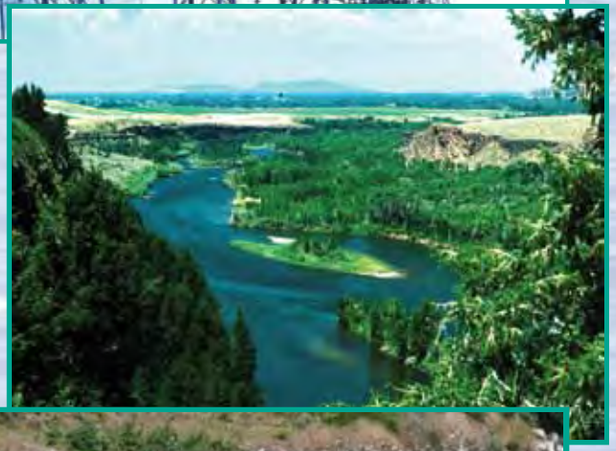


Many Benefits

Palisades Project stores natural flow of the Snake River for later irrigation use during dry years. It reduces flood damages, produces electricity, and provides fish and wildlife enhancement and outdoor recreation opportunities.

What's the Yearly Value?

Irrigated crops: $575 million
Livestock industry: $314 million
Power generated: $ 27.75 million
Flood damage prevented: $18.5 million
Reservoir recreation: 25,000 visits - $700,000
River recreation: 280,000 visits - $14 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.

www.usbr.gov/pn • Upper Snake Area Office (208) 678-0461

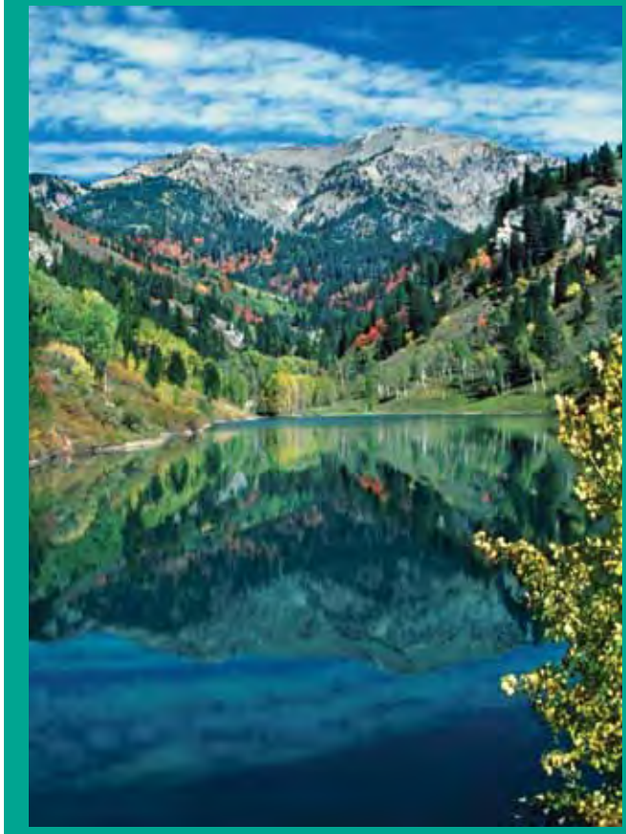
August 2010

RECLAMATION
Managing Water in the West

The Story of the

Palisades Project

IDAHO–WYOMING



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation

Early Farming

Pioneer farmers coming to southeastern Idaho quickly developed riverbank flatlands. Farmers settling near Rexburg and Blackfoot in the early 1870s developed the first irrigation in the upper Snake River valley. These early irrigation systems supplied water to crops on thirsty lands–until the water ran out. Many systems failed and left farmers with no water and no harvest. Those systems that did succeed began to thrive and by 1900, more than 500,000 acres were irrigated. But further settlement was not likely to occur until a reliable water source was found.

1910 grain farmer

Reclamation Comes Into Being

Congress passed the Reclamation Act in 1902 to bring water to the arid West. The Act, and later legislation, specified that those who receive irrigation water and electricity from Reclamation projects would pay part of the construction costs and ongoing operation and maintenance costs. Reclamation began creating water storage and irrigation networks by looking into locally supported projects. This led to the series of Minidoka Project reservoirs in eastern Idaho, completed between 1909 (Lake Walcott) and 1927 (American Falls). These facilities reduced flood damage and allowed for the irrigation of land along the Snake River for 300 miles.

Nature Rules

Many believed the Minidoka Project reservoirs would prevent irrigation water shortages; however, an unusually long drought in the early 1930s kept American Falls Reservoir from filling. All the water in the reservoir was not enough, and millions of dollars worth of crops failed. Irrigators learned firsthand the need for another reservoir.

More Electricity and Flood Protection Needed

Steady population and industrial growth in the Snake River valley put high demands on the existing electricity supply. Repeated high water affected many who wanted protection against the damaging floods. A new dam and reservoir could ease both burdens.

