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DAMMING PARADISE:
PUBLIC POWER, FREE ENTERPRISE, AND TRIBAL SOVEREIGNTY IN THE
MOUNTAIN WEST IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

By

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Bachelor of Arts, Whitworth University, Spokane, WA, 2016

Thesis

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

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History

Damming Paradise: Public Power, Free Enterprise, and Tribal Sovereignty in the Mountain West in the Twentieth Century

Chair: Tobin Miller-Shearer

“Damming Paradise” examines the transformation of the political economy of the Mountain West through the development of hydropower over the course of the twentieth century. Beginning with early attempts to regulate electricity marketing and dam construction, this thesis traces the development of a conservation paradigm which insisted upon full development of water resources and public ownership of hydropower facilities. The author then follows that development through the New Deal and Post War eras, focusing particular attention on the Kerr Dam (now Seli’s Ksanka Qlispe’ Dam) and Hungry Horse Dam on Montana’s Flathead River. “Damming Paradise” then examines the attempt to expand public power marketing through river valley authorities in 1944-50, demonstrating how a coalition of business interests and preservationists defeated those proposals and sowed doubt about the economic and ecological costs of federal hydropower. Finally, this thesis hones in on competing plans for damming the Lower Flathead River in the 1950s and 1960s. Throughout the thesis, the author examines the actions of various members of the Confederated Tribes of the Flathead Reservation and the development of tribal sovereignty in relation to natural resource management.

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I owe a debt both in my writing and my morale to a great cohort who have been willing to read drafts and provide helpful critique throughout the past two years. In addition to their insights on writing and history, they have also dragged me away from reading and writing occasionally to unwind. I hope that I have been able to help them to a similar degree. A special thanks is owed to Bob Lambeth and Lance Foster with whom I shared an office, and an apology is owed to those in the adjacent offices who had to put up with our spirited discussions.

While not directly involved in this research, a special thanks is owed to Sam Mace of Save Our Wild Salmon. When Sam first reached out to me about planning a paddling event with the Nez Perce Tribe back in 2017, she set in motion a series of events that have led to this point. I am forever grateful to her for trusting me and sparking my obsession with fish, dams, and the rivers where they are found.

Finally, I could not have completed this thesis without the support of my wife Faith, who has listened to me rant about the politics of water and power for the past five years. I am so grateful that she was willing to move to Montana and discuss even more obscure dams with me for these past two years.

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Introduction

In a 1958 address to the Montana Farmer Labor Institute in Missoula, Montana, Special Counsel to the Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, Milton C. Mapes called upon the legacy of Theodore Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot to argue for the construction of a dam on the Clark Fork River. Mapes' argument for damming the Clark Fork at Paradise, Montana, was premised upon the former president's assertion that a civilized nation is one which utilizes its soil, water, and forest resources such that "the nation will have their benefit in the future." Given that starting point, Mapes asked his audience: "Can a nation that permits half development of one of its greatest power sites call itself civilized under Teddy Roosevelt's definition?"¹ Throughout his lengthy address, the Senate Counselor continued to refer back to speeches given by Pinchot and Roosevelt as if citing chapter and verse from the conservation bible. For Mapes, the fifty years that had passed between Roosevelt's presidency and his speech served only to heighten the importance of building large federal dams to fully utilize water resources, to harness labor saving electricity, to reclaim wasted land, and to extirpate the greedy private interests that threatened those conservation goals.

Mapes was not the only one who turned to Roosevelt and Pinchot when considering the future of the Clark Fork River. Eight years earlier in 1950, Montana Grange Master and nature writer Winton Weydemeyer warned his fellow conservationists against following the examples of Roosevelt and Pinchot too literally, writing: "Perhaps because a necessary foundation in resource conservation in America was

¹ Milton C. Mapes, "Wise Conservation and Utilization of Our Resources: Key to Freedom's Survival," Address to the Montana Farmer Labor Institute, November 22, 1958, pamphlet distributed by Committee for Paradise Dam, in John R. Garber Papers (JRG), box 1, folder 7, p. 2-3.

laid by Theodore Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot... we conservationists through the years have overemphasized the role of public ownership or control of natural resources.” Weydemeyer was concerned that if conservationists persisted with top-down schemes and continued to lend their support to federal hydropower projects, they would fail to achieve true conservation, lending their credibility to the destructive forces of overdevelopment in the process. While still allowing that there was some role for the federal government to play in managing things like the National Parks and the National Forests, he endorsed a system primarily based on local control and private initiative. He asked rhetorically, “Can conservation best be accomplished by government planners or by the people?”² While Mapes argued that the government and the people were one and the same, Weydemeyer saw the two as opposing factions, insisting that federal planners could never understand the complexity of the diverse social and ecological landscape.

Debates over the meaning of conservation were steeped in theoretical musings about democracy and human nature, but the stakes were quite tangible. Both sides hoped to reshape the rivers of the West according to their understanding of what was best for the people. For Mapes and the public power lobby, that meant the construction of large federal hydropower dams. For Weydemeyer and the free enterprise conservationists, that meant the construction of hundreds of relatively small dams and canals planned and maintained by local organizations within each creek and river valley. While neither plan was executed in its entirety, the struggle between the two shaped the political and economic development of the Western United States in the twentieth century. In Mapes and Weydemeyer can be seen but two examples of the positions taken throughout the near century long debate over the development of water power in the West and in the Clark Fork Basin specifically. In addition to their opposing visions of conservation there were the interests of private electricity companies and the varied interests of those who lived along the River—particularly Native American communities such as the members of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation.

² Winton Weydemeyer, “The CVA and Conservation: Open letter to The Editors, *Nature Magazine*,” January 7, 1950, Winton Weydemeyer Papers (WWP), box 3, folder 4.

This is a history of the rise and fall of public power development in the Western United States, from the initial attempts by progressive era politicians to reign in the power monopoly, to the New Deal's triumphant dam building, to the resurgence of private electricity interests in the 1950s, the preservationist moment of the 1960s, and the energy crisis of the 1970s. "Damming Paradise" examines several dam proposals on the Clark Fork and Flathead Rivers in Montana in order to understand the political transformation of the American West between 1932 and 1970. Whether or not to build a dam at Paradise, Montana, became a referendum on public control of the energy grid, the sovereignty of Native American tribes, the environmental impact of New Deal policies, and the future of the West. By looking at the debate over public power in the mid twentieth century, this thesis traces the triumph and subsequent decline of New Deal governance, the resurgence of free market thinking and the political power of investor-owned utilities, along with the development of tribal sovereignty in the wake of allotment, relocation, and termination.

