
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

1.1 OVERVIEW

This Resource Management Plan (RMP) was developed for the Banks Lake area, in Grant County, Washington, in response to the growing demand for recreational opportunities and visitor facilities while balancing resource protection and conservation objectives. The plan is designed to guide conservation, protection, and management of land and water resources under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation). Developed by Reclamation to primarily receive and store irrigation water from the Columbia River for the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project, Banks Lake is managed to meet irrigation commitments, assure public safety, and protect property. Once these obligations have been fulfilled, Reclamation turns its attention to other resources like fish and wildlife and their habitats, cultural resources, recreational activities, and educational opportunities.

In 1953, under a memorandum of agreement (MOA), Reclamation transferred all the responsibilities dealing with fish and wildlife management to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), and the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission (SPRC) conceded to manage recreation. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) assisted Reclamation with the development of the RMP by preparing the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act Report (CAR) for the Banks Lake management area; the CAR is in accordance with the provisions of the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (FWCA) (48 Stat. 401, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 661 et seq.). Reclamation supports the completion of this RMP for the Banks Lake management area to direct future management decisions.

1.2 AUTHORITY

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), established by Congress in 1969, provides a mandate and a framework for federal agencies to consider all reasonably foreseeable environmental effects of their actions; hence an Environmental Assessment (EA) on the Banks Lake management area was performed and completed. The document focused on issues and concerns identified by the public and resource agencies during the scoping process. Reclamation initiated the public involvement efforts by collecting information from the public and representatives from state and federal agencies through a series of workshops, interviews, and consultations. Responding to input from the public and the agencies' concerns, an Ad Hoc work group, Reclamation, WDFW, and SPRC developed integrated management policies and actions to ensure the use of Reclamation lands and waters at Banks Lake maintain, protect, and enhance natural resources.

The AD Hoc work group, consisting of a broad cross-section of resource, Tribal, and local agency personnel, addressed both the public and the agencies' concerns by identifying the goals and objectives of the RMP. The EA informed decision makers and the public of the impacts associated with each alternative. Based on the outcome of Reclamation's environmental decision process, the resulting RMP was developed for the preferred alternative. "To balance management agencies' and the public's long-term vision for Banks Lake by recognizing the need to protect the natural and cultural environment while supporting the overall recreational interests

of the visitors.” The EA was also used to determine a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), and the management elements and objectives from the EA have been incorporated into the RMP. As approved and adapted by Reclamation, the RMP authorizes the coordination of adaptive management to ensure all future decisions in the planning area will include a multiple-use approach to natural resources.

1.3 APPLICABILITY

The EA was completed for Banks Lake to analyze and discuss the environmental consequences associated with three management alternatives (plus the no action alternative). Reclamation study team and decision makers selected Alternative B - Natural Resource Conservation with Limited Development - as the preferred alternative. Therefore, the scope of this RMP will *only* discuss the establishment and integration of Alternative B into Banks Lake management area. The RMP captures the goals and objectives of the Alternative B and examines each resource individually across the entire management area rather than examining related resources found in predetermined sections of the management area. This technique is referred to as a broad-scale approach and is particularly effective in natural resource management (Haufler et al. 1996).

Four management actions remained constant in all the alternatives because of existing laws, regulatory requirements, or Reclamation policy. Consequently, they are also included in the preferred alternative; the understanding is as follows:

- 1) Continue to meet all contractual obligations of the 1968, contracts between the U.S. and Columbia Basin Project (CBP) irrigation districts.
- 2) Continue to operate Banks Lake in accordance with Reclamation law and the Columbia Basin Project Act dated March 10, 1943 (Chapter 14, 57 STAT, 14).
- 3) Continue to meet existing operational constraints placed on Banks Lake water surface elevations due to CBP contractual obligations, agreements with the Pacific Northwest Power Planning Council, fish flow requirements established under the Endangered Species Act, and pump-storage power generation requirements.
- 4) Continue to administer Reclamation lands and waters through an updated MOA between the United States and Washington State. Day-to-day resource and recreation management activities will continue to be provided by the SPRC and WDFW with oversight by Reclamation.

1.4 PURPOSE

The purpose of this RMP is to provide management guidance and jurisdictional and administrative boundaries for the land and water resources at Banks Lake for a 10-year period. Management actions outlined by the RMP will be carried out as soon as the plan is accepted by Reclamation. Revisions to the plan should occur every 10 years, but no later than 15 years after the approval of the original plan. In the interim, the RMP will act as a “living document” that may be amended as needed by land managers and resource personnel with jurisdictional authority within the management area. Additionally, the RMP will provide direction for future proposed projects (while monitoring the progress of management prescriptions as they become implemented) in the Banks Lake management area.

