

# Overview, Proposed Canyon Ferry Contract Renewals

At their request, Reclamation is proposing to renew long-term water service contracts with Helena Valley Irrigation District (Helena Valley), Toston Irrigation District (Toston), and City of Helena (City).

All three contracts expire December 31, 2004, and represent the majority water contracted by Reclamation from Canyon Ferry Reservoir. A minor amount of water is also made available through temporary contracts for contractors adjacent to Helena Valley and Toston. The majority of the reservoir's yield is released to produce hydropower by Reclamation, and to comply with the Coordination of Electric Operations Agreement with PPL Montana.

Helena Valley and Toston contract with Reclamation for water for agricultural irrigation, while the City of Helena contracts water for municipal and industrial (M&I) uses. Helena Valley and the City receive water directly from Canyon Ferry Reservoir through the Helena Valley Pumping Plant, tunnel, and feeder canal. Water is stored in the Helena Valley Regulating Reservoir and made available to meet the demands of the Helena Valley Irrigation District and the City.

Helena Valley irrigates approximately 16,000 acres of land northwest of Canyon Ferry Dam and contracts with Reclamation for a quantity of water not to exceed the amount that can be beneficially used within the irrigation district. On average, approximately 87,000 acre-feet (af) of water are pumped into the regulating reservoir for use by Helena Valley and the City of Helena (an acre-foot equals the quantity of volume of water that covers one acre to a depth of one foot; equal to 43,560 cubic feet, or 325,851 gallons of water). The City withdraws water from the regulating reservoir and conveys the water to the municipality by pipeline. The City of Helena's current contract provides for up to 5,680 af of water per year for M&I uses.

On average, Toston annually diverts approximately 16,800 af of water to irrigate 6,248 acres of land southwest of Canyon Ferry Reservoir. Like Helena Valley, it contracts with Reclamation for a quantity of water not to exceed the amount that can be beneficially used within the irrigation district. Toston pumps water directly from the Missouri River at a site about 1.5 miles upstream of the Toston Dam through the Crow Creek Pumping Plant and into series of canals where it is made available for distribution to water users. To protect senior water right holders downstream, Toston contracts with Reclamation for replacement water to be released from Canyon Ferry Reservoir.

To determine whether renewal of these contracts will result in significant environmental impacts, Reclamation will prepare an environmental assessment (EA) in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Outreach will be accomplished through public meetings, mailings, press releases, targeted media advertisements, and through the Internet.

**Please visit our Internet site <http://www.usbr.gov/gp/mtao/canyonferry/> for the following information:**

- 1) All NEPA documentation
- 2) Maps & Display Material
- 3) Electronic & Hard Copy Comment Forms
- 4) Links to General Info

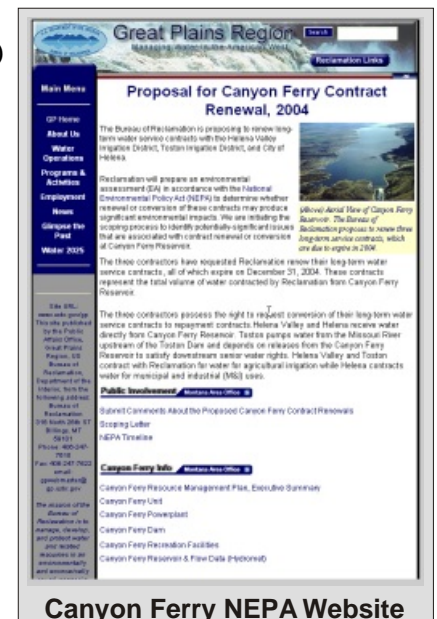
Our Web site has the most up to date information concerning the proposed Canyon Ferry contract renewals. You may also ask questions via email, by contacting us at [questions@gp.usbr.gov](mailto:questions@gp.usbr.gov), or by calling 406-247-7610.

## Public scoping will begin with three meetings, March 16, 17 & 30.

**March 16, Tuesday:** Townsend, Mont. Broadwater High School, 201 North Spruce, from 5:30 to 9:00 p.m.

**March 17, Wednesday:** Helena, Mont., Red Lion Colonial Hotel, 2301 Colonial Drive, from 3:30 to 9:00 p.m.

**March 30, Tuesday:** Helena, Mont., Montana Association of Counties Convention Center (near airport), 2715 Skyway Drive, from 3:30 to 9:00 p.m.



# Introductory NEPA Information:

The United States Congress passed the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) on December 23, 1969 and it was signed into law on January 1, 1970. The NEPA process helps public officials make decisions that are based on understanding of environmental consequences, and take actions that protect, restore, and enhance the human environment. NEPA also established the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ).

The basic doctrine of NEPA requires the Federal Government to use all practicable means and measures to protect environmental values. It establishes policy, sets goals and provides means for carrying out the policy. NEPA encourages the wise use of natural resources by requiring the consideration of environmental factors in Federal agency decision-making.

Reclamation is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) to evaluate a proposal to renew long-term water service contracts with the Helena Valley Irrigation District, Toston Irrigation District, and City of Helena. This EA will:

- **Provide an appropriately scoped analysis addressing the potential direct, indirect and cumulative impacts of the contract renewals;**
- **Consider a range of reasonable alternatives in the decision making process; and**
- **Determine whether environmental impacts are significant, and if a more detailed Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is required.**

The EA will be developed in accordance with NEPA and CEQ implementing regulations. At the conclusion of the EA process (unless sooner determined), Reclamation will determine if the proposed action will cause significant environmental impacts. If not, then a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) will be prepared. If it is determined that the proposed action will cause significant environmental impacts, then Reclamation will release a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an EIS.

Public participation in the EA process is essential to identify all environmental factors needed for review and to identify all reasonable alternatives for implementing the proposed action. The primary venues of public participation on this project will be through public scoping meetings and through the analysis of written comments on the EA that are received during the public comment period.

Public scoping meetings are scheduled for March 16, 17 & 30. These meetings will be held in an open-house format with a series of information stations (please see meeting schedule, page one). Each station will be attended by the appropriate subject-matter specialists from the Great Plains Regional Office and the Montana Area Office.



Aerial View of Canyon Ferry Reservoir

## Contact Information:

### **Questions:**

**Email-- [questions@gp.usbr.gov](mailto:questions@gp.usbr.gov)**

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**Comments: [comments@gp.usbr.gov](mailto:comments@gp.usbr.gov)**

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