Dams have long been a focus of historians of the American West. As the "working pyramids" of the United States, large federal dams are a potent symbol of engineering might and collective will.³ They are the temples of the American Empire in the West.⁴ As water storage, flood control, navigation, and hydropower projects, large dams and the federal appropriations for their construction have greased the wheels of political deals throughout the 20th century.⁵ As disruptors of fish migration, inundating ancestral lands behind their huge, unnatural concrete

³ The phrase "working pyramid" likely originates with Carl, a worker on the Grand Coulee Dam who used the phrase to describe the project in a conversation with historian Murray Morgan; Murray Morgan, *The Dam* (New York: Viking Press, 1954), xviii; Nicholas J. Schnitter, *A History of Dams: the Useful Pyramids*, (New York: Taylor and Francis, 1994) xii, 4-21; Interestingly, Sierra Club President David Brower and radical environmentalist Edward Abbey both use the Pyramid metaphor for America's dams as well, however these two liked to imagine the ruins of abandoned dams as the only remaining evidence of a lost culture that had the hubris to construct them; David Brower "Let the River Run Through it" *Sierra Magazine*, (March/April 1997), accessed via Sierra Club Vault <https://vault.sierraclub.org/sierra/199703/brower.asp>; Edward Abbey, *Desert Solitaire*, (Random House: New York, 1968), 160.

⁴ Mark Reisner, *Cadillac Desert: The American West and Its Disappearing Water*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1993), 104.

⁵ Reisner, 7; Donald Worster, *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, and the Growth of the American West*, (New York: Random House, 1985), 130.

facades they have been derided as the embodiment of the United States' capacity for hubris, cruelty, and devastation.⁶ Photos of dams decorate the walls of union halls in the Northwest, and hopeful paintings of their destruction hang in the offices of environmental nonprofits.⁷ This chapter contributes to each of those traditions by reflecting upon a great concrete monolith (even an imagined one) as a lens through which to understand the politics, economy, and environment of a particular place and time.

The first histories of Western hydropower development were triumphal narratives of nature conquered by engineering know-how and manly might. Among the best of these is Murray Morgan's *The Dam*. Written in 1954, *The Dam* depicts the grandeur of the Columbia River primarily to emphasize the monumental task of controlling its flow and making it "useful." *The Dam* was written to inspire his audience to reflect on just how much life had changed in the Pacific Northwest since Coulee started sending lightning through its wires in 1941. Morgan opens his history of Grand Coulee with an anecdote from his time as a student at the University of Washington back in 1935 when a classmate told him that he was dropping out of school to work on the dam, not for money but to be part of something important. "If our generation has anything to offer history, it's that dam," the student proclaimed.⁸ While *The Dam* is filled with human stories of all sorts and Morgan does address conflict between various interests in the Columbia Basin and briefly touches on the devastating effect that Grand Coulee Dam had on the

⁶ Abbey, 181–82; in "A Prayer for Salmon's Second Coming" David James Duncan blames "spiritually inert" "slackwater politicians" for damming the Snake River, David J. Duncan *My Story As Told By Water*, (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2002) 181–214; numerous Native American Authors have written about the impact of dams on their land and culture, some examples are D'Arcy McNickle *Wind from an Enemy Sky*, (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1988); and Sherman Alexi "The Powwow at the End of the World" in *The Summer of Black Widows* (New York: Hanging Loose Press, 1996).

⁷ These images refer specifically to the IUOE Union Hall in Spokane, WA, which is decorated with photographs of each of the Columbia and Snake River Dams and the Save Our Wild Salmon office also in Spokane, WA, which displays the painting "Resurrection" by Monte Dolack commissioned by Idaho Rivers United depicting the destruction of Lower Granite Dam on the Snake River.

⁸ Morgan, xviii.

Native people, the arc of his narrative always returns to spirited cooperation, human ingenuity, and technological progress.⁹

Mid twentieth century historians continued to write occasionally about dams and power development, with a decidedly more political approach. Elmo Richardson, who has been considered the preeminent historian of natural resource policy in the Truman and Eisenhower administrations, began to blend political history with a growing interest in ecological conservation. Richardson focused on the dual purpose of the Interior Department in the West as both guardians of nature and developers of water and mineral resources and how the sometimes irreconcilable conflict between those two functions produced post-war environmental policy.¹⁰ One of Richardson's greatest contributions to the history of hydropower was his identification of a marked shift in natural resource policy during the Eisenhower administration, particularly with the appointment of Douglas "Giveaway" McKay as Interior Secretary.¹¹

In the 1980s, the environmental turn in American History and the public reckoning with the impact of dams led to a complete tonal shift in how the history of hydropower was written. Two books from that era have become indispensable texts in any study of Western water. These two books—Marc Reisner's *Cadillac Desert* and Donald Worster's *Rivers of Empire*—both lay out the history of Western water development on a long timeline presenting the story of a thirsty nation forcing a dry land into total submission in the reckless pursuit of wealth and power.¹²

⁹ See Morgan, 32–34, 71–76.

¹⁰ Elmo Richardson, *Dams, Parks, and Politics: Resource Development and Preservation in the Truman Eisenhower Era* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1973); Praise for Richardson found in Karl Boyd Brooks, *Public Power Private Dams*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), 184.

¹¹ Elmo Richardson, "The Interior Secretary as Conservation Villain: The Notorious Case of Douglas 'Giveaway' McKay," *Pacific Historical Review* 41, no. 3 (August 1972), 333–45; That turn in federal policy is explored in Chapter Two: "Democracy in Retreat."

¹² Other environmental histories of dams also came out of the 1980s, in particular two books about damming the Colorado River, Russel Martin, *A Story That Stands Like A Dam: Glen Canyon and the Struggle for the Soul of the West*, (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1989); and Philip L. Fradkin, *A River No More: The Colorado River and the West*, (New York: Knopf, 1981).

Reisner's more journalistic work recounts in thrilling detail how William Mulholland lied and cheated to secure water for Los Angeles at the turn of the century, how Reclamation Commissioner Floyd Dominy manipulated Congress and battled the Sierra Club in the 1960s, and how incompetent federal bureaucrats failed to stop the Teton Dam collapse in 1972. With each of the dozens of vignettes from the history of Western water development that Reisner relates, he paints a picture of a nation unwilling to accept the harsh reality of the West's aridity. For Reisner, that misunderstanding of the West coupled with the self-interest of those bold and deluded enough to presume that they could make the desert bloom leads him to two primary conclusions. First, Reisner concludes that federal water projects have been shaped by interagency competition—especially between the Army Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation—and pork barrel politics in Congress. Second, he argues that this process is leading toward an inevitable collapse. By highlighting the Teton Dam disaster, the rapid depletion of the Ogallala Aquifer, and the outlandish NAWAPA project, he argues that the age of dams is over—or at least it ought to be, if the West is to have a future at all.

