



Many Benefits

Minidoka Project reservoirs store flow of the Snake River system for later irrigation use, electricity production, and to reduce flood damage. The project also provides fish and wildlife enhancement and some of the best outdoor recreation opportunities in the West.

What's the Yearly Value?

Irrigated crops: \$622 million
 Livestock industry: \$342 million
 Power generated: \$5.6 million
 Flood damage prevented: \$8.8 million
 Recreation: over 674,000 visits - \$25 million



The mission of the Bureau of Reclamation is to manage, develop, and protect water and related resources in an environmentally and economically sound manner in the interest of the American public.

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RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

The Story of the Minidoka Project

IDAHO-WYOMING



Railroad Draws Settlers

Pioneer farmers immigrated to eastern Idaho in the mid-to-late 1800s. Construction of the Oregon Short Line Railroad, completed in 1882, brought many workers who settled in Minidoka. More and more people came by rail to the Snake River valley.



Landscape before irrigation

The arid landscape, largely sagebrush, got little more than 10 inches of annual rainfall. However, the fertile silt and sandy loam soils were perfect for farming. Early farmers quickly realized how productive the area could be with adequate water. Rigby and Rexburg grew as farming communities with small, moderately successful irrigation systems.



An early survey crew

Early Government Involvement

The valley's agricultural successes fit perfectly with the Federal government's interest in settling the West. The U.S. Geological Survey surveyed the Minidoka area in 1889-1890 for potential large irrigation projects. State and private interests investigated further and provided the driving force for a large irrigation development.

Congress passed the Reclamation Act in 1902 to bring water to the arid West. The Act provided the technical means and the money to develop large-scale irrigation projects. The Act also specified that those who receive irrigation water and power from Reclamation projects would pay part of the construction costs and ongoing operation and maintenance costs.

The Secretary of the Interior authorized the Minidoka Project, one of Reclamation's earliest projects, in 1904 to provide irrigation water and generate electricity.



Minidoka Dam in 1911

The Project's Early Days

Reclamation started building Minidoka Dam on the Snake River in 1904. Several project canals and farm delivery systems were built by 1906. Minidoka Dam powerplant began generating electricity in 1909, and Lake Walcott started supplying irrigation water that same year.



The 1911 Jackson Lake Dam

Reclamation completed a temporary dam in 1907 at the site of Jackson Lake in Wyoming to begin

storing project water. The 1911 permanent dam was modified and enlarged several times over the years. The capacity for storing water also increased with the modifications.

Minidoka Project continued to grow with construction of American Falls, Island Park, and Grassy Lake Dams between 1927 and 1939.

Moving A City

Building American Falls Dam would put most of the town of American Falls under water. Reclamation purchased land the reservoir would flood and land for relocating the city and its residents.

World War II Camp

During World War II, the U.S. government removed thousands of Japanese-Americans from their West Coast homes and relocated them to remote camps. The Hunt Site, in Jerome County, Idaho, housed over 9,300 people during the war. The evacuees built and repaired portions of the Minidoka Project's canal system and assisted in clearing the land and



Hunt Site barracks

The learning continued

planting crops. After the war, Reclamation offered the camp buildings and equipment to war veterans, including Japanese-Americans, who settled on the project. The National Park Service now manages the Minidoka Internment National Monument to preserve this historic site.

Irrigation Brings Crops to an Arid Desert

Take fertile soil, favorable topography, an average 200 day growing season, and add the irrigation water provided by Minidoka Project the result is 19,000 farms on more than 1.1 million acres of land stretching some 300 miles from Ashton to Bliss along both sides of the Snake River. These lands are responsible for most of southeastern Idaho’s agricultural economy—millions of dollars worth of world famous potatoes, grains, vegetables, cereals, forage crops, dairy farming, and livestock production. Water users and electricity sales will, over time, pay about 70 percent of the total project construction costs.



