



# DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

## INFORMATION SERVICE

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION  
Region 1 - Boise, Idaho

**ADVANCE  
RELEASE**

FOR RELEASE to P.M.'s Saturday, July 10:

BOISE, Idaho - Remarks of United States Commissioner of Reclamation Michael W. Straus at the ceremony marking the start of construction on the main structure of the Hungry Horse Dam, Kalispell, Montana, Saturday, July 10, 1948.

### HUNGRY HORSE -- A DREAM COME TRUE

It's good to be here this great day. We have reached the turning point in the road that Reclamation and the people of the flathead valley have traveled together in partnership for about a third of a century.

Reclamation's congratulations to the men of vision, courage, and action--men of Montana who wouldn't be denied, whose eyes lifted from the dust to the stars, who knew what they wanted, and who wanted something worth while--and got it. Here today, Hungry Horse Dam is a dream come true.

The Bureau of Reclamation, your service agency and partner in behalf of Uncle Sam, knows something about dams. Hungry Horse is one of the great water control projects not only of the United States but of the world. Finished it will be the fifth highest and fourth largest concrete dam ever built by man--exceeded only by Grand Coulee itself down the Columbia River, Boulder south on the Colorado River, and Shasta in California.

Reclamation, as your working partner, also knows something of the long and rough road over which you have toiled--as any community must toil--to get to where you are today. So far it has been hard going and uphill. But this is the turning point--from here in you are sure of success. It was way back--a third of a century or about two wars ago--that the United States Geological Survey of the Department of the Interior was talking about the possibilities of the Hungry Horse damsite. Twenty years ago--that was back in the 70th Congress--they even had a bill, that didn't pass, for Hungry Horse Dam. When



I married a young Montana schoolmarm who taught in the Hillside School, Mission County, over the ridge near St. Ignatius--and she is still Mrs. Straus and our children now are in college--folks around here were saying that Hungry Horse Dam should be built--and soon. Four years ago--about this time of year-- I remember coming out to Kalispell with a group of Senators and eating half a bushel of Flathead cherries and also testifying for two days at a hearing on Hungry Horse.

Well, today, you and Montana and the whole Columbia River Basin are sure of Hungry Horse Dam. Dirt flew with the first blast as we began building the main structure this morning. Nothing can stop it now. Reclamation likes it and let me, for Uncle Sam, salute you, our partners in this great venture. I would like to name them all but I will mention only a few, such as the men of Montana:

Governor Sam Ford

Congressman Mike Mansfield

ex-Senator B. K. Wheeler

State Engineer Fred Buck

Senator Jim Murray

Don Treloar

Al Winkler

And on the other side of the partnership, let us recognize the men of Reclamation:

Clyde Spencer,  
construction engineer

Leslie McClellan,  
Chief Engineer of Reclamation

Bob Newell,  
regional director

Bill Warne,  
once Assistant Commissioner of  
Reclamation and now Assistant  
Secretary of the Interior

And the builders in the contracting field:

General Construction Company

The Shea Company

Morrison-Knudsen Company

and such men as Henry Morrison, who have dotted the West and the world with great dams.



Now, I am going to leave to Assistant Secretary Warne, because he's an expert, the job here today of laying out the relationship of Hungry Horse to the comprehensive Columbia Basin development. He did that task so well four years ago before the Congress that they authorized the project, and he will do it better today. Also, I don't want to waste your time and my breath talking about the need or the blessings of multiple-purpose flood-control, irrigation, and power dams here in the Pacific Northwest. You are outstanding pioneers in that field. Selling hydro power and irrigation water in this country is too easy. It would be about as hard as persuading a starving man to take a sandwich. I want to talk about Hungry Horse and the West's Reclamation program.

Hungry Horse is a big one--a big one in anybody's league. Congress authorized it for "not less than a million acrefeet. But you and I decided to build it to hold a reservoir of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  million acrefeet--a major, new, deep, 40-mile-long lake that man is adding to Montana's geography. We'll need every acrefoot of that storage.