While Reisner highlighted the dysfunction and mismanagement of western water development by the Bureau of Reclamation and the Army Corps of Engineers, Donald Worster emphasized the throughline of a singular, profit motivated imperial project. In *Rivers of Empire*, the historian depicts the development of a rigidly hierarchical hydraulic society in the West in which the challenges presented by the environment have led to the centralization of power in a capitalist state manipulated by various local elites.¹³ Even when water development was championed in the name of democracy and progress, Worster argues that these claims were deluded or deceptive, claiming that “In the West, the single most important function of that state

¹³ This is perhaps an oversimplification of Worster's more complex argument about the hydraulic society and the capitalist state, which is most succinctly described in *Rivers of Empire*, 279–285.

has been... making abundant what was scarce, putting an elusive, stingy nature within private reach where before it was unattainable”¹⁴ Like Reisner, Worster also presents a declensionist narrative with an intense conviction writing, “nothing is more certain in the modern West than that the next stage after empire will be decline.”¹⁵

Both of these western water histories came at a time when the nation was beginning to understand the scale of environmental destruction that had been wrought by the nation’s dam building craze. As such, the authors trained their sights upon the causes of that era and its environmental consequences. They brought a much needed indictment against dams with the rhetorical force of Old Testament prophets that has had noticeable effect.¹⁶ Although the conclusions about the motives of dam builders and what brought the dam building era to a close presented here differ from those presented by Reisner and Worster forty years earlier, both books have shaped “Damming Paradise.” As in *Cadillac Desert*, “Damming Paradise” also points to competition between dam builders to explain the existing hydropower systems of the West. However, unlike Reisner’s narrative of interagency conflict, “Damming Paradise” argues that conflict between public and private power utilities and between ad hoc development and coordinated valley authorities determined the fate of the Flathead and Clark Fork Rivers. While *Cadillac Desert* gives vivid detail to federal mismanagement and inter-agency squabbling, the significant role played by private electricity utilities is decidedly absent from Reisner’s narrative. While taking account of the empire building of the capitalist state described by Worster, “Damming Paradise” attempts to humanize dam advocates who have at times alternately appeared as either villains or fools. This thesis sheds light on their hydro-social vision without

¹⁴ Ibid., 284.

¹⁵ Worster, 261.

¹⁶ See Lawrie Mott, “Postscript to the Revised Edition” in Marc Reisner, *Cadillac Desert: The American West and its Disappearing Water*, (New York: Penguin Books, 2017), 521–66.

denying, excusing, or covering up their environmental footprints. While Reisner and especially Worster were not ignorant of ambitious progressive plans like the Columbia Valley Administration or the lobbying of private electricity companies against those schemes, both authors' preoccupation with impending collapse limited the degree to which they took those dynamics seriously. This thesis puts declensionist speculation aside and focuses instead on the contingent happenings, the dams that almost were and the struggles over management of those that came to be.

In recent decades scholars have introduced more nuance, resurrected forgotten economic and political dynamics, and given voice to those who have been silenced by previous accounts of western water development—particularly Native Americans. The footprints of federal dams and federal environmental policy generally are not merely on the landscape, but on its first inhabitants. Native Americans have been subject to federal experiments in resource management, from flooding land and clear cutting forests, to designating large swaths of their unceded territory as roadless wilderness.¹⁷ Each of the historians cited above made some mention of the impact of dams on Native Americans, but the first full account of how river development uniquely targeted Native people was Michael Lawson's book *Dammed Indians* in 1982.¹⁸ Historians since Lawson have followed suit, bringing Native American voices forward in the history of natural resource management. Tribe members themselves began to document their struggles with the hydropower system in films such as *As Long as the Rivers Run*, and *The Place*

¹⁷ Garrit Voggesser, *Irrigation, Timber, and Hydropower: Negotiating Natural Resource Development on the Flathead Indian Reservation, Montana, 1904–1945*, with a Preface by Robert Bigart, (Salish-Kootenai College Press, Pablo, MT: 2017) 59–88; Paul Sutter, *Driven Wild* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2002), 227–230.

¹⁸ Michael Lawson, *Dammed Indians: The Pick-Sloan Plan and the Missouri River Sioux, 1944–1980*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994).

of *Falling Waters*.¹⁹ A recent dissertation entitled “Worth A Dam” Shawn P. Bailey places the Paradise Dam proposal of the 1940s within the narrative of Native American resistance to dispossession. Bailey recounts how some members of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation (CSKT) helped fight for a dam in Glacier National Park in order to prevent a different dam from flooding the Flathead Reservation.²⁰ Garrit Voggesser has also written a detailed account of the conflicts between CSKT and the Flathead Irrigation Project, the Northern Pacific Railroad, and the Montana Power Company in his 2004 dissertation that became a 2017 book. “Damming Paradise” benefits from this recent scholarship and contributes to Native American history by highlighting the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes’ struggle for sovereignty over their forests and damsites in 1956–65. This thesis challenges both the myth of the “Ecological Indian” and the narrative of victimization without resistance by focusing on the economic ambitions that CSKT leaders had for their natural resources and the political action that they took to secure their access to those resources.²¹

Very little has been written about the Paradise Dam proposals, despite the wealth of primary source evidence attesting to their importance.²² Sean P. Bailey’s research on the Glacier View and Paradise Dams thus resurrected a nearly forgotten chapter in the history of hydropower. Bailey’s analysis of the Glacier View saga is sharp and by juxtaposing the project with the Paradise Dam he highlights the constrained choices that faced the CSKT. Yet while Bailey lays out a detailed history of both Glacier View and Paradise, giving due credit for their

¹⁹ *As Long as the Rivers Run*, directed by Carol Burns and Hank Adams, restored and distributed by Salmon Defense (Olympia, WA: Survival of American Indians Association, 1971); *The Place of Falling Waters*, directed by Roy Bigcrane and Thompson Smith (Pablo, MT: Salish-Kootenai College Media Center, 1990).

²⁰ Shawn P. Bailey, “Worth a Dam: Glacier View and The Preservation of Wild America” (PhD diss. University of Montana, 2020).

²¹ For the myth of the ecological Indian see Shepard Krech III, *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History*, (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1999).

²² Elmo Richardson did briefly address Glacier View, but made no mention of Paradise, see *Dams, Parks, and Politics*, 108–09, 197.

defeat to the wilderness movement and the CSKT respectively, he overlooks the role that the Montana Power Company played in that history. This thesis does not delve too deeply into the Glacier View Dam proposal, focusing instead on the efforts of public power advocates like Mike Mansfield, James Murray, and Lee Metcalf toward greater public control of the energy market. Their vision for Montana and the West was to escape the extractive, colonial economics of the past through federal hydropower production. That vision—while successful in isolated places such as Columbia Falls, Montana—was defeated by the concerted efforts of private electricity companies and their allies in the extractive industries such as timber and mining. While preservation interests eventually succeeded at protecting wild rivers throughout the West, they were only able to do so because of how private power had weakened public power in the Post War era. By recentering the Paradise Dam fight around control of the energy grid, “Damming Paradise” also complicates the narrative of Native American sovereignty, as CSKT leaders were split over the idea of damming the Flathead River within their borders as discussed in Chapter Three.