Changes to the EA may require supplementary NEPA analysis and subsequent public involvement. This scenario will require an addendum document to the original EA but will not require the preparation of a new EA. NEPA documents do not expire; the original EA will be supplemented with the more recent information. However, some management actions (outlined by the RMP) may require site-specific NEPA analysis, particularly with actions that require ground-disturbing activities. While these projects will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, they will require a new NEPA document that pertains only to the management action(s) being proposed. The author should refer the readers back to the original EA for more information; this process is known as “tiering,” and it prevents the unnecessary duplication of documents. The authority to supplement the existing EA or tier to a new EA will be the responsibility WDFW and the SPRC with oversight from Reclamation.

1.5 PLAN STRUCTURE

The RMP is organized into thirteen chapters:

- 1 Introduction to the Banks Lake Resource Management Plan
- 2 Existing Resource Conditions at Banks Lake
- 3 Agency Coordination and Standards
- 4-10 Management Prescriptions for Each Resource Identified in the Plan
- 11 Mitigation Measures for the Desired Condition
- 12 Implementation of the Resource Management Plan
- 13 References

Subsections, corresponding with these chapters, can be located in the Table of Contents. Chapter 2, Existing Resource Conditions at Banks Lake, provides a general description of the management area’s existing natural, cultural, and visual resources. Chapters 4 through 10, specifically address each resource in the RMP including: (1) Natural Resources, (2) Cultural Resources, (3) Recreation, (4) Land Use and Administration, (5) Grazing Management, (6) Public Information/Awareness, and (7) Public Health and Safety. Chapters 4 through 10 outline the concerns, goals, and objectives for each resource by providing a protocol, or guideline, for the management agency to follow by describing the current management situation and establishing the expectations for the desired management condition in the management area. Chapter 11 presents the mitigation actions, or additional environmental commitments, made by Reclamation. Chapter 12 deals with the implementation of the RMP by outlining *how* the plan will be integrated into the management area; *when* it is expected to come into effect; and *who* will be responsible for managing, administrating, and monitoring the results.

1.6 MANAGEMENT AREA DESCRIPTION

One of the principal reservoirs of the Columbia Basin Project, Banks Lake occupies the basin floor of the Upper Grand Coulee Dam between the towns of Grand Coulee and Coulee City in central Washington. The lake is 27 miles long and encompasses an estimated 27,000-acre area at full pool; the reservoir’s elevation at full pool is 1570 feet (Figure 1.6-1). The management area focuses on an additional 17,000 acres of land around Banks Lake Reservoir.

Since the creation of Banks Lake in the early 1950s, the reservoir has been operated and maintained for the storage and delivery of irrigation water drawn from the Columbia River to the Columbia Basin Project lands. The water level fluctuates approximately 3 to 5 feet annually. The highest water levels usually occur in June, and the lowest water levels can be found in November. Eurasian Water Milfoil control and facility maintenance drawdowns, implemented on a 10 to 15 year cycle, require lowering the level of the lake approximately 20 to 25 feet during the winter.

At Dry Falls Dam, the main canal flows southward from the Banks Lake outlet to the northern portion of the project's irrigation area. Reclamation operates the reservoir within established constraints for surface water elevation to meet contractual obligations, assure public safety, and protect property; other resource needs are viewed as secondary within existing operational constraints.

The steep basalt and rhyolite cliffs of the Grand Coulee encompass the lake and limit human access and activities in the RMP management area, particularly on the west side of the reservoir. State Route (SR) 155 is the primary travel corridor along the reservoir's eastern shore between Coulee City and the south end of the lake and Electric City/Grand Coulee at the lake's north end. Local city and county roads also serve the Banks Lake area. Some shoreline areas are primarily accessed via the reservoir's primitive road network. These roads are generally unmaintained, two-track dirt roads that may require the use of high clearance four-wheel drive vehicles. Other shoreline areas can only be accessed by boat.