Now, we know you have heard some sincere citizens lacking in vision say that's "too big." There will arise somewhere in this land prophets of doom and corporals of disaster who say it is a "waste" or that nobody needs it or that it will be a "white elephant." Listen to them courteously, but let me tell you Reclamation's experience. Every time we build a dam--and we have built hundreds of them--we have heard the same calamity howl. We heard that Boulder was "too big" so it was built. We heard that Grand Coulee was "beyond all reason" so it was built. And we heard the same thing about Shasta so we built it bigger than originally planned. Now, today we find that we didn't build them big enough. Everyone we build is too small to do the job that the growing West's economy demands. And you are having to build more of them.



So, we are going to start by building Hungry Horse full size--a giant concrete arch plug in the canyon of Flathead, 520 feet high and 2,100 feet long. It will take the best part of five years to move the approximate three million cubic yards of material into this plug and to get all the generators, turbines, and fixings into place. It is going to be a long hard job, and you and Reclamation will think it's a good job. Then after we get done--say, about 20 years from now--our grandchildren who will require and who will get more water and power will say: "Grandpappy, you old fud-duddy, why didn't you build Hungry Horse big enough back in 1948 and save us from having to go out and build bigger and better ones around here now."

It takes a lot of hay to fatten up Hungry Horse--as I found out a couple of months ago when Reclamation awarded the main contract for the dam and power plant with a face value of \$43,431,000. That happened to be the second largest contract in Reclamation's history--second only to Boulder Dam. But that's only one of the hundreds of contracts, for this is a project which, while it happens to stand in the Flathead Valley, is truly national in scope. In Schenectady, New York, craftsmen of General Electric, which has a \$4,414,000 contract to build 4 giant 75,000-kw. Hungry Horse generators, are at that task. These generators are to roll out across the country to this site in pieces in a flock of freight trains. In Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Allis-Chalmers' workmen with a \$2,150,000 contract are fashioning four hydro turbines through which Flathead water will spin those generators. In Colorado, Washington, and elsewhere, cement mills are kilning 2,500,000 barrels of cement to plug this gulch. Before this national job is finished, the people in every state in the Union will have worked and made a contribution to this dam.

But even if it takes a lot of hay to fatten up Hungry Horse, that hay will be forthcoming. Uncle Sam has already tossed about \$20,000,000, in the form of appropriations, into the manger. With that stake in this partnership, he won't



quit. Congresses still to be elected, the 81st and the 82nd, will have the task of financing this job to completion. Uncle Sam will get his money all back—and more—in the form of new productive wealth and new strength—irrigated land, flood-free communities, and particularly from hot kilowatts created through this work. As the waters of the Flathead are released from this reservoir, they will not only whirl Hungry Horse generators but also those in and to be placed in every plant down the Columbia River from here to the Pacific Ocean, including Bonneville, Grand Coulee, Rock Island, Kerr, and McNary. For my money as a taxpaying citizen of this Nation, I don't know of a better investment that Uncle Sam makes than in this type of wealth-creating permanent assets—they're better than dollars in the bank.

Now, lean back far enough from Hungry Horse to take a look around at the whole Reclamation program over 17 western states, of which this is but one item. The West has been in a reclamation partnership with its Federal Government for almost half a century now. This is nothing new or untried—although a lot of good people back East don't seem to have heard of it yet. During that half century, your Government, through Reclamation, has invested just a little over a billion dollars in Federal Reclamation that with new wealth creates new communities and produces food that a hungry world needs and power that sparks new industry. In the single year of 1947, the last food year for which we have full reports, the lands watered by Federal irrigation produced crops that had a value of \$555 million—half of the half-century's investment back in crop values in a single year, and that's a rate of return that makes even a tax collector grin. Beyond that, this investment created new communities and new industries by providing new electrical power, such as the new light metals industry here in the Pacific Northwest. Kilowatts do not only flow from the Government but they also bring strength back to the Nation. This year Reclamation power revenues



alone are going to amount to \$25 million and they are going to keep right on flowing into the Treasury in increasing volume for years into the future. It pays to feed up Hungry Horse until it's a work animal that earns its keep.