Midcentury flooding in Idaho Falls

Where to Build

The search for a damsite started in 1931, and a site on the South Fork of the Snake River proved the best location. Reclamation received authorization for Palisades Project in 1941. Congress specified that building the dam could not start until water users assured Reclamation they would conserve water by no longer diverting about 135,000 acre-feet of water each winter for livestock.

Before Starting the Dam

The priorities of World War II delayed all progress on the project until 1945. Workers first built a construction camp for offices and housing. Next came the transmission line to carry electricity from the dam to the users.

Early transmission line work

More than 50 miles of road were moved. Workers continued preparing the site and testing the earthen materials. Progress stopped each year when the harsh winter weather hit. High winds and excessive snowfall in February 1949 isolated the damsite for 10 days.

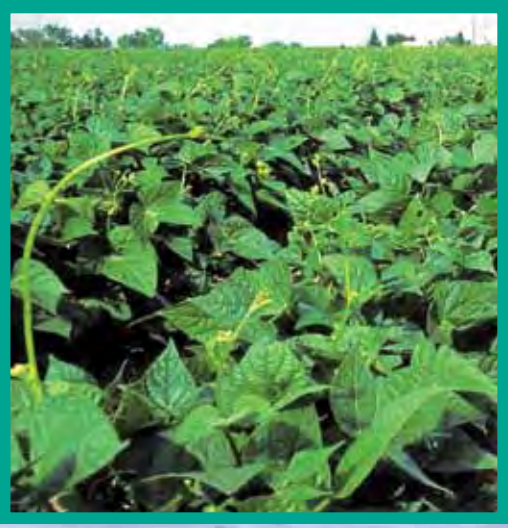
And the Project Moves Forward

Congress reauthorized the project in September 1950 and included, in the new authorization, increased flood protection and improved powerplant designs. Work on the dam started in 1951. Palisades Project was completed in 1957 and started producing electricity in May 1958.

1956 work on Palisades Dam

An Abundance of Crops

The Palisades Reservoir stores 1.2 million acre-feet of irrigation water for over 765,000 acres of irrigated lands served by the Minidoka and Michaud Flats Projects and North Side Canal Company. These lands occupy what is now one of the nation's most productive irrigated regions. Crops include world-famous potatoes, grains, vegetables, sugar beets, seeds, and forage. Crops grown with project water serve a variety of livestock industries such as milk and dairy production.

