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DEPARTMENT OF
WATER RESOURCES

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Exhibit 36

Excerpted pages of “Supplementary Water For
Irrigation In Idaho, With Particular Reference
To Boise And Snake River Valleys,” by R.W.
Faris, Idaho State Commissioner of
Reclamation,
(Oct.15, 1934)

SUPPLEMENTARY WATER FOR IRRIGATION IN IDAHO,
WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO BOISE AND SNAKE
RIVER VALLEYS

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By

R. W. FARIS,

State Commissioner of Reclamation

(Revised)

October 15, 1934

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Idaho has approximately two and one-half million acres of irrigated land, being third in area in the United States and exceeded only by California and Colorado. Farming by irrigation is Idaho's greatest industry. Over one-half of the people of the State depend upon irrigation, directly or indirectly, for their livelihood. The limit of the development of the irrigation resources of the State from the natural flow of streams has long since been reached, and resort has been had to storage, pumping from lakes and streams, and the development of subterranean water to supplement and augment the supply necessary to irrigate the lands under cultivation.

In years of normal precipitation and runoff, the supply has been reasonably adequate to meet all demands, except in some isolated sections; but during the past few years, and particularly the last three years, precipitation and runoff has been so meager as to create a deficiency in many districts.

We have just passed through the most serious and disastrous drouth in the history of the State. Reports from reliable sources indicate a crop loss of approximately \$25,000,000.00 in the Snake River Valley this year, due to shortage of water for irrigation, to say nothing of the appalling losses to the livestock industry and human suffering and distress involved, most of which could have been avoided had provision been made

for the conservation and utilization of our water supply. The situation is acute and disaster confronts many heretofore prosperous and self-sustaining communities unless supplementary and additional water can be provided to afford relief.

In certain sections of the State, supplementary water is available from various sources, but in some cases at a cost that is prohibitive, under existing conditions. In cases where no supplementary water supply is obtainable the cultivated acreage must be reduced to conform to the available water supply. Among the many localities where there is no possibility of obtaining an additional or supplementary water supply are the Big and Little Lost River projects, the Salmon River, Oakley, Raft River, Mud Lake, and many other projects similarly situated. In most cases the land owners in the projects where no additional water supply is available are taking steps to eliminate marginal lands to reduce the cultivated area to conform to the water supply. Considerable progress has already been made in that direction, but to accomplish the end, funds must be obtained from some Governmental agency such as the United States Bureau of Reclamation, the Public Works Administration, Reconstruction Finance Corporation, or from private sources.

As a condition precedent to securing such relief, surveys, examinations and investigations must be made to determine the feasibility and cost of affording relief to the various projects in distress. Few, if any, of these projects in this State have financial resources to enable them to make the necessary investigations, and if such investigations are to be made funds must be secured from some of the Governmental agencies now engaged in rehabilitation work, to cover the expense.

Among the projects requiring additional and supplementary water, where there is a possibility of securing such water, the SNAKE RIVER VALLEY

above the Milner dam and the BOISE VALLEY are outstanding because of the large acreage and vast interests involved, covering as they do more than half of the irrigated area of the State. These projects are remote, geographically, from each other, but in the consideration of some of the plans suggested for relief they become very intimately related. In what is generally referred to as the "Upper Snake River" or "Fall River section," there is a shortage of about 150,000 acre feet of water per annum under normal conditions, and on the main river above Blackfoot, something like 300,000 acre feet. If and when the Fort Hall Indian Reservation project is extended to cover Michaud Flats, between Pocatello and American Falls, as proposed, an additional 100,000 acre feet of water will be required, making a total shortage of 550,000 acre feet in Snake River Valley above Milner dam.

The United States Bureau of Reclamation, during the past two years, has made surveys and investigations in an effort to discover ways and means of relieving this situation by providing storage on the upper reaches of both the North Fork and the South Fork of Snake River. No report has been made disclosing the results of these investigations, but it is understood that a satisfactory reservoir site has been found on the North Fork, in the vicinity of Trude, Idaho, with a capacity sufficient to take care of that area. Investigations are now being made on the South Fork in the hope of being able to locate a site for a dam to form a reservoir of sufficient capacity to supply the deficiency on the main river. However, the American Falls reservoir has filled but twice since it was placed in operation, in 1926, so unless some plan or arrangement can be made to release or transfer some of the rights on the lower river at and below American Falls, under normal conditions, to say nothing of the extreme shortage of recent years, there is no water available for storage in such reservoirs. The rights that might be looked to to supply

this deficiency are those of the Idaho Power Company, with a primary storage right of 45,000 acre feet of water in the American Falls reservoir, and a secondary right of 255,000 acre feet to be drawn upon under certain limitations and restrictions, the right of the Minidoka project to divert something like 2,000 second feet, continuously, for the operation of its power plant at the Minidoka dam, and that of the canals diverting water at the Milner dam for domestic purposes during the non-irrigation season.

The runoff of Snake River for the climatological year, October 1, 1930 to September 30, 1931, inclusive, was the lowest of record, covering a period of thirty years, being only about 54 per cent of the average for the period.

During the non-irrigation season, from October 15, 1930, to April 15, 1931, the several canals heading at the Milner dam diverted 519,827 acre feet of water from Snake River for domestic and stock watering purposes, and during that time 644,108 acre feet passed over Milner dam to the Pacific Ocean and was wasted, making a total of 1,163,935 acre feet, of which amount 80,835 acre feet was gain between the Minidoka dam and Milner which could not have been recaptured for storage, leaving a net loss of 1,083,100 acre feet.

There was approximately 550,000 acre feet of water in American Falls reservoir at the close of the irrigation season of 1930, and it lacked about 150,000 acre feet of filling in 1931, so that, even though the reservoir had been empty at the close of the irrigation season of 1930, it would have filled in 1931, and there would have been a surplus of over 400,000 acre feet for storage on the upper river, which, in addition to the normal flow, would have been sufficient to meet all requirements.