Less than a month ago, the 80th Congress adjourned after having acted on the West's annual reclamation program, including some funds for Hungry Horse. They appropriated \$245,566,139 for Reclamation in 17 states and made some minor inroads against Reclamation public power and anti-monopoly land laws, but these inroads were infinitesimal compared to the attack. There are quite a few things that you could say about this \$245 million appropriation for western land and water development. One might be that it was less than the President asked. Another might be that it was by far the largest annual reclamation appropriation in history. But probably the most sensible thing to do would be to stop playing this historical mathematical numbers game, take our eyes off the rear-vision mirror and look ahead down the route we must go to build the West that this Nation must have with water and its power. We won't do that measuring with the yardstick of yesteryear. To achieve the West's destiny and satisfy the Nation's demands for food, power, and water in the economy of today and tomorrow, we must measure our movement and our investment to meet the requirements of today and tomorrow.

This reclamation that you of the West have developed is one of the firmest contributions to our national strength and economy. And you have done it under the Reclamation Law that the West developed and the Congress passed. There are certain firm foundations in that Reclamation Law having to do with the greatest good for the greatest number and adverse to monopoly—monopoly of two fundamental resources of the people: water and power. Past Congresses wrote into the Reclamation Law that Reclamation should generate public power, transmit and distribute it widely with preference to public bodies, which requires transmission lines,



and that Reclamation should provide water to individual family-sized irrigation farms rather than serve vast corporate agriculture. I happen to be a great admirer of those laws written by the Congress. But some people don't like those laws. Some of Reclamation's opponents are from far away from the West and are plainly ignorant about irrigation. They've never seen it. Others are simply selfish and are groups or corporations who want to control or monopolize the benefits. Sometimes they are corporations who don't want the Government to have certain transmission lines to distribute low-cost power. These would interpose their own private utility lines between the people and the people's dam. There has been some of that in Montana.

You have probably heard of some of the rukus in the 80th Congress over attempts to end those basic Reclamation principles. It was quite a scrap. But I am happy now to report to you that even if a few officials such as myself got pushed around a bit, the 80th Congress recessed without scuttling any of those fundamental anti-monopoly provisions of the Reclamation Law.

That's important to you for those laws are cornerstones on which this Reclamation philosophy rests and on which these great developments have gone forward. Without this public power policy and anti-monopoly rule for irrigated land and water, Reclamation western development, as you know it and have it, cannot prosper. Certainly, without the public power features in existing law, there would be no jubilee here today--there would be no Hungry Horse Dam. There couldn't be because here your Government is definitely entering the low-cost power production field. And it plans to make not only this Hungry Horse power but all the power from here to the Pacific Ocean available to its citizens over transmission lines which they own. That was the justification on which Uncle Sam undertook this task. Pull out the foundation from under it and the plan collapses--there would be no justification for going on with this task.



There are two great days in any Reclamation work. One is the day, such as we have reached this day, when after years of strivings the dirt starts flying on the main works. But that's only half the course. The next great day is when there is water in the ditch or hot kilowatts start flowing over the lines. Reclamation is not building Hungry Horse as an exercise. We will not have succeeded until our end purpose of achieving the power and water benefits is attained. We plan that second great day for Hungry Horse when the first generator is put in in June 1952 with all of them on the line by June 1953. You and Reclamation have to protect and guard this work until it accomplishes its mission and then you have to protect and guard it from then on, so that it truly brings you the benefits for which it was conceived. Stand alert and firm to its defense and don't let it be injured. Serve it well and it will serve you well.

No one has yet found the life span of such a dam as Hungry Horse. If we protect it, it will be serving this community after everybody in Montana today is dead and gone--a hundred, five hundred, or a thousand years--as long as water runs downhill--perhaps forever.

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