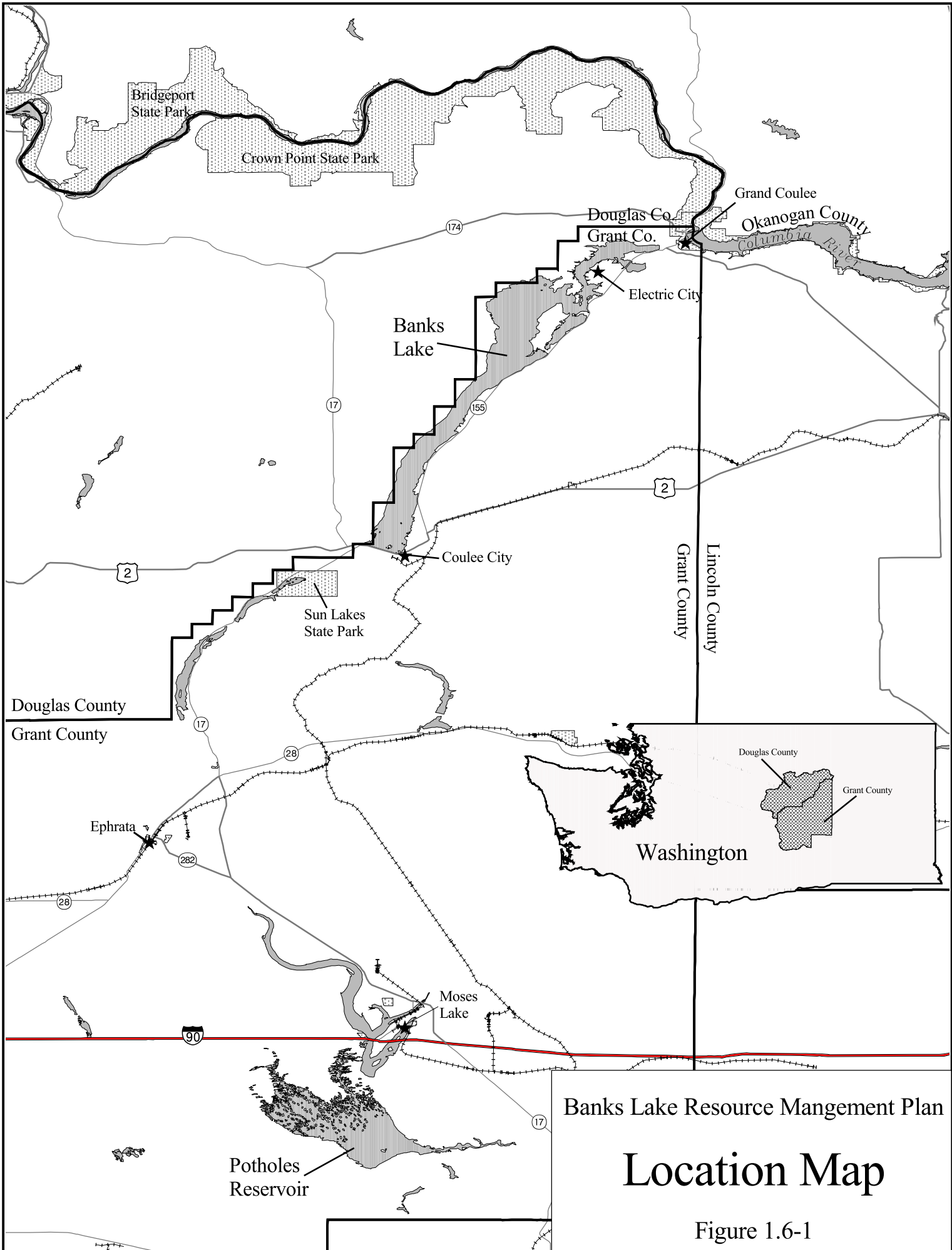
1.7 JURISDICTIONAL BOUNDARIES

Reclamation lands in the RMP management area are managed by Washington State under a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) expiring in 2003. Under the MOA, the SPRC and the WDFW are the principal state agencies responsible for essentially all Banks Lake land use activities. The State issues and administers all leases, licenses, permits, and concession contracts for the purpose of providing commodities and public services in the reservoir area. The Steamboat Rock State Park Recreational Area (SRSP), administered by the (SPRC), includes recreational sites and facilities both within the management area (Steamboat Rock State Park) and immediately adjacent to the management area (Northrup Canyon Natural Area). The Washington Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) maintains jurisdiction school endowment lands and administers Sunbanks Resort on Banks Lake.

The Northrup Canyon Natural Area is managed as part of the Steamboat Rock State Park Recreation Area by the SPRC; however it lies outside of the management area, and therefore is outside the scope of the RMP. Management actions and decisions potentially affecting the Northrup Canyon Natural Area are not included or assessed in the RMP except where related to actions within the RMP boundary. All state agencies affiliated with the Banks Lake management area operate with oversight from Reclamation since the lands were appropriated to the Reclamation from Congress.

Banks Lake lies primarily in Grant County, but portions of the western shoreline extend into Douglas County. Grant County provides law enforcement services in the management area. To ensure proper operation and protection of the reservoir, Reclamation maintains primary jurisdiction over developments in Reclamation zone, which includes North Dam, Dry Falls Dam,

and their appurtenant works. The National Park Service (NPS) and the (FWS) may review plans, as Reclamation deems appropriate.



Banks Lake Resource Mangement Plan

Location Map

Figure 1.6-1