

**Interagency Collaboration Leads to Successful Implementation
on the Ashley National Forest**
- **High Lakes Stabilization Project – Clements Lake Dam Stabilization**



Clements Lake, Dam Breach Final Inspection - (September -2007)

Duchesne, Utah ... The Utah Reclamation Mitigation and Conservation Commission (URMCC), a Federal agency, and the US Department of the Interior (USDI) are authorized to complete the High Lakes Stabilization Project (HLSP), identified as a mitigation project within the scope of the Uinta Basin Replacement Project (UBRP), with the goal of stabilizing thirteen mountain lakes in the High Uintas Wilderness Area (HUWA) on the Ashley National Forest.

The purpose of the High Lakes Stabilization Project (HLSP) is to modify historic dam structures to a “No-Hazard” level, meaning the risk of damage to wilderness and downstream property resulting from potential floods would be no greater than if the dam was not there. Stabilization will restore wilderness characteristics by improving lake conditions and returning natural instream flow.

Clements Lake Dam in the Brown Duck Basin of the HUWA was stabilized in Fiscal Year 2007, at an approximate combined cooperated cost of \$650,000 and is the largest and most complex of the 4 dam structures stabilized so far.

Kevin B. Elliott, Forest Supervisor stated, “This has been an excellent demonstration of federal and state agencies cooperating to restore natural integrity within the High Uintas Wilderness.”

Project implementation was accomplished through collaboration and cooperation among the Forest Service, the aforementioned agencies, the Central Utah water Conservancy District, the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), the Moon Lake Water Users Association, the State of Utah, and Duchesne County Water Conservancy District.

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Cooperation from the nationally recognized Student Conservation Association (SCA) was also critical to successful project implementation.

Applicable wilderness law required that the stabilization activities utilized only the minimum tools necessary to meet project constraints. To eliminate the risk of damage to wilderness and risks to human health and safety, stabilization of each lake must be completed in one summer season. Work was accomplished on time at Clements Lake and in one season through a combination of hard working SCA hand crews, utilizing simple non-motorized tools, and Bureau of Reclamation equipment operators, using a few pieces of small mechanized equipment. Equipment was flown to the lake shore by a K-max helicopter. Utilizing the K-max helicopter avoided the risk of project delay and potential resource damage surrounding ground transport methods within a short operational time frame (July 10th to September 17th). Also, Forest Service and private commercial outfitter pack strings contributed to project success by ensuring that crew and project needs were met in a timely fashion. Forest Service and cooperator support and coordination, as well as frequent inspections, ensured proper stabilization that met on-site design needs.

“Surmountable obstacles arose and the project didn’t always go as planned but the Clement’s Lake stabilization is a true example of how interagency collaboration can work to benefit local needs and the wilderness resource. Each season of stabilization work will face unique challenges... I am confident that the Forest Service and our cooperators will surmount each one.” - R. Brian Paul, High Lakes Stabilization Coordinator.

In 2008 Brown Duck and Island Lake dams are currently being planned for stabilization using minimum tools at a projected cost of over \$1 million. Although heavier equipment will be required to accomplish the work in one season, cooperator ingenuity, dedicated conservation crews, and the use of heavy lift helicopters, as well as pack strings will make this project a success. In the future even more complex, remote and larger dams will be tackled. The mass of dam material will increase dramatically and may require the use of even larger mechanized equipment than will likely be used in 2008. Transportation logistics and constraints, as well as wilderness user group concerns over on-the-ground mechanized equipment transport methods, may lead to development of novel methods of equipment reassembly or changes in stabilization methodology.

In combination with other UBRP mitigation activities this stabilization project will also provide water to local users without dam maintenance. As a result of the location of project activities, the project purpose, and its positive impacts to the HUWA, the HLSP has gained much public support and interest. Although many public comments on the 2001 UBRP environmental document were in favor of complete removal of all dams proposed for stabilization, the dam structures will be modified and not completely eliminated, as they are culturally significant monuments of importance to the local community. The decision to construct a stable breach, rather than eliminate each historic dam, is consistent with the Wilderness Act of 1964 and the Utah Wilderness Act of 1984.

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The URMCC is responsible for mitigating the effects of the Uinta Basin Replacement Project (UBRP), as outlined in the 2004 UBRP Decision Notice and FONSI, and other Bonneville Unit (Central Utah Project) environmental mitigation.

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