



## SELECTING LAND FOR FARMS COLUMBIA BASIN PROJECT

Within the boundaries of the Columbia Basin Project lie 1,029,000 acres of land which the Bureau of Reclamation has found suitable for successful irrigated agriculture. Also within these boundaries is considerable land that has been excluded from development under irrigation because of its sandy or stony nature, or its rough topography. This leaflet is intended to acquaint prospective settlers with the things they should know about project lands before selecting acreage for farms.

MOST LANDS PRIVATELY OWNED - During the period from 1890 to 1910, when rainfall was above normal, nearly all the land in the Basin was homesteaded. While much of this land eventually was abandoned as far as dry farming was concerned, a high percentage still remains in private hands. Some of the land, acquired through Government grants, is still owned by railroads. Small portions of the project lands are owned by the State of Washington and the counties involved. The most recent tabulation by the Bureau of Reclamation shows the ownership divided as follows: State of Washington, 6.1%; railroads, 3.4%; counties, 2.2%; United States, 9.5; all others, 78.8%.

In anticipating settlement of the project under irrigation, it is expected that much of the land will be developed by the present owners. Some may not wish to develop their land, or may have more than a landowner is permitted to retain. Such property may be sold to persons who wish to develop an irrigated farm, or to the Government. Land bought by the Government will be segregated into farm units, and later sold to qualified settlers.

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION WILL LAY OUT ALL FARMS - Prospective buyers of land for farms on the Columbia Basin Project should consider a number of factors. First, the size and shape of farm units definitely will be platted and established by the Secretary of the Interior. A person cannot buy a tract of land for a farm now with any assurance that the size and boundaries of the farm purchased will be the same as those finally established by the Government as a necessary precedent to receiving water.

The Columbia Basin Project Act requires that farm units on the project will be



of a size adequate to support an average farm family. Because the soils on the project vary quite widely in their productive capacity, it is evident that there will be a considerable variation in the sizes of farms.

ALL LANDS ON THE PROJECT CLASSIFIED FOR PRODUCTIVENESS - As a basis for establishing the size of each family-size farm unit, all land in the project has been carefully classified as to the productive capacity of the soil. A brief description of the various land classes follows:

Class 1 land has deep soil, has not more than 5% slope, and is well suited to the production of row crops, such as potatoes, sugar beets, and truck crops, as well as hay and pasture.

Class 2 is divided into two principal sub-classes, 2T and 2S. Soil classified as 2T (T for topography) has practically the same depth and quality as Class 1, but may have up to a 10% slope, and the land may be more rough in contour. Sub-class 2S (S for soil) may be slightly more shallow than Class 1 and may be slightly lighter or more sandy in texture. A limited acreage of Class 2 was rated 2R because of loose rock in the plow zone. There are likewise combinations that have differences in both soil and surface, like 2ST. Class 2 land is well adapted to diversified farming, but should not be farmed as intensively as Class 1.

Class 3 land also is divided into two principal sub-classes, 3T and 3S. Land in these sub-classes is irrigable, but is suitable principally for the production of hay, and for pasture. Some Class 3R land has been mapped because of loose rock in the top six inches of soil, which makes intensive tillage difficult. As in the case of Class 2, there are some combinations of sub-classes, such as 3ST.

Land that is too rough, steep, sandy, rocky, or for other reason is unsuited for economical farm operations, is termed Class 6, and will not be supplied with irrigation water.

DELAY RECOMMENDED IN LAND PURCHASE - The Bureau of Reclamation recommends that purchase of land for farm units on the Columbia Basin Project be delayed until the farm-unit plat for the area in which the buyer is interested has been approved. This will make it possible to acquire a farm unit of the size and shape which will meet the standards of the Columbia Basin Project Act, and to avoid the possibility of having to buy or sell land to make farm boundaries conform with those of the Farm Unit Plat.

If, however, the prospective settler does buy land before farm units have been laid out, it is recommended that he buy at least 80 acres if the land is largely Class 1 or a combination of Classes 1 and 2. If the land under consideration is largely Class 2 or a combination of Classes 2 and 3, he should buy at least 120 acres. If the land is largely Class 3, and particularly if there is some Class 6 included, he should acquire 160 acres.

While farm units, as they are finally determined, may not be as large as outlined in the foregoing, it would be better to have a few acres of excess land than to have to buy additional land. Even if a person has sufficient acreage for a standard farm unit, it may be necessary for him to exchange land with adjoining landowners in order to conform the boundaries of his farm unit with those of the approved Farm Unit Plat.

Maps of every section (640 acres) within the project, showing land classification in detail, are available for examination at the Bureau of Reclamation office at Ephrata, Washington. Single section maps can be purchased for 25 cents each, by writing to the Bureau of Reclamation at Ephrata or Coulee Dam. Anyone considering the purchase of project land should determine its classification and its appraised value before buying.

ALL COLUMBIA BASIN LANDS APPRAISED - In the development of large areas of new land under irrigation, there is often a tendency to buy and sell lands for more than their true values. Payment of inflated prices for unimproved "raw" land, in addition to later costs for clearing, leveling, irrigation system, farm buildings, farm equipment, and livestock, might easily bring about a total investment that would be quite burdensome.

