

# RECLAMATION

## *Managing Water in the West*

## Animas-La Plata Project

### Chronology of Events

The Animas-La Plata (ALP) Project, located in southwestern Colorado and Northwestern New Mexico, has been the focus of substantial public interest and environmental review since it was authorized. The following is a brief chronology of the project.

**1968** – Congress authorized construction of the ALP Project as a multi-purpose project with a projected water supply of nearly 191,200 acre-feet for irrigation, municipal and industrial use purposes in Colorado and New Mexico.

**1980** – The Bureau of Reclamation released a Final Environmental Statement for the ALP Project.

**1980-81** – With construction of the ALP Project set to begin, the Carter Administration suspended the initiation of new public works water projects.

**1986** – The Department of the Interior accepts a cost-sharing arrangement that calls for state and local entities to provide 38 percent of the up-front funding for the Project, resulting in phasing the ALP Project. Also, the Colorado Ute Indian Water Rights Final Settlement Agreement was signed.

**1988** – Congress passed the Colorado Ute Indian Water Rights Settlement Act to resolve the senior water rights claims of the Southern Ute Indian and Ute Mountain Ute Tribes. The Act allowed future development of the region and protected existing water uses.

**1990** – Based on new biological information, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service issued a draft biological opinion concluding that the project would jeopardize the existence of the Colorado pikeminnow. No reasonable and prudent project alternatives were identified at this time.

**1991** – The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service issued a Final Biological Opinion that contained a reasonable and prudent alternative that limited project water depletions from the Animas River to 57,100 acre-feet per year and included an endangered fish recovery program. The Biological Opinion lifted impediments to construction of the project.

**1992** – Legal actions brought forward by environmental organizations halted construction of the project.

**1996** – Reclamation released a Final Supplement to the Animas-La Plata Environmental Impact Statement.

**1996-97** – Colorado Governor Romer and Lt. Governor Schoettler held meetings with supporters and opponents of the project to address unresolved concerns associated with the original ALP Project and to gain consensus on future project alternatives. The meetings resulted in proposals for structural and nonstructural alternatives.

**1998** – The Department of Interior recommended construction of a substantially scaled-down project. The scaled-down alternative

was recommended as a means to address the Colorado Ute Indian Tribes' long-standing water right claims and to provide a solution for municipal and industrial water needs in the project area. The proposal eliminated irrigation and downsized the project to address the Endangered Species and Clean Water Act requirements.

**2000** – Reclamation released a Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision that identified the scaled-down project as the preferred alternative. The scaled down alternative provided the Colorado Ute Indian Tribes with an assured water supply and contained both structural and nonstructural components. Because this alternative would provide benefits to the Colorado Ute Indian Tribes that were not identical to those envisioned in the 1988 Settlement Act, it was recognized that Congressional authorization was needed to achieve final implementation.

Congress authorized the scaled-down project with the passage of the Colorado Ute Settlement Act Amendments of 2000. These amendments authorized construction of a reservoir, pumping plant and inlet conduit with an average annual depletion of 57,100 acre-feet.

Additionally, the Amendments included the Navajo Nation Municipal Pipeline and established a \$40 million Resource Fund for the Ute Mountain Ute and Southern

*(Continued on Back)*

More information: call 1-866-720-0918, email [d gates@uc.usbr.gov](mailto:d gates@uc.usbr.gov), or log on to <http://www.usbr.gov/uc> then click on ALP Project



Ute Indian Tribes for municipal and rural water development, as well as resource acquisition and enhancement.

**2001** - Approval was granted by Reclamation's Commissioner John Keys to initiate construction on the ALP Project and November 9, 2001 was established as the date of formal initiation of construction. Also, in 2001 the final design for the dam and pumping plant began.

**2002** - Four major tasks were initiated. First, field work began on the cultural resource mitigation program within the project area. Second, construction began on the inlet conduit pipeline sleeve at the site where a natural gasline crosses the path of the inlet conduit. The inlet conduit will carry project water from the Animas River to Ridges Basin Reservoir. The inlet conduit sleeve was completed in October of 2002. Third, Weemuniche Construction Authority began constructing haul roads to facilitate traffic during the construction of the dam and outlet works, and excavation started on the dam outlet portal. Last, a final route selection for the Navajo Nation Municipal Pipeline was initiated.

**2003** - The update of the Project Construction Cost Estimate reveals a potential increase of project costs from approximately \$338 million to \$500 million. The schedule for completing the project moves from approximately 2009 to 2011. Excavation work started on the right abutment of Ridges Basin Dam and the Durango Pumping Plant (DPP). From May to November, 108 blasts were fired at the footprint of the DPP to allow for excavation of rock at the pumping plant site.

**2004** - Construction continues on Ridges Basin Dam foundation excavation, with over one million cubic yards of material excavated. Durango Pumping Plant excavation, the intake structure, and fish bypass were substantially completed. Three new contracts were awarded: Materials Processing Plant contract in July; Durango Pumping Plant structure in August; and Outlet Works Tunnel Excavation in September. Preliminary design for the Navajo Nation Municipal Pipeline was completed. Ridges Basin Reservoir was renamed Lake Nighthorse to honor retiring Colorado Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell.

**2005** - Construction continued on the Durango Pumping Plant (DPP) structure. Erection of an onsite Sky Ute Sand and Gravel concrete batch plant at DPP was completed and brought into production. The foundation and first floor concrete in the main pumping plant bay were completed. Work was started and completed on the floor of the intake channel/fish screen. The intake and discharge manifold piping were installed and concrete encasement is continued.

Ridges Basin Dam Completion Contract was awarded in March. The curtain and blanket grouting were initiated on the foundation and both abutments. Placement of the various component zone materials including sand and filter drains, impervious clay core, and Zone 4 shell materials was initiated. The materials processing plant was brought into production; producing Zone 2 (sand), Zone 3 (gravel), Zone 6 (rock), and road base materials. On August 12, 2005, Ridges Basin Dam - Zone One Clay Placement Ceremony - was held. During the ceremony, religious leaders of the Colorado Ute Indian Tribes blessed the building of the dam and the structure.

The outlet works tunnel excavation hole-through was achieved in April. Excavation of the gate chamber was completed. Concrete invert tunnel lining in the upstream area was completed and initiated downstream. Construction of Basin Creek Drop Structures 5 & 6 was initiated. After additional value engineering analysis, drop structures 9 and 11 were eliminated.

**2006** - Construction continued on Durango Pumping Plant. Approximately 20,000 cubic yards of concrete were placed through the end of 2006 at the intake fish screen, plant, and air chamber structures. Installation, at the pumping plant site, of a portion of the 72 inch buried steel pipeline (Ridges Basin Inlet Conduit) was initiated and completed. In December, the contract to construct the remainder of the Ridges Basin Inlet Conduit was awarded.

Ridges Basin Dam construction continued. Approximately three million cubic yards of embankment zoned fill material were placed bringing the dam elevation to an average height of 6,783 feet. This is approximately 128 feet higher than the elevation at the conclusion of the 2005 construction year. At the end of the 2006 construction year, the embankment rose approximately 153 feet above the bedrock elevation of approximately 6,630 feet. Grouting operations continued on the dam (left and right abutments) and in the outlet works tunnel. The materials processing plant continued in full production until winter shutdown.

The outlet works tunnel upstream reinforced concrete lining and down stream arch lining were completed. Concrete lining in the gate chamber was initiated in late fall. The intake tower was completed to elevation 6,760 feet. Construction of Basin Creek Drop Structures 5, 6, 7, 8 and 12 were completed.