The Intake Project

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1999

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Intake Project

Very often Reclamation becomes involved in relatively minor projects requiring little construction work. The Intake Project falls into this category. A two-pump pumping plant, Intake took a matter of months to construct. Because of its small size, Intake made virtually no impression on Reclamation's written record. In many ways the lack of documentation regarding the project signifies that it was a success–no major problems occurred requiring repairs, construction activities proceeded without a hitch, and water users benefitted.

Project Location

The Intake Project consists of a pumping plant and a privately constructed irrigation distribution system. The project is located in Dawson County, Montana, adjacent to the Lower Yellowstone Project. The pumping plant sits on the Main Canal of the Lower Yellowstone Project about a mile and a half downstream of the town of Intake, Montana.

Historic Setting

Reclamation began investigations on the Lower Yellowstone River soon after its inception in 1902. In 1904, the Secretary of the Interior, Ethan Allen Hitchcock authorized construction of the Lower Yellowstone Project. Reclamation began construction of the Lower Yellowstone Project in 1905. Construction activities continued until 1909. After completion of the Lower Yellowstone Project land owners on what became the Intake Project began irrigating their lands using gas powered pumps to lift water from the Lower Yellowstone Main Canal to their project lands which were not served by the Lower Yellowstone Project. These pumps proved rather costly to maintain and operate. In 1942, Reclamation investigated the general Intake Project area and submitted its findings in a report dated April of 1942. This report provided the basis for project authorization in 1944.

Project Authorization

President Franklin D. Roosevelt authorized the Intake Project on January 20, 1944, under terms of the Water Conservation and Utilization Act of August 11, 1939. Congress reauthorized the project as part of the Missouri River Basin Project, later renamed the Pick-Sloan Missouri Basin Program (PSMBP), under the Flood Control Act of 1944. The project was included as part of the Yellowstone River Pumping Unit in the PSMBP authorization. Construction proceeded under the original authorization so the project does not fall under Pick-Sloan's jurisdiction.

Construction History

Reclamation constructed the Intake Project by force account beginning in July of 1945. All work was completed prior to the start of the 1946 irrigation season.

The Lower Yellowstone Project provides the project water for the Intake Project. From the Main Canal of the Lower Yellowstone project, the Intake Project pumps water through two electric pumps into Laterals A-2 and A-3, one-mile and almost three miles long respectively. These laterals supply water to the irrigated lands on either side of the Lower Yellowstone Project Main Canal. The nearby Fort Peck Project, part of the PSMBP, supplies the needed electricity to run the pumping units.

Post-Construction History

No significant problems occurred on the project after its completion. Routine operation and maintenance activities took place in conjunction with the Lower Yellowstone Project.

Settlement of the Project/Uses of Project Water

Operated and managed by the Board of Control of the Lower Yellowstone Project, the Intake Project irrigates roughly 850 acres of land previously under cultivation. Reclamation did

not provide any additional project lands for settlement. The principal crops grown on the project include alfalfa, other pasture land grasses, oats, sugar beets, and soybeans.[1]

Conclusion

The Intake Project represents Reclamation at its most efficient. While the project made little impression on Reclamation it did impact the local water users in a positive manner. By consolidating several small privately owned gasoline powered pumps into two larger electric ones, Reclamation saved the local irrigators in fuel and operating costs making irrigation more feasible. Largely due to its size Intake does not stand out in Reclamation's history.

About the Author

Toni Rae Linenberger, a Colorado native, received her B.A. in History from The Colorado College in Colorado Springs, Colorado in 1996. In 1998, she earned a MS in Western American History from Utah State University in Logan, Utah. Ms. Linenberger's final paper, a case study entitled *A Dam for All Seasons: Hollywood, the Bureau of Reclamation, and Construction of Parker Dam*, explored the relationship between the growth of a small town in California and the development of the Colorado River.

1. United States Department of the Interior, Water and Power Resources Service, *Project Data*, (Denver: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1981), 553-4; United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, *Report on Intake Pumping Project Montana*, Project Investigations Report No. 76, (April 1942), 1-9.

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