To protect settlers from this, Congress provided in the Columbia Basin Project Act certain anti-speculation features. One resulted in the appraisal of all irrigable land in the project, by an impartial and well-qualified board of appraisers, on the basis of its value for grazing or dry-farming purposes, and without giving consideration to the added value that irrigation might bring. Another provision prohibits the Bureau of Reclamation from supplying water to farm land not covered by a Recordable Contract. Also, if land covered by a Recordable Contract is sold above the appraised price, the right of that property to receive water may be cancelled. And under existing regulations, the Government can decline to execute a Recordable Contract on lands which have been purchased for more than the appraised price. The anti-speculation provisions remain in effect as to any particular block of land until five years after first water is available to the block.

Appraisal information for any tract in the project may be obtained free from the Bureau of Reclamation at Ephrata or Coulee Dam.

ALL FARM LAND TO BE UNDER RECORDABLE CONTRACTS - Prospective purchasers of land for a farm on the Columbia Basin Project should inquire whether a Recordable Contract has been executed for the land in which they are interested. This contract between the landowners and the Government provides that the Bureau of Reclamation will supply water to the land concerned, and that the landowner will abide by the anti-speculative and farm-unit division features of the Columbia Basin Project Act.

Most landowners signed Recordable Contracts before the April 9, 1946 deadline, but a considerable number could not be located, and others have not signed for various reasons. Under certain conditions, and before expiration of the time limit set by law, such lands still may be included under the provisions of Recordable Contracts. Before buying land not covered by a Recordable Contract, the purchaser should carefully investigate this matter and consult the Bureau of Reclamation.

WITHDRAWN LAND - Owners of land within the three irrigation districts of the Columbia Basin Project were allowed to withdraw part or all of their land prior to the date set for voting on repayment contracts between the irrigation districts and the United States. About 300,000 acres, largely dry-farm wheat land, were withdrawn under this privilege. Such land is not now eligible to receive water, and will not be in the future unless first sold to the Government. For this reason, persons who expect to secure a farm for irrigation should not buy withdrawn land. Information on withdrawn land also can be secured from the Bureau of Reclamation at Coulee Dam or Ephrata.

EXCLUDED LAND - Certain areas of rough topography and poor soils were not considered suitable for development under irrigation. Such areas were excluded from the irrigation districts and will not receive water. Purchasers should determine whether the land they are considering is in such an area.

CONFORMING OWNERSHIP BOUNDARIES TO FARM UNIT BOUNDARIES - Within two years of the time that water is to be made available to a given block of land, the Bureau of Reclamation will prepare a farm unit plat, outlining in detail the boundaries of each farm unit in the block. These will follow present ownership boundaries where practicable, but to a great extent they will follow such natural boundaries as roads, canals, ridges, and coulees. This will make it necessary, in many cases, for landowners to make land exchanges. Such transfer or exchanges are required to be made on the basis of appraised dry-land values.

If a person owns more project land than he is entitled to retain under the law, such "excess land" must be sold at appraised values for inclusion in other farm units.

When any land covered by a recordable contract is sold, or contracted to be sold, an affidavit describing the land and giving the consideration involved must be filed with the County Auditor of the county in which the land lies within 30 days after the conveyance or contract. This affidavit may be filed by either the buyer or the seller. Forms for such affidavits can be secured from the County Auditor or Bureau of Reclamation offices.

SEQUENCE OF IRRIGATION DEVELOPMENT - Consideration should be given also to the probable date water will be delivered to various areas within the project.



While this will depend on various factors, such as appropriations, and the availability of labor and materials, information is now obtainable from the Bureau of Reclamation as to whether certain areas will be irrigated relatively early or late in the general development of the project.

PREMATURE DEVELOPMENT OF LAND IS RISKY - By reason of the various considerations discussed, owners can see that it would be unwise to develop their land until farm units are definitely determined and the arrival date of water is known. Land cleared of brush may become badly wind-blown. Leveling operations might not be in accord with the best layout of irrigation ditches. Farm buildings might be constructed without proper regard to the permanent farm-unit boundaries. Dry farming of small holdings of land during the period before water comes will, in most cases, be unprofitable.

"DO'S" AND "DON'TS" IN BUYING LAND - Those who may contemplate the purchase of land in the Columbia Basin Project for an irrigated farm should consider the following list of "Do's" and "Don't's" in buying land:

1. DO - Check land classification and appraised values at Bureau of Reclamation offices.
2. DO - Determine whether a Recordable Contract, covering the land offered for sale, has been signed.
3. DO - Determine approximate date first water will be available.
4. DO - Buy sufficient land to comprise a complete farm unit.
5. DO - If the land purchased is covered by a Recordable Contract, file an affidavit with County Auditor describing conveyance, or contract of sale, and price involved.
1. DON'T - Pay more than the appraised value.
2. DON'T - Buy lands which have been withdrawn or excluded from the irrigation districts.
3. DON'T - Buy land not covered by a Recordable Contract if you have to pay more than the appraised value, or if the period for signing Recordable Contracts has expired.
4. DON'T - Develop or improve land before farm-unit boundaries have been established.
5. DON'T - Buy land as a speculative investment. Provisions of the Columbia Basin Project Act rule out the probabilities of gain through speculation.

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Direct inquiries to the

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Ephrata, Wash., or Coulee Dam, Wash.

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