As a work of political history, this thesis picks up on recent historiographic trends regarding the rise of the American right and the decline of the New Deal order. In “Environmental Law and the End of the New Deal Order,” Paul Sabin argues that the enforcement of the Wilderness Act of 1964, the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968, the National Environmental Policy Act of 1970, and the Endangered Species Acts of 1966 and 1973, gave rise to anti-state, yet pro-regulation politics that saw the expansion of federal power as both a threat to the environment and a necessary tool for its protection.²³ According to Sabin, a group

²³ Paul Sabin, "Environmental Law and the End of the New Deal Order," *Law and History Review* 33, no. 4 (2015): 965-1003; Sabin further examines the role that environmentalism played in undoing the New Deal and Great Society in Paul Sabin, *Public Citizens: The Attack on Big Government and the Remaking of American Liberalism*, (New York: Norton, 2021).

of public interest lawyers utilized Great Society environmental laws to strengthen the government's capacity to enforce protections for wild rivers and endangered animals, while opposing that same government when it sought to construct interstate highways and towering dams, creating a new class of lawyers and professionals who were loyal to the Democratic Party but hostile to the public works programs of the New Deal. That development is highlighted in Chapter Three, as wilderness advocates such as David Brower were split between their moral commitment to free-flowing rivers and their pragmatic commitment to the Democratic Party. Chapter Two sheds light on the potential that existed for environmental politics to align with progressive social goals in the CIO's *Magnificent Columbia* version of the CVA proposal. Chapter Two also shows how a coalition of business interests hostile to the New Deal challenged the economic reasoning and engineering wisdom of federal power planners, adding an environmental dimension to the narrative laid out by Kim Phillips-Fein in *Invisible Hands* and Lawrence Glickman in *Free Enterprise*.²⁴ Calling attention to the politicization of the environment in the 1950s, this thesis also benefits from the work of Brian A. Drake in *Loving Nature, Fearing the State*.²⁵

While the history of dams has tended to flatten the distinctions between federal hydropower developers and investor-owned utilities, a notable exception is *Public Power, Private Dams* by Ken Boyd Brooks. Brooks' telling of the Hells Canyon High Dam controversy in western Idaho focuses on the conflict between the Bonneville Power Administration and the Idaho Power Company, while also paying some attention to the salmon crisis. Through the Hells Canyon saga he illuminates the simultaneous rise of free market economics and environmental

²⁴ Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Businessmen's Crusade Against the New Deal*, (New York: Norton, 2010); Lawrence Glickman, *Free Enterprise: An American History*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019).

²⁵ Brian Alan Drake, *Loving Nature Fearing the State: Environmentalism and Antigovernment Politics before Reagan*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2013).

protection in the 1950s and 60s. The parallels between the Hells Canyon High Dam and the Paradise Dam are not just evident to historians today, they were quite clear to Paradise Dam advocates, including John F. Kennedy.²⁶ Brooks describes the Northwest power landscape in military terms, referring to the attempt by public power advocates to annex southern Idaho into the public power territory of the BPA. Using the same territorial understanding of electrical governance, western Montana was also a new frontier for public power. If Hungry Horse Dam was a beachhead in Montana Power's territory, Paradise Dam would have constituted a full-scale invasion. By centering the conflict between public and private electricity development like Brooks did in *Public Power, Private Dams*, "Damming Paradise" concludes that the lobbying efforts of investor-owned utilities shaped the development of the Post War political economy in the Mountain West.

In order to understand the motivations of both public and private power interests and their impact on the political economy of the Mountain West, I have focused primarily on the state of Montana and the Clark Fork and Flathead Rivers. Every river is unique, and conclusions about a broad and diverse region based on any single watershed will have their limits. However, as Montana straddles the continental divide, holding the headwaters of two of the two of the great western river systems and encompassing a variety of climates and landscapes, the state serves as a microcosm of the region. The political leadership of Montana has been at the forefront of much of what is discussed in this thesis, as Senators James Murray, Mike Mansfield, Burton Wheeler, and Lee Metcalf all played major roles in the regulation of electricity, development of natural resources, relations with Indian tribes, and the preservation of wilderness. In addition to the political leadership, Montana is also home to the Anaconda Mining Company and its affiliated

²⁶ Kennedy campaign speech in Billings, MT September 22, 1960, quoted in "Montana Needs Knowles" *Committee for Paradise Dam*, 1961, JRG, box 1, folder 7.

Montana Power Company, two corporations that exerted a tremendous degree of power over politicians and the press and thus represent the political influence of private capital throughout the era in question.

In order to understand the motives and actions of those who shaped river development in the twentieth century and those who reacted to it, I have consulted a number of archival collections and newspaper sources. Much of the evidence supporting this thesis was found in the archives of the Mike and Maureen Mansfield Library in Missoula, Montana, and the Montana Historical Society Research Center in Helena, Montana. In Missoula I read extensively in the Clifton Merritt Papers which contain documents relating to wilderness preservation, the Harry Billings Montana Power Collection which contains research documents related to the Montana Power Company and their efforts against public power, the John R. Garber Papers which contain materials published by the Committee for Paradise Dam, the Mike Mansfield Papers which contain extensive correspondence on all relevant subjects, the Lorena M. Burgess Papers which provide insight into a unique Native perspective and the perspective of people living along the Lower Flathead River, and the Walter H. McLeod Papers which helped me to assess Columbia Basin development from a businessman's perspective. In Helena I consulted the Francis Logan Merriam Papers, which document the activities of the Democratic Party and the Committee for Paradise Dam; the J. Hugo Aronson Papers, which contain several speeches given by Governor Aronson in opposition to new dams; the Lee Metcalf Papers, which are extensive and provide insight into dozens of dam proposals as well as correspondence with wilderness advocates and members of Native American tribes; the Montana Fisheries Division Records, which contain survey data regarding hydropower projects; the Perry S. Melton Papers, which give some insight into labor union activity in western Montana; and the Winton Weydemeyer Papers, which proved

to be a tremendous insight into heterodox environmentalist thought. What could not be discerned through archival materials has been accessed through newspaper records, primarily those of the *Flathead Courier* and *Char-Koosta*, a newsletter published by the CSKT. Despite the volume of documents consulted in constructing this thesis, there are still many more archival records that could provide a historian with even greater insight into the activities of groups such as the Committee for Paradise Dam and the Montana Power Company.

