

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation

Keeping an Eye on the Job

Civil Engineer

[music]

Jaime Huerta: I'm a civil engineer and I work for the Bureau of Reclamation. My duties are basically project management. We take the project from design and into the construction aspect. So once it gets awarded, we carry out the project from start to finish.

Basically I'm an onsite government representative. With our group I've been assigned as a lead project engineer. So not only do I handle the onsite work... I also take care of the office tasks. Keeping track of the progress where we're at now... making sure we're going to complete on time. Any technical submittals that come in, I handle... RFIs, which is a request for information.

The best part, I found out, is, you know.... I actually get to go out into the field, take a 2D drawing and build it. For me, as a new engineer, it's hard to envision the projects as 3D and actually being out here helps you see... take a 2D drawing and be able to envision in 3D in your head. It gives you a better sense of the constructability of the projects. And with that, you know, over the years your knowledge in these areas will increase.

A typical day.... It's, say, 75% out in the field, and then writing reports, tracking progress, keeping track of who did what, when, and where. And documenting everything. Taking pictures. Having the proper documentation on these projects is critical. If something comes up where the contractor's delayed... you know, it's either our fault [or] their fault. We determine that from the inspection reports. You keep track of quantities, making sure that the contractor's not billing you for, say, excess amount of concrete or something.

Usually the contractors are fairly good. There are little things that they may not catch that I may. So we're here to basically make sure that the project is built right and according to specs and, of course, to our safety and health standards.

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