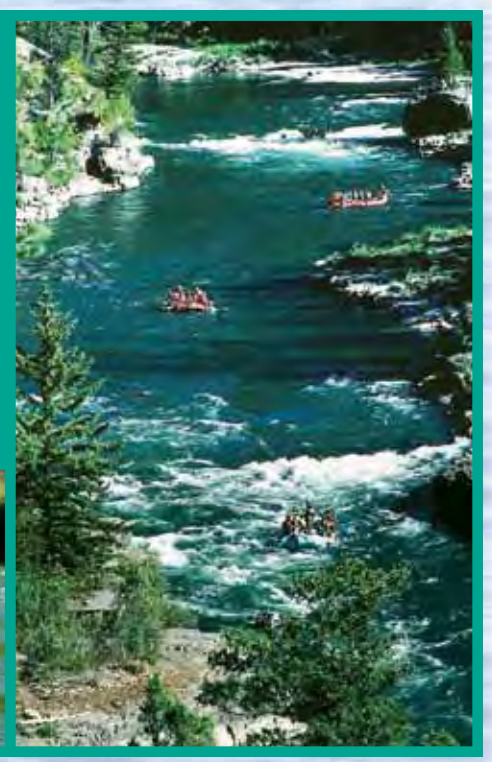


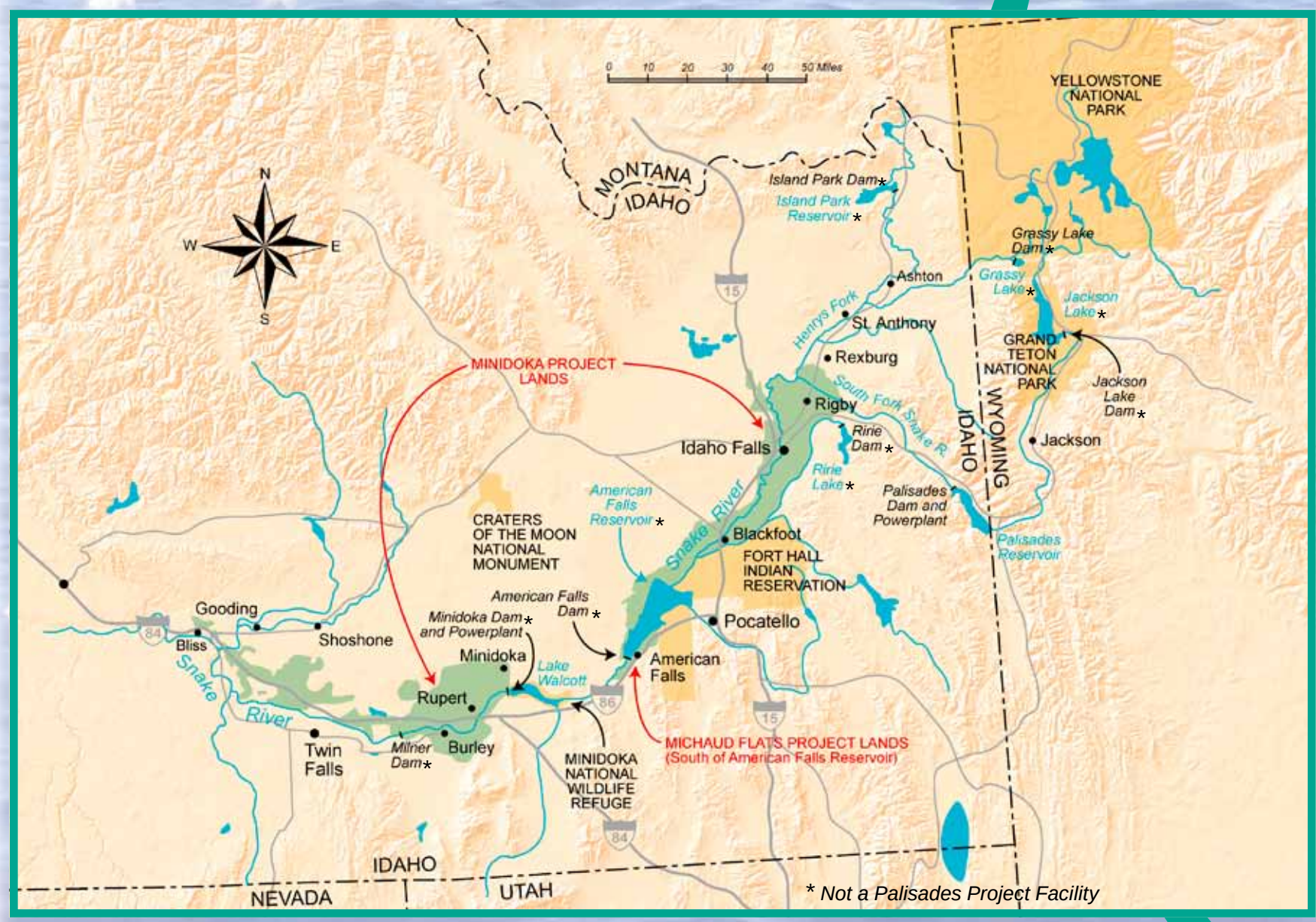
What's In Palisades Project

Palisades Project includes Palisades Dam, Reservoir, and Powerplant on a 5,200-square-mile drainage basin. The project transformed an area plagued by droughts and floods into an area with a dependable water supply.

World Famous River

Many people experience the joys of rafting and fishing on the Henrys Fork and the South Fork of the Snake River. The South Fork has one of the two remaining large river system populations of Yellowstone cutthroat trout and is known as one of the best fly-fishing streams in the West. A cooperative effort among Reclamation and several entities is working toward the long-term ecological health of the South Fork to maintain the outstanding fishery in this reach.





Recreation In Nature's Beauty

Palisades Reservoir, in scenic Caribou-Targhee National Forest, has a 16,000-acre water surface favored by tourists and local residents alike. The reservoir and its 70-mile-long shoreline offer fishing, boating, waterskiing, camping, picnicking, and sightseeing activities.

Holding Back Flood Waters

Palisades Reservoir helps reduce flooding in the Snake River valley, where average annual runoff is more than 4.9 million acre-feet. Reclamation operates Palisades Reservoir and Jackson Lake (Minidoka Project) to keep some space empty in both reservoirs during the flood season. This space can temporarily store heavy snow melt and precipitation runoff to reduce downstream flooding. Without these actions, extensive flooding would have occurred six times between 1971 and 2000.

Electricity for Idahoans

Palisades Dam Powerplant, with a total generating capacity of 176,600 kilowatts, is the largest Reclamation power facility in Idaho. It generates about 740 million kilowatt-hours of electricity each year—enough to serve a city the size of Idaho Falls. Bonneville Power Administration receives and sells the electricity not used to operate irrigation system facilities. Money from the sales helps pay the cost of constructing and operating Palisades Project.

USGS, Peter Rissler

Water for Fish and Wildlife

Reclamation coordinates with several State and Federal agencies on Palisades Reservoir releases to benefit the downstream fishery.

Across State Lines

Idaho, Wyoming, and Reclamation cooperate in providing the most efficient uses of Snake River and Palisades Reservoir water. Wyoming holds storage space in Palisades Reservoir that can be exchanged for upstream water to enhance Wyoming streamflows or increase Jackson Lake storage.