

# CRM at the Bureau of Reclamation

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The U.S. Reclamation Service was created within the U.S. Geological Survey in July 1902. The new Reclamation Service—later to become the Bureau of Reclamation—studied potential water development projects in each western state with federal lands with the express purpose of reclaiming the arid and semi-arid West for settlement. Reclamation's first project, the Salt River Project in Arizona, got underway in 1903 and included construction of Roosevelt Dam (designated a national historic landmark in 1963). In addition to such major dams, Reclamation's projects often built hundreds of individual features including smaller diversion dams, flumes, siphons, and small head gates. (More information about Reclamation may be found on the Internet at <[www.usbr.gov](http://www.usbr.gov)>.)

After World War II, Reclamation entered into construction projects implementing congressional authorizations like those for the Pick-Sloan Missouri Basin Program, the Colorado River Storage Project, and the Colorado River Basin Project. Congress authorized approximately two-thirds of Reclamation's projects between 1944 and 1968. Among the most famous of these later projects were extensions of the Central Valley Project in California, Glen Canyon Dam, and the Central Arizona Project.

Reclamation's first encounter with professional archeology can be dated to the mid-1940s and the creation of the River Basin Survey. Reclamation's exposure to archeology at that time was limited in nature and duration. For two years, 1946 and 1947, it transferred funds to the National Park Service and Smithsonian Institution to conduct surveys in its proposed project areas. After 1947, its involvement with the River Basin Survey diminished and was restricted to giving the Park Service and the Smithsonian the locations of its proposed construction. The initial work of the survey was carried out under the authority of the Historic Sites Act of 1935.

As these extensive postwar construction projects were getting started, the American public began to develop a sensitivity toward environ-

mental issues. In the arena of historic preservation before World War II, general legislation covering archeological and historic resources was limited to the Antiquities Act of 1906 and the Historic Sites Act of 1935. The newer environmentally oriented legislation included the Reservoir Salvage Act of 1960, which was to provide for the preservation of historical and archeological data that might be lost as the result of dam construction. Soon afterward, the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 established a nationwide program for the preservation and protection of historic properties. These acts placed positive requirements on Reclamation regarding archeological, architectural, historical, and cultural properties affected by its projects, particularly properties that would be included in the National Register of Historic Places.

Other historic preservation mandates followed in the 1970s, including Executive Order 11593, "Protection and Enhancement of the Cultural Environment," in 1971 and the Archeological and Historical Preservation Act of 1974, which expanded federal responsibilities for protection of historic properties in all construction projects. As a result of these new responsibilities, Reclamation's first federal preservation officer, an archeologist, was hired in 1974. The federal preservation officer, while officially on the staff of Reclamation's Commissioner in Washington, DC, was stationed in Denver near Reclamation's seven regions in the West. In 1975 each region hired staff to deal with cultural resource issues, and as the number of issues grew, so did the staff. Today Reclamation's cultural resources staff numbers about 30 and includes prehistoric and historic archeologists, historians, architectural historians, and cultural anthropologists.

Reclamation has responsibilities for protecting cultural resources on the eight million acres under its jurisdiction (approximately four million of which are inundated) and for considering the effect of its actions on cultural resources on non-Reclamation lands. Reclamation constructed more than 180 projects in the arid and semi-arid West (17 western states), and these projects tend

## Ward Frederick Weakly

Dr. Ward Frederick Weakly, Bureau of Reclamation Senior Archaeologist and Federal Preservation Officer from 1974 to 1985, was among the earliest professionals appointed to guide federal bureau compliance after the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966.

In 1974 Reclamation thought its archeologists should focus on its huge new construction project, the Central Arizona Project. As senior archeologist, Dr. Weakly became the center of a small program, which grew as Reclamation management understood its needs. It was apparent by 1976 that the Central Arizona Project required full-time staff in the project area, while the other regions needed staff to deal with the new federal cultural resource management laws, regulations, and programs. When Dr. Weakly died of cancer in September 1985, the Reclamation's CRM staff numbered about 10 people who practiced the high professional standards that Weakly established and Reclamation maintains today.

After Weakly's death, the Colorado Council of Professional Archaeologists established the Ward Weakly Memorial Fund scholarship which honors all of CCPA's deceased members.



*Photo courtesy Bureau of Reclamation.*

to be heavily concentrated in river corridors that were the focus of prehistoric and historic settlement. In the 24 years that Reclamation has had staff archeologists, it has identified more than 15,000 sites.

In the context of today's historic preservation legislation, most of Reclamation's 180 projects are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places at least at the local and regional levels. They are significant in the broad historical patterns of water development, settlement, agriculture, and economic activity in the West. Therefore, Reclamation implements historic preservation law to deal not only with prehistoric and historic sites created by others, but to protect buildings and structures the bureau built to fulfill its historic mission of water development and distribution.

