

Reclamation Manual

Policy

- Subject:** Determination of Irrigation Suitability of Proposed Project Lands, and Identification of Lands That May Receive Project Irrigation Water on Operating Projects
- Purpose:** Establishes requirements for irrigation suitability land classification associated with Reclamation activities and specifies which lands on operating projects may receive project irrigation water.
- Authority:** Reclamation Project Act of 1902 (32 Stat. 388), Fact Finders Act of 1924 (43 Stat. 702, 43 U.S.C. 462), Omnibus Adjustment Act of May 25, 1926 (44 Stat. 636), Reclamation Project Act of 1939 (53 Stat. 1192, 43 U.S.C. 485g), and the Reclamation Reform Act of 1982 (96 Stat. 1261, 43 U.S.C. 390 et seq.).
- Contact:** Office of Program and Policy Services, Water and Environmental Resources Office, D-5500
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1. **Introduction.** Reclamation is required by statute to assess the irrigation suitability of proposed project lands to support new projects that include an irrigation purpose. The Secretary of the Interior (Secretary) must determine the suitability of lands of each new project with respect to their ability to support a family and pay water charges so that all lands may bear the burden of cost according to their productive value.¹ Reclamation utilizes the irrigation suitability land classification (land classification) process to determine if the preceding criteria have been met. This policy and the associated Reclamation Manual (RM) directives and standards, *Irrigation Suitability Land Classification for New Projects or Operating Projects*, WTR 06-01, state the requirements for land classification.

Once a project is operating, Reclamation will only deliver project irrigation water for lands exhibiting certain required characteristics. These characteristics are stated in this policy. This policy also specifies lands to which project irrigation water will not be delivered.

2. **Responsibilities.** Land classifications conducted by Reclamation to support authorization and construction of new projects, or new blocks, units, or divisions of a project (projects), must have the concurrence of the Secretary.²
 - A. **Commissioner.** The Commissioner is responsible for approving land classifications performed on lands for new projects before submitting them to the Secretary with a recommendation for concurrence.
 - B. **Regional Directors.** The Commissioner delegates to the Regional Directors the authority to perform and approve land classifications and/or reclassifications performed

¹ Factfinders Act of 1924, Subsection D .

² Ibid.

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on operating projects at the request of water user organizations. Each Regional Director is also responsible for:

1. Scheduling and completing land classification activities on lands for new projects then submitting land classification reports to the Commissioner with a recommendation for approval.
2. Ensuring all land classifications performed in their Region conform to the requirements of Reclamation policy and directives and standards, and are performed in a technically adequate manner.
3. Providing oversight within his/her region to ensure project irrigation water is only provided to lands with characteristics that allow delivery.

C. **Area Managers.** Area Managers are responsible for:

1. Supporting the Regional Director by completing land classification activities on lands for new projects, or by completing land classifications or reclassifications at the request of water user organizations on operating projects.
2. Monitoring activities within his/her area to ensure project irrigation water is only provided to lands with characteristics that allow delivery.

3. Definitions.

- A. **Operating Project.** Generally, an operating project is one for which the Secretary has 1) executed repayment and/or water service contracts,³ and 2) issued public notice of completion,⁴ even though additional blocks, units, or divisions may be added at a later time.
- B. **Project Irrigation Water.** Project water made available for irrigation purposes pursuant to a contract with Reclamation.
- C. **Project Water.** Surface or ground water, including project return flows, which is pumped, diverted, and/or stored, and for which Reclamation has the right of use. (See paragraph 3D of RM policy, *Voluntary Transfers of Project Water*, WTR P02, for a more detailed definition of project water.)

4. Land Classification to Assess Irrigation Suitability of Proposed Project Lands.

Land classification investigations provide supporting data for the authorization and construction

³ Omnibus Adjustment Act of 1926, Section 46.

⁴ Ibid.

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of new Reclamation projects with an irrigation purpose. Reclamation utilizes its land classification process during project investigations to ensure project lands to be included for irrigation will meet statutory requirements. Detailed information, including required procedures for the land classification process, are found in RM directives and standards, *Irrigation Suitability Land Classification for New Projects or Operating Projects*, WTR 06-01.

5. **Characteristics of Lands That Allow Delivery of Water on Operating Projects.** Federal reclamation law requires that a contract must be in effect between Reclamation and the water user organization prior to delivery of water⁵. This policy does not alter that requirement in any way. Reclamation has authority to deliver project irrigation water to lands, regardless of that lands' classification status or even if the land has never been classified, if the lands to receive the water exhibit at least one of the following characteristics:
 - A. Lands in a project area for which all irrigation construction repayment obligations associated with the provision of project irrigation water have been paid out.
 - B. Lands in a project area that are currently under a contract with Reclamation for delivery of water. Use of delivered water must be consistent with the provisions of the contract.
 - C. Lands that will only receive a temporary, unplanned supply of excess project water for one year or less.
 - D. Lands that will receive project water for non-commercial irrigation⁶.
 - E. Lands in a project area that have previously been classified by Reclamation as arable and irrigable through use of Reclamation land classification methodology.
 - F. Lands that have been exempted by specific legislation from the requirement for classification as arable and irrigable.
6. **Lands on Operating Projects to Which Project Irrigation Water Will Not Be Delivered.**
 - A. Reclamation will not deliver project irrigation water to lands that do not exhibit at least one of the characteristics set forth in paragraph 5 above.

⁵ Omnibus Adjustment Act of 1926, Section 46.

⁶ Non-commercial irrigation lands, as defined in RM policy WTR P02, *Voluntary Transfers of Project Water*, do not require land classification.

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- B. Reclamation will not deliver project irrigation water to lands that are designated as ineligible excess lands for acreage limitation purposes, unless covered under a contract pursuant to Section 215 of the Reclamation Reform Act of 1982.
7. **Classification and Reclassification of Lands on Operating Projects.** Nothing in this policy prohibits water user organizations from requesting to have project lands classified or reclassified. In addition, nothing in this policy overrides contract provisions that require periodic land classification or reclassification. All land classifications performed at the request of a water user organization or performed as required by contract will conform to requirements stated in RM directives and standards, *Irrigation Suitability Land Classification for New Projects or Operating Projects*, WTR 06-01.