The West is a unique and varied place that resists easy characterization. Nonetheless, the following three chapters set out to do just that, tracing the course of western hydropower development from the early days of private dam construction through the New Deal expansion of public power and the ensuing decades of backlash that it inspired. Chapter One, “Without Harming Anyone,” provides an overview of the regulation of water power in the Progressive Era and New Deal, before delving into a detailed look at two exemplary dams. The dam at the mouth of Flathead Lake, which was known as Kerr Dam until 2015 when it was renamed Seli’s Ksanka Qlispe’ (SKQ) Dam, serves as an example of private power development and the challenges to Native sovereignty posed by water power development.²⁷ Hungry Horse Dam, with its unique power marketing scheme, represents the ideal that public power Democrats were striving for in river valleys throughout the West. Chapter Two, “Democracy in Retreat,” follows the attempts in the 1940s to expand public power nationwide through the creation of river valley authorities in the model of the Tennessee Valley Authority. Following the defeat of the valley authority plans, public power Democrats suffered further defeat at Hells Canyon, where the Eisenhower Administration granted license to the Idaho Power Company, rather than the Bureau of Reclamation, to build a series of power dams. Chapter Three, “Preserving Paradise,” carries the

²⁷ Throughout this thesis I refer to the dam at the mouth of Flathead Lake by the name which contemporary actors knew it at the time in question.

story into the 1960s, focusing on the multiple overlapping proposals to dam the Lower Flathead River. Amidst the threat of termination and the possibility of Paradise Dam flooding 20,000 acres on the reservation, CSKT leaders sought authorization for their own dams at Buffalo Rapids. That plan was opposed by the Montana Power Company, Montana's Democratic Senators, conservationists, and some members of the tribes. The seemingly interminable conflict between mutually exclusive plans ultimately dragged on long enough that no group could muster the political or financial capital to build a single dam.

How exactly to preserve the greatest good, for the greatest number, over the longest period of time in the management of western water power has always been as much a question of morality than engineering. Resource conflicts have been shaped by competing conceptions of the public good, varying claims of who counts toward the greatest numbers, and exactly how long systems will hold. As they debated the legacies of Pinchot and Roosevelt, Mapes and Weydemeyer disagreed about more than just the economic or hydrological viability of two different water storage and power generation schemes. They were expressing fundamentally incompatible understandings of the public good. For Mapes, the federal government was the greatest instrument for the development of resources for the benefit of the whole nation. Anything less than the full development of all potential water power and the distribution of that power at the lowest possible cost was a betrayal of the conservation principles laid down by Roosevelt and Pinchot. For Weydemeyer those same government instruments held unparalleled potential to squander resources on wasteful and destructive schemes. Federal dams were not only bad engineering, they also undermined both the rugged natural beauty and the free enterprise system that anchored his conception of the public good. He believed that his proposal for smaller private dams on every tributary stream throughout the mountain West was the superior plan not

just on an engineering level, but an ideological one as well. Still others presented their own conceptions of the good—whether it was best served by regulating utilities or allowing them to compete freely—and of the public—whether it consisted of every citizen equally on all matters or only of members of an affected region, state, or tribe. Although neither the Paradise Dam, the tribal dams, or the headwaters flood control scheme were ever built, the decades of debate over the role of the government, corporations, and communities in the conservation, preservation, and development of resources in Western Montana shaped the American West throughout the Twentieth Century.

Chapter One

“Without Harming Anyone”: Kerr, Hungry Horse and regulation of hydropower

During the first half of the twentieth century, hydropower transformed the modes of production and patterns of life in the Mountain West. From 1906 to 1953 residents of Montana’s Flathead Basin struggled to direct the process according to their own understanding of the public interest. The mighty rivers cascading down from the snowcapped peaks of the Rocky Mountains have long captivated farmers, sportsmen, industrialists, and naturalists whether as a source of water, fish, electricity, or scenic splendor. Particularly in the West, how to distribute water resources equitably, what constitutes the best use of a limited resource, is a foundational question. The addition of electricity production to the already crowded claims on western waterways further complicated matters, while revealing new horizons of possibility for social and economic reform.

Like other aspects of western development, electrification was undertaken by a mix of public and private authorities with sometimes competing and sometimes compatible social and financial objectives. The first hydroelectric projects were built and managed by private power companies, often in the service of extractive industries. In Montana, executives of the Anaconda Copper Mining Company launched the Montana Power Company in 1912 as a separate but affiliated entity to distribute power to smelting and milling operations in Butte and Bonner. In response to the rise of hydropower companies, progressive reformers pieced together a regulatory regime to counter the monopolistic tendencies of investor-owned utilities. The multi

decade struggle to formulate a coherent system for regulating water power in the public interest led many to question whether the private sector—even when strictly regulated—could be trusted with power production at all. By the 1930s, they began to pursue federal power development as a tool for economic justice and the full development of the nation’s resources.

This chapter traces the development of water power on the Flathead River over the first half of the twentieth century from the surveying of power sites on the Flathead Reservation through the construction of Hungry Horse Dam on the South Fork of the Flathead. The Kerr Dam at the mouth of Flathead Lake completed in 1938 and the Hungry Horse Dam on the South Fork of the Flathead River built from 1948–1953 are products of distinct but related visions of modernization resulting from the specific circumstances and individuals who contributed to their authorization and construction. In order to understand these two projects, it is necessary to first take a broad look at the development of water power regulation and rural electrification in the West and throughout the nation. The Kerr Dam is deeply entangled in the history of water power regulation and struggles over control of resources on the Flathead Reservation. Hungry Horse Dam was, in contrast, the product of a more ambitious and transformative approach to water power forged in the New Deal and war mobilization. That approach along with the construction, location, and management of the Hungry Horse project were colored by the experience that legislators had with the Montana Power Company and the Army Corps of Engineers at Kerr Dam in the previous decades. The history of both dams is a window into how people in twentieth century Montana sought to harness river power as a means of social and economic reform.

While water power has been harnessed for production throughout human history, developments in the late nineteenth century drastically increased the potential for river modifications to transform society. Frank Sprague's electric motor allowed river power to be

transmitted over long distances, revolutionizing water power and the production that it could support. With the advent of hydroelectric power in the 1880s, low head dams which had been built for onsite milling operations gave way to massive high dams capable of transmitting power to far away cities. While this new technology was first implemented on the Fox River in Wisconsin and Niagara Falls in New York, its true potential to shape human geography was found in the West with the Feather River and American River dams in California supplying power to factories in far off Sacramento. Whereas Eastern cities located their industry along the river or coal plant, western industries which grew primarily in the age of electrification could be located farther from the sites that generated their power.²⁸

Conflicts soon arose over who would be allowed to build hydropower dams at various sites. River power naturally tends toward monopoly, as a dam on any portion of a river alters the water and land available to other river users.²⁹ Progressive Era reformers who saw business monopolies as a grave threat to democracy went after the electric companies in their pursuit of greater economic equality and well ordered infrastructure. Foremost among these Progressive electricity reformers was Gifford Pinchot. In his role as Chief Forester and as Governor of Pennsylvania, Pinchot made an enemy of the private utilities, declaring in 1925 that private electricity's threat to democracy was "immeasurably the greatest industrial fact of our time." Pinchot was an enemy of "Big Power," but at the same time a consummate progressive with regard to the transformative power of modern technology, stating that "if effectively controlled

²⁸ David Nye, *Electrifying America: Social Meanings of a New Technology 1880–1940*. (MIT Press, Cambridge, MA: 1990). 193–201.