Preventing Flood Damage

A formal agreement between Reclamation and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers regulates reservoir storage in Jackson Lake to provide a buffer against flooding. American Falls and Island Park Reservoirs are filled, based on expected snowmelt and precipitation. Excessive runoff that is temporarily stored in the reservoirs is then gradually released to prevent downstream flooding along the Snake River.

Across State Lines

Idaho, Wyoming, and Reclamation cooperate to provide the most efficient uses of Snake River water and to equitably divide the water between the two states.

Other Reclamation Projects Contribute

Reclamation’s Palisades and Ririe Projects contribute to Minidoka Project by providing additional irrigation water during dry years and additional flood protection.

Fun for Everyone

Minidoka Project’s 5 reservoirs offer more than 100,000 acres of water surface and 320 miles of shoreline. Jackson Lake, in picturesque Grand Teton National Park, is the most popular project attraction. Fishing, boating, waterskiing, camping, hunting, picnicking, and sightseeing are favorite activities.



Sections of the Snake River between Jackson Lake and American Falls are nationally known for exceptional white water rafting and kayaking. South Fork and Henrys Fork Snake River offer premier trout fishing.



Minidoka Dam

- Constructed: 1904 1906
- Height: 86 ft
- Length: 4,475 ft
- Water Storage (Lake Walcott): 95,180 acre feet
- Generating Capacity: 28,000 kW

American Falls Dam

- Constructed: 1925 1928, replaced in 1977
- Height: 104 ft
- Length: 5,277 ft
- Water Storage (American Falls): 1,672, 600 acre feet
- Generating Capacity: 112,420 kW (Non Federal)

Island Park Dam

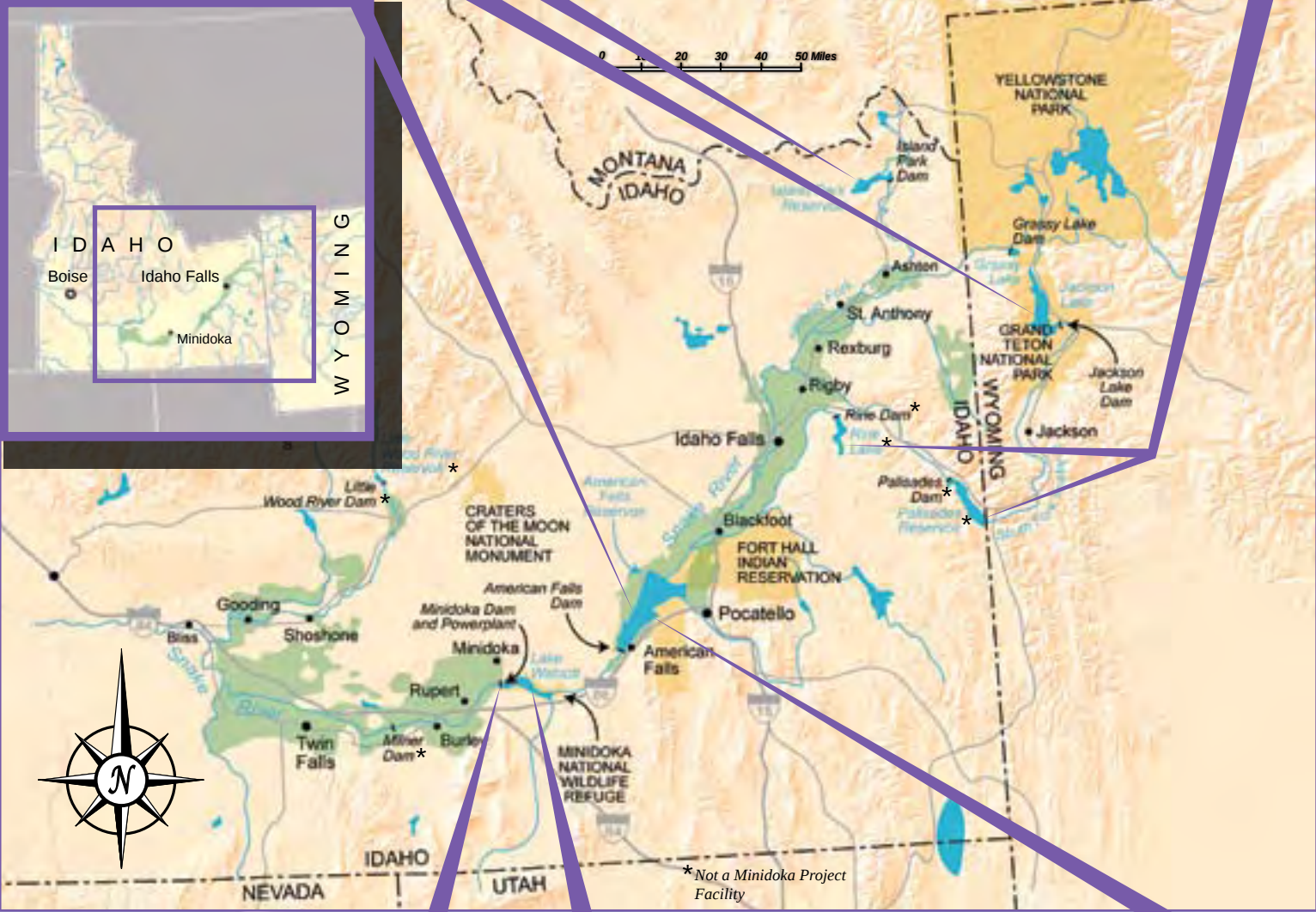
- Constructed: 1937 1939
- Height: 94 ft
- Length: 9,500 ft
- Water Storage (Island Park): 135,500 acre feet
- Generating Capacity: 4,800 kW (Non Federal)

