

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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SECRETARY MORTON SIGNS CENTRAL ARIZONA PROJECT WATER CONTRACT

Secretary of the Interior Rogers C. B. Morton today signed a history-making contract with the Central Arizona Water Conservation District for delivery of water and repayment of costs of the Central Arizona Project. Total estimated cost of the project for all authorized functions is about \$1.2 billion.

The signing opened the way for construction of the project which will supply water to the district encompassing Maricopa, Pinal and Pima Counties in Arizona and to the involved Central Arizona Indian Reservations. Construction will take 10 years or more depending on the rate of funding, the Secretary said.

The contract calls for delivery of Colorado River water through a series of pumping plants, aqueducts, tunnels and canals some 300 miles for municipal and industrial use mainly in the Phoenix and Tucson areas and for farmlands. The Central Arizona Water Conservation District, whose president Roger Ernst signed earlier, has agreed to repay the full amount of costs allocated to the District for construction, operation and maintenance.

After weighing all environmental and socio-economic factors, Secretary Morton signed the contract at a ceremony in his office in the presence of Arizona Congressmen John J. Rhodes and Morris K. Udall. The Secretary also issued a Secretarial decision to be published in the Federal Register establishing water use priorities and the principles for allocation of irrigation water. This followed an agreement which the Secretary reached in Phoenix on December 13 with leaders of five central Arizona Indian tribes for a change in the District's contract to remove all reference to Indian water allocations and priorities in that contract.

The tribes represented were the Ak-Chin, Fort McDowell, Gila River, Papagos, and Salt River.

In the allocation of project irrigation water Indian land shall receive a relative advantage over non-Indian land, the percentage of project water allocated to Indian lands to be determined by the Secretary,

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the decision said.

"Signing of these documents is in accord with the discussions and feelings of the five Indian tribes as expressed at the Phoenix meeting," the Secretary said.

Main physical features of the project sill extend southeast from Lake Havasu, above Parker Dam, to Tucson. Along the route will be 10 pumping plants to lift water some 1,800 feet and one reservoir northeast of Phoenix (Orme Dam), for regulation, storage and flood control. These facilities, plus Buttes Dam on the Gila River, are considered to be the main system of the Central Arizona Project.

In addition, there will be storage reservoirs on the Gila River in New Mexico (Hooker Dam) and on the San Pedro River in Arizona (Charleston Dam). Water will be delivered from Charleston Dam northeast to Tucson by means of at least one pumping plant and a 64-mile pipeline.

Central Arizona became eligible for the water under a Supreme Court decree of March 9, 1964. Delivery will average approximately 1.2 million acre feet annually.

Money is in the 1973 Federal budget to initiate construction, Secretary Morton noted. Interior's Bureau of Reclamation will be the lead agency in constructing the project.

J. R. Smith, Assistant Secretary for Water and Power Resources pointed out that the repayment contract carries the largest dollar repayment obligation of any single contract ever executed in the 71 year history of the reclamation in the West. Repayment will take place over 50 years.

Upon completion of construction, the operating responsibility may be continued by the United States or transferred to another entity. Secretary Morton noted that the district may be able to assume operational responsibility upon completion.

The Secretary noted that a final environmental impact statement was submitted to the President's Council on Environmental Quality on September 26, 1972, carrying out requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act. Detailed environmental statements for each major individual feature of the project also will be prepared as design data are assembled prior to construction.

"The Central Arizona Project will maintain and enhance the existing agricultural and urban economy by providing substitute water from the Colorado River, thus reducing the overdraft on ground water supplies," Secretary Morton explained, adding:

"The project will also provide a long-term supply of water for the rapidly expanding municipal and industrial development in the State. It is anticipated that augmentation of the river will eventually be accomplished to supply additional water, thus making a growing economy possible."

The Central Arizona Water Conservation District has authority from the State to tax properties up to 10 cents on each \$100 evaluation, recognizing the contribution of the water development to the local economy. The District will enter into subcontracts with farmer organizations, municipalities and others for the sale of water.

Joining the other officials at the signing were Interior Department Solicitor Mitchell Melich, Assistant Secretaries Harrison Loesch and James R. Smith and Reclamation Commissioner Ellis L. Armstrong.