²⁹ The first major federal regulation of free market power was the result of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899, which required congress to approve of impoundments on navigable streams, United States Congress, *Rivers and Harbors Appropriation Act of 1899* (33 U.S.C. 403; Chapter 425, March 3, 1899; 30 Stat. 1151).

in the public interest it [electricity] can be made incomparably the greatest material blessing in human history.”³⁰

Even among self described progressives, there were major disagreements over how best to develop electrical resources. During the Roosevelt and Taft administrations, federal officials were at odds over whether social progress was best facilitated by opening federal property to private development without conditions or imposing strict terms on power developers. Early water power development had been guided by free market principles, with private energy companies given indefinite authorization to build dams and extract profits from rivers on federal land. Pinchot and his allies caused a stir throughout the Roosevelt and Taft administrations for fighting against power sites given away, "forever and for nothing."³¹ Beginning with the legislative struggle over the Muscle Shoals project on the Tennessee River in Alabama and Pinchot’s strict limits on dams and power lines built within National Forest lands, the federal government began reducing the longevity of leases and charging power companies for “the privilege” of monopolizing a public resource.³²

Roosevelt’s critics blamed Pinchot’s policies for stymying development by imposing financial burdens on power companies. Pinchot saw things differently. According to Pinchot the power companies often sought authorization for projects that they had no intention to build, merely to prevent others from building competing dams, a concept which sheds light on the Buffalo Rapids controversy of the 1960s, discussed in Chapter 3.³³ By imposing stricter

³⁰ Gifford Pinchot speech to the Pennsylvania Legislature, 1925, Quoted in “Wise Conservation and Utilization of Our Resources: Key to Freedom’s Survival” speech of M. C. Mapes, Jr. to the Montana Farmer Labor Institute, 22 November 1958, in JRG, box 1, folder 7.

³¹ Gifford Pinchot, “The Long Struggle for Effective Water Power Legislation” *George Washington Law Review* Vol. 14, no. 1, (December, 1945) 9–20.

³² Charles K. McFarland. “The Federal Government and Water Power, 1901-1913: A Legislative Study in the Nascence of Regulation.” *Land Economics* Vol. 42, no. 4 (1966), 439–52.

³³ McFarland, 442.

conditions, Pinchot believed that he was ensuring development, not hampering it. Only those entities, public or private, which were serious about efficient and rapid development would be given authorization. The decades-long conflict within the federal government resulted in the passage of the Federal Water Power Act of 1920 which created the Federal Power Commission (FPC), shifting responsibility for coordinating hydropower development from the individual states to the national government. In its initial form, the FPC was a committee of three members: the Secretaries of War, Interior, and Agriculture. The commission was reorganized in 1930 into a five-member committee with members appointed by the president and subject to Senate approval. It was further strengthened in 1935 when it was given a full-time staff. Montana legislator Burton K. Wheeler gave a legal defense for the FPC on the basis that the potential for electricity to be transmitted between states firmly placed energy policy under the purview of Congress.³⁴ Creating the FPC changed the nature of power conflicts, but it did not put an end to fights over power licensing. Pinchot's suspicions about private utilities would be born out in the following decades on the Flathead River, as the Montana Power Company delayed, deferred, and disrupted dam building and reneged on their promises to the people of the Flathead Reservation.

The effects of electrification were felt immediately in America's urban industrial settings, but the benefits of new technology arrived much slower in rural America. In 1935, only one in ten farms had access to electricity, and much of those generated their own power on site, rather than tying into a regional grid. Urban workers had been taking Sprague streetcars to factories lit by Edison electric lights for nearly fifty years while outside the cities farmers were still primarily working with muscle power. Reform minded politicians saw that disparity as a matter of

³⁴ Burton K. Wheeler "Federal Power Commission as an Agency of Congress" *George Washington Law Review* 14, no. 1 (December 1945) 1-4.

injustice, not merely inconvenience.³⁵ Yet while many farmers were eager to adopt new technology, some were skeptical of who would benefit from the efficiency gains brought on by electricity and mechanical farm tools. These critical farmers saw reductions in the amount of work needed to produce crops benefiting city dwellers by lowering their food costs while putting thousands of farm hands out of work as their skills became redundant and inefficient. Those concerns led to friction between rural and urban communities during the early years of the Great Depression, but overall momentum was on the side of expanding electrification.³⁶

Early attempts at rural electrification were largely unsuccessful, due in large part to a public relations campaign waged by the National Electric Light Association throughout the 1920s. Building transmission lines in rural areas was not a profitable endeavor for the power companies, and the prospect of government assistance to rural electricity users was seen as antithetical to the free enterprise system, as the government did not have to obey the rules of market competition.³⁷ The fight against private electricity throughout that decade was led by a bipartisan group of progressives headed by Republicans Gifford Pinchot and Robert La Follette along with Democrats including Montana's Tom Walsh and Burton K. Wheeler.³⁸ In the 1924 presidential election, La Follette ran a third party presidential campaign with Wheeler in the Vice Presidential slot. The chief plank of La Follette's campaign platform was public ownership of utilities. While La Follette only won his home state of Wisconsin, the progressive ticket swept

³⁵ Nye, *Electrifying America*. 288.

³⁶ David Nye, *Consuming Power: A Social History of American Energies*, (MIT Press, Cambridge, MA: 1998) 187–196.

³⁷ Christie, Jean, "Giant Power: A Progressive Proposal of the Nineteen-Twenties." *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 96, no. 4 (1972) 480-507.

