undependable and inadequate water supply (approximately 25% of optimum through existing facilities over the past 25 years). The area has been designated a depressed area under the Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965.

Completion of the project would be of great economic value to the area, including an increase of over 2 million dollars to the local tax base. All irrigated crops would be utilized for livestock production, which at the present time could be of significant national benefit.

The recreational benefits derived from local fisheries along the streams and at Gould and Soap Park Reservoirs would serve to take local pressure away from the Curecanti National Recreation Area and provide additional facilities for the overflow from Curecanti and Black Canyon of the Gunnison area.

Approximately \$3,236,000 of FY 1976 funds are now available to initiate construction. A repayment contract has been executed. A small construction start has been made through the replacement of the Gould siphons. It is recommended that the Governor and the members of Colorado's congressional delegation be requested to support the former President's proposed budgetary item of \$7,702,000 to continue project construction during FY 1978.