

# RECLAMATION

*Managing Water in the West*

## GRAND COULEE DAM

### Visitor Center Exhibits *“Many Voices—One River”*



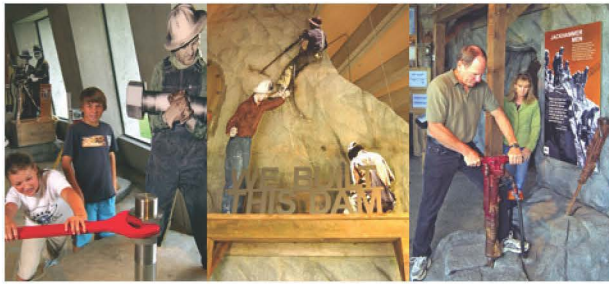
U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Reclamation



## About the Visitor Center

The Grand Coulee Dam Visitor Center was significantly upgraded in 2006, when new exhibits and displays were installed. The exhibits interpret Grand Coulee's role as the largest irrigation, flood control, and hydroelectric dam on the Columbia River. They also address the effects the dam has had on various groups of people, including Native Americans and early settlers. There are many hands-on exhibits such as a virtual reality fly-through tour of the dam, an operating jackhammer, and an interactive game about operating the dam.

The Visitor Center was built in the late 1970s as part of the dam's Third Powerplant expansion. It was designed by renowned architect Marcel Breuer to resemble a generator rotor. The Visitor Center was retrofitted in 2004 to meet seismic, life-safety, and accessibility standards.



The new exhibits were designed, manufactured, and installed by Formations, Inc., of Portland, Oregon.

## The Early Days

**We Built This Dam** - In the midst of the Great Depression, the construction of Grand Coulee Dam brought work and hope to thousands of jobless families. Their legacy is that they helped bring water to the thirsty landscape, security to downriver communities, and electrical power that transformed the economy of the Pacific Northwest.



This exhibit contains audio excerpts from interviews with people who were actually there.

## Power

### Powering the Northwest

The Northwest power system is extensive with Grand Coulee Dam as the cornerstone of the system. At 6,809 MW, Grand Coulee Dam is the largest hydroelectric facility in the United States, producing over 21 billion kW-hours of electricity each year.



This exhibit describes the extent of the Northwest hydroelectric system.

## Native Americans

**Our Stories** - The construction of Grand Coulee Dam affected the local landscape and the native people who had lived along the Columbia River for countless generations. What seemed a grand accomplishment to some was considered a destructive intrusion by many tribal members.



Interviews with six members of the Colville Tribe are a highlight in this exhibit.

## Managing Grand Coulee Dam

**Balancing Act** - Balancing operations to provide for competing needs such as flood control, power generation, irrigation, river flows for fish migration, and water for recreation can be challenging.



This exhibit allows you to make decisions concerning how Grand Coulee Dam is operated. It provides feedback on the benefits and consequences of your decision.

## Grand Coulee Visitor Center

The Visitor Center is located on State Highway 155 below the dam.

The Visitor Center is open daily from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., with extended hours for the summer between Memorial Day and the end of September. It is closed for Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day.

### Laser Light Show

Memorial Day – July 31	10:00 p.m.
August 1 – August 31	9:30 p.m.
September 1 – September 30	8:30 p.m.

### Tour Information

Free guided tours are available to the public during the summer season. The tour lasts about 45 minutes. For current dates and times of the tours, please contact the Visitor Center or visit the website.

### For More Information

Bureau of Reclamation  
Grand Coulee Power Office  
Grand Coulee Dam Visitor Center  
P.O. Box 620  
Grand Coulee, WA 99133-0620

(509) 633-9265

<http://www.usbr.gov/pn/grandcoulee>



## Irrigation

For some of its journey, the Columbia River carves through arid plateau lands. The dream that water from the river could be pumped up to irrigate the surrounding countryside was the original purpose for the development of the Grand Coulee Dam. That dream is a reality as the Columbia Basin Project irrigates more than half a million acres. The annual value of crops raised on these lands is well over half a billion dollars.

## Flood Control

Floods can devastate communities. Grand Coulee Dam is part of a flood control system that extends protection to communities all along the river. The water levels in Franklin D. Roosevelt Lake, the dam's 151 mile-long reservoir, are seasonally lowered to accommodate spring runoff from the mountains.