³⁸ Senator Walsh speaking on Sen. Resolution 83, 70th Congress, 1st sess., *Congressional Record* 69, April 17, 1928.

twenty Montana counties and placed a close second to the Republicans in 11 states west of the Mississippi.³⁹

With his newfound national acclaim following the election, Burton Wheeler returned to Congress ready to carry on his fight against the private power monopoly. Wheeler, a self-described “Yankee from the West,” had left his stuffy upbringing in Massachusetts to attend law school in Michigan before wandering through just about every city and boom town he could from Tucson to Telluride and Portland to Pocatello. He finally settled in the mining city of Butte, Montana in 1905 by accident after losing his train ticket and all of his savings in a poker game. In the gritty and often violent atmosphere of early twentieth century Butte, Wheeler quickly gained a reputation as a defender of workers’ rights, winning election to the state legislature in 1910 and later serving as a US Attorney and as representative of Montana’s first Congressional District.⁴⁰ In the 1930s, Wheeler dealt a major blow to the energy monopolies with the Wheeler-Rayburn Act or Public Utilities Holding Company Act of 1935. The act, which expanded the power of the SEC to break up utilities holding companies, was seen as a direct threat to electrical utilities and their shareholders who editorialized in Montana newspapers about how the bill would be the end of the Montana Power Company.⁴¹

The same year that the Wheeler-Rayburn Act passed, Congress created the Rural Electrification Administration, a measure that some historians consider among the most significant and enduring aspects of the New Deal.⁴² Through the REA, the federal government aided in the establishment of local cooperatives, distributed low interest loans, and provided

³⁹ “1924,” *The American Presidency Project*, University of California Santa Barbara, (accessed February 21, 2022), <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/statistics/elections/1924>

⁴⁰ Burton K. Wheeler, *Yankee from the West: The Candid, Turbulent Life Story of the Yankee-born U.S. Senator from Montana*, (Doubleday, New York: 1962) 58–80.

⁴¹ “Wheeler Rayburn Bill Arouses Fear” *Sanders County Independent Ledger*, May 22, 1935.

⁴² Alan Brinkley, *The End of Reform: New Deal Liberalism in Recession and War* (Random House, New York: 1995) 6.

technical schematics for electricity infrastructure. REA money helped county level co-ops build transmission lines to connect into the existing high voltage systems that spanned the mountain west. Local energy coops, most of which still provide power to customers today, charged lower rates and provided consistent service in areas that private power did not serve. For western politicians like Mike Mansfield, the REA was a triumph.⁴³ The mandate to provide power to all customers was especially significant in rural states like Montana. In 1963, Rural Electrification Administration co-ops in Montana served 1.5 customers per mile, while the Montana Power Company served 17.5 per mile. As a result of both the rural customer base and the lower prices they offered, REA co-ops made only \$414 of revenue per mile of line annually compared to \$6,580 per mile in annual revenue made by Montana Power.⁴⁴

The REA brought the blessings of electricity to rural America, but not along the Giant Power model that Pinchot had proposed, nor the *Democracy on the March* dreams of David Lilienthal. Unlike David Lilienthal and Arthur Morgan's TVA, the REA functioned more like a bank combined with an engineering firm than a power company. While a significant intervention into the economy, the REA, like many New Deal agencies, represented a sort of compromise between the vision of the more radical reformers and the opposition's fears of government control. The fact that the REA was less radical than Pinchot's Giant Power or the TVA did not stop critics from calling for it to be dismantled, especially once the majority of rural counties had been successfully electrified.⁴⁵ Neither did the Roosevelt administration see REA as the ultimate solution to the country's uneven electrical development. Roosevelt advanced a plan for "Seven

⁴³ Mike Mansfield, "Rural Electrification" (1952) Mike Mansfield Papers (MMP), series 21, box 36, folder 71; "Montana State Rural Electrification Administration Convention - Lewistown, MT" (1956), MMP, series 21, box 38, folder 38.

⁴⁴ "Dear Mr. Weber," Letter from Mike Mansfield to Willett F. Weber, June 12, 1963, MMP, series 17, box 227, folder 6.

⁴⁵ "What Should the REA's Future Role Be?" *UCDC Newsletter*, July 1957, WWP, box 3, folder 4.

Little TVAs” that would bring every major river system in the United States under federal management. These proposed river valley authorities will be discussed in the following chapter.

Putting rural America on the grid led to an increase in demand for electricity and demands for lower utility bills. As a larger swath of the country joined the ranks of consumers purchasing electrical appliances and paying monthly heating bills, politicians sought to expand energy generation and challenge the power monopolies. While the antitrust efforts of New Deal liberals faced varying success and failure throughout FDR’s presidency and beyond, adding more generating capacity to the grid was a broadly popular and successful project.⁴⁶ Building new power plants—especially by damming western rivers—was seen as the surest way to provide reliable energy and reduce costs to consumers while creating manufacturing jobs throughout the country.

Along the Flathead River, hydropower development engendered conflicts over by whom and for whom that development would take place. The first plans for damming the Flathead River were proposed in 1906.⁴⁷ Engineers devised a five-dam project with the first and most important dam to be located at the mouth of Flathead Lake. Various entities looked upon this plan for developing the power potential of the lower Flathead quite differently. The Montana Power Company saw these dams as a means of claiming resources which white profiteers had been barred from accessing by the Hellgate Treaty. Agents of the Bureau of Indian Affairs saw the dams as an economic opportunity for the Flathead Reservation. White settlers alternatively saw the dams as a threat to their land claims or a welcome source of surplus power and irrigation

⁴⁶ Brinkley, *The End of Reform*.

⁴⁷ Voggesser, 89; Although a map produced by C. P. Gray for the Montana Power Company in 1909 had no indication of planned dams on the Flathead River, only marking sites at Thompson Falls and Quartz Creek on the Clark Fork, see Mapping Montana and the West, Montana Memory Project (14th Jan 2022), *Power developments and properties of the Montana Power Co., Great Falls Power Co., and subsidiary companies*, (accessed February 23, 2022), <https://www.mtmemory.org/nodes/view/87749>

storage. Salish and Kootenai people, while split over the idea of altering the river, were opposed to further encroachment by white people on their shrinking reservation. These conflicting understandings stalled the construction of any dams on the Flathead until well into the 1930s and questions of compensation would remain unanswered for decades after a dam was built.

Designating a power site involves more than merely selecting the location of a dam; every acre of land with the potential to be flooded by a future reservoir has to be secured as well. Purchasing land for reservoirs on the Lower Flathead was made all the more fraught by ongoing conflicts over access to farmland and irrigation water. While planning for dams along the lower reaches of the Flathead River, federal land managers were frustrated by squatters illegally occupying land reserved for power sites in the Flathead Allotment Act of 1904. But squatters at power sites were only one aspect of a long history of conflict and conquest on the lands of the Salish, Kootenai, and Pend Oreille people which had led Interior Secretary Ballinger to condemn, “the cupidity of white men, which interferes on every hand and at every turn with the successful and efficient administration of Indian affairs.”⁴⁸

The Flathead Reservation was established as the sovereign territory of the Salish, Kootenai, and Pend Oreille people in the Hellgate Treaty of 1855. The territory, while rich in resources and scenic beauty, was a massive reduction in land from that which the tribes had previously occupied. While the tribes agreed to the treaty, they did so under false pretenses and as the result of questionable translations. Jesuit priest Fr. Adreon Hoeken who was witness to the negotiation called it a “ridiculous tragicomedy” and lamented, “ “When, oh when, shall the oppressed Indian find a poor corner of the earth on which he may lead a peaceful life.”⁴⁹ It was

⁴⁸ Interior Secretary Ballinger, as quoted in Voggesser, 94; See Figure 8.