Like other federal land-managing bureaus, Reclamation must carry out its current primary mission (water resources management) and its cultural resources compliance with shrinking

budgets while its legislative mandates continue to expand. During the 1990s, the cultural resources program has acquired numerous new or expanded responsibilities from Indian trust assets policy, an executive order to protect and allow access to sacred sites, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, 36 CFR Part 79, "Curation of Federally-owned and Administered Archaeological Collections," and Departmental Manual 411, "Managing Museum Property."

A major component of this expansion of duties is acknowledgment that consultation and coordination with Indian tribes, on a government-to-government basis, is an integral part of Reclamation's mandate. No longer can a letter to a tribe be considered to fulfill the government's trust responsibilities. Under NAGPRA Reclamation will be consulting with more than 80 tribes regarding human remains, associated and unassociated funerary objects, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony located in 19 repositories as well as intentional and unintentional discoveries.

Another facet of this expansion of duties is the accountability for museum property under Reclamation's jurisdiction. This effort is motivated by an Interior Inspector General's audit which found that Interior's bureaus did not have control over or exercise responsibility for their collections. As part of its effort to eliminate material weakness for museum property, Reclamation has located collections in more than 80 facilities, with a total number of objects in excess of 4.5 million. Reclamation's museum property collection includes more than 200 pieces of fine art. (For more information relating to the art collection, see Stinger and Ferguson article, p. 48.)

Reclamation is one of the few federal bureaus that is actively participating with the National Park Service as they work to compile a list of all cultural resources reports in their database. The National Archeological Database is a computerized communications network for the archeological and historic preservation community and is a source of information on public archeology. This database was established to meet a congressional directive to improve access to information on archeological activities nationwide. Reclamation's entries number more than 3,500 reports. (Reclamation's contribution to the National Archeological Database Reports module can be found at <[www.cast.uark.edu/other/nps/nadb/nadb\\_brcl.html](http://www.cast.uark.edu/other/nps/nadb/nadb_brcl.html)>.)

Another aspect of Reclamation's interest in assuring that its CRM activities are efficient and economical is exemplified in its decision to invite other federal agencies to join with it in creating the Federal Preservation Forum in 1989. Reclamation has continued to actively support the Federal Preservation Forum with its goals of improving federal historic preservation programs by promoting constructive dialogue among participants and improving communications and cooperation between field personnel implementing programs and policy-making personnel in head offices. Additionally, Reclamation's staff are active in professional archeology and history organizations and particularly in the Society for American Archaeology's public education initiatives.

A recent initiative was the development of a cultural resources training course for the non-cultural resources professional. This two-day course is taught by Reclamation's contractor, Environmental Training and Consulting International. In 1998 a mini-course was developed that focuses on upper-management infor-

mation needs. This course was piloted by members of the target audience and will be offered five times a year at field office locations.

In addition to a traditional cultural resources management program, Reclamation has a history program that concentrates on historical studies, oral history, and preserving data about Reclamation's past. The history program also is the focus of activity for Reclamation's centennial celebration forthcoming in 2002. (More information regarding the history program can be found at <[www.usbr.gov/history](http://www.usbr.gov/history)>.)

Reclamation has an outstanding record of implementing federal cultural resource mandates. The work funded and carried out by the bureau has made significant contributions to understanding the prehistoric, as well as the historic settlement of the West. Reclamation is committed to maintaining the leadership role it has established.

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## **Elephant Butte Dam**

When completed in 1916, Elephant Butte Dam was among the largest dams in the world. Its construction, however, was the focal point of much controversy. During the late 1800s, population growth along the borders between the United States and Mexico led to increasing conflicts over the waters of the Rio Grande River. In 1896, Mexico protested a proposed dam on the Rio Grande near Elephant Butte, New Mexico, fearing the dam would reduce the amount of water available to Mexico. The matter was sent to the International Boundary Commission, which advised against the Elephant Butte dam and proposed an agreement between the two nations to provide equal distribution of the river waters. The U.S., having already granted permission for dam construction near Elephant Butte, obtained a decree permanently enjoining its construction.

Congress passed a bill in 1905 authorizing construction of Elephant Butte Dam as part of Reclamation's Rio Grande Project. Mexico protested that the bill did not recognize her rights to fair allocation of the Rio Grande waters. The U.S. responded by claiming absolute territorial sovereignty, although in May 1906 the two nations reached agreement. Under the signed treaty, the U.S. delivers 60,000 acre-feet to Mexico each year via the Rio Grande using water stored behind Elephant Butte Dam.

The 1906 treaty marked a major milestone in international water law and established a doctrine of cooperation among nations that has lasted almost a century. Although controversies surrounding water resources in border regions still exist, the treaty established a solid foundation on which later agreements could stand.



*Elephant Butte Dam, Rio Grande Project, New Mexico-Texas. Photo courtesy Reclamation/Denver.*