Grassy Lake Dam

- Constructed: 1937 1939
- Height: 118 ft
- Length: 1,170 ft
- Water Storage (Grassy Lake): 15,182 acre feet
- Generating Capacity: None

Jackson Lake Dam

- Constructed: 1907, raised in 1916
- Height: 65.5 ft
- Length: 4,920 ft
- Water Storage (Jackson Lake): 847,000 acre feet
- Generating Capacity: None



Making Electricity

Minidoka Dam Powerplant, one of the first Federal power developments, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Allen E. Inman Powerplant, added in 1997, replaced some of the original units and raised the generating capacity to 27,700 kilowatts. Water upstream from Minidoka Dam passes through the powerplants to generate about 150 million kilowatt hours of electricity each year— enough to serve a town the size of Blackfoot. Bonneville Power Administration sells the electricity not needed by the project.

Enhancing Fish and Wildlife

Minidoka Project reservoirs provide excellent habitat for fish and wildlife. Millions of waterfowl nest in or migrate through the Minidoka National Wildlife Refuge on Lake Walcott each year.



Project reservoirs provide water to maintain streamflow for river fisheries in the Snake and Columbia Rivers. This water comes from reservoir space and natural flow that Reclamation purchases from willing sellers and Idaho water rental pools.



Many Wetlands – Many Benefits

Minidoka Project wetlands improve water quality, allow water reuse, and provide additional wildlife habitat. Wetlands filter runoff water and irrigation return flow as it moves through the vegetation. Wetlands also help water enter and recharge the groundwater aquifer.

The Project’s Largest Reservoir

American Falls Reservoir is the project’s largest storage reservoir and holds up to 1.7 million acre feet of water.

Crops As Far As The Eye Can See

Minidoka Project, in southeastern Idaho and northwestern Wyoming, has 5 storage reservoirs, 2 diversion dams, 2 powerplants, 4 pumping plants, 103 miles of main canals, 815 miles of smaller canals, and more than 170 water supply wells. The combined water storage available for project use is more than 4 million acre feet. Water from deep wells in the Snake River Plain Aquifer adds to the irrigation water supply during dry years. These facilities significantly influenced growth in southeastern Idaho by bringing water to the land and prosperity to the area. Additional private facilities are operated as part of the project.