⁴⁹ Quoted in Lonny Hill, “Blast from the Past: Treaty of Hellgate 164 Years Old Today,” *Char-Koosta News*, July 18, 2019.

not until 1891 and not without considerable coercion that Chief Charlo's band of the Salish relocated from the Bitterroot Valley—land which was proposed as an alternative reservation, before President Grant ordered otherwise in 1871—to what was then called the Jocko Reservation. Efforts to remove Native Americans from valuable lands and integrate them into American society continued throughout the late nineteenth century, particularly with the General Allotment Act of 1887, which allowed for the division of reservation lands into individual plots with all “surplus” acreage to be sold to white homesteaders. This policy, while couched in paternalistic language that insisted it was for the good of white and Native alike, was a blatant abrogation of treaties in order to access the forests and minerals located on reservations. Colorado Congressman James Belford stated the goal of allotment plainly, “an idle and thriftless race of savages cannot be permitted to guard the treasure vaults of the nation.”⁵⁰ Allotment was clearly about race and power more so than progress or development, as the Salish and Kootenai were far from idle or thriftless. In the years following the Hellgate Treaty, the tribes of the Flathead Reservation had become extremely successful farmers and cattlemen, with tribal members owning around 30,000 head of cattle and selling over 1,000 tons of wheat to off reservation customers in 1903. Yet that economic success was threatened by the strict acreage restrictions of allotment policy. The people of the Flathead Reservation had resisted allotment for years with Chief Isaac of the Kootenai telling Indian Agents in 1901, “You tell me I was poor and needed money, but I am not poor... We haven't any more land than we need, so you had better buy from somebody else.” However, the demands of white settlers were eventually granted by Congress in the Flathead Allotment Act of 1904.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Quoted in Bailey, 282–83.

⁵¹ Overview of Flathead Reservation history from Bigart and Voggesser; Agricultural figures from Indian Agent Arthur M. Tinker's September 20, 1903 Report, as quoted in Voggesser, 3–4; See also Bailey, 278–86; Chief Isaac

With the 1904 Act, the 1,245,000-acre reservation was effectively reduced to 245,000 acres with the remaining “surplus” land opened to white settlement. Of the \$7,410,000 that the land was valued at, the tribes were paid only \$1,783,549, which was held in trust by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. A drastic reduction of available land was disastrous to the grazing and gathering practices of the Salish and Kootenai, resulting in widespread poverty on the reservation. Thus, when hydropower engineers declared some 50,000 acres of land necessary to produce power “in the interest of the Flathead Tribe,” tribe members did not see a benevolent modernization project, but rather one more act in an ongoing saga of unjust land grabs.⁵²

While many members of the tribes were skeptical of hydropower development, some aligned themselves with whites who promoted power dams as a source of sustainable revenue for the tribes and economic opportunity for all Montanans. Agents of the Bureau of Indian Affairs saw the resources of the Flathead Reservation as tools for the economic and social advancement of tribe members. Whether out of corruption, nobility, or paternalism, under the Indian Agents the abundant timber, minerals, farmland, and water power of the Flathead Reservation were not utilized in a manner which reflected those principles. Instead, they were sold for below market value, harvested unsustainably, or stolen. The forests which had been a source of economic wellbeing for the Salish and Kootenai were cut more rapidly on the reservation than in the adjacent National Forests, especially following the Allotment Act. While money from these extractive enterprises funded schools, roads, and per capita payments on the reservation, the companies contracted by the BIA made considerable profits in the process. Yet some members

quote from Burton Smith, “The Politics of Allotment: The Flathead Indian Reservation as a Test Case.” *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 70, no. 3 (1979): 138.

⁵² Voggesser, 89.

of the tribes insisted on continuing the extractive practices even after the BIA imposed conservation minded limits on logging and mining on the Reservation.⁵³

Members of the tribes held a variety of opinions about dams and resource use in general. With regard to hydropower, Kerr dam presented an opportunity for development which not all members of the tribes opposed, even if they did object to the manner in which the whole affair was conducted. Reflecting on the construction of Kerr Dam and the loss of the “Place of Falling Waters,” novelist and tribal member D’Arcy McNickle lamented how “white man makes us forget our holy places,” whereas former tribal council member E. W. Morigeau in his autobiography primarily remembered the good pay and the opportunity to operate heavy machinery.⁵⁴ In a 1990 documentary, Roy Bigcrane and Thompson Smith placed the dam at the center of the whole history of the Flathead Reservation calling it the culmination of, “eighty years of assault on the sovereignty of the people.”⁵⁵ For nearly all members of the tribes—whether or not they agreed on how to use it—sovereignty over their own lives, land, and resources was their primary goal. Questions of conservation and preservation, overuse and under development, would certainly need to be settled, but first the tribes needed the right to answer these questions for themselves.⁵⁶

That opportunity came to a degree with the Wheeler Howard Act of 1934, which was a centerpiece of the Indian New Deal. The Meriam Report of 1928 had awakened some leaders in Washington as to the damage that allotment had wrought, information which justified a change in federal policy. Under the Wheeler-Howard Act, tribes were encouraged to adopt their own

⁵³ Ibid., 86–87, 91–94.

⁵⁴ Quote from McNickle’s novel *Wind from an Enemy Sky* appears in Voggesser 112–13 and is referenced in Bailey 289; E. W. Morigeau, *Valley Creek: A True Story of a Flathead Reservation Indian*, ed. by Mariss McTucker (Privately printed by Walter Douglas Morigeau: 2002), 47–50.

⁵⁵ *The Place of Falling Waters*, 0:59–1:15.

⁵⁶ Voggesser, 59–88.

constitutions. While still under the trusteeship of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, this allowed for a degree of sovereignty over tribal resources and an opportunity to reclaim some of what had been lost under allotment. Burton Wheeler, in authoring the legislation, harbored some of the same assimilationist motivation that Dawes had in writing the Allotment Act, believing that tribal sovereignty would be a step on the road to ending the tribe's relationship with the federal government. Regardless of his motivation however, the Act allowed the tribes of the Flathead Reservation to reform as the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation (CSKT), becoming the first federally recognized tribal government.⁵⁷

While allotment and reorganization were shifting the balance of power on the Reservation, federal engineers were planning for the development of all available water power. In 1926 the BIA proposed a small dam capable of generating only 4 MW of power to be used for pumping irrigation water, but this modest plan did not match the development ambitions of the moment. The FPC instead granted Rocky Mountain Power—a subsidiary of the Montana Power Company—a license in 1927 to construct and operate a dam capable of generating 90 MW at the mouth of Flathead Lake. The site for the dam was a sacred place on the Flathead River known as Royal Gorge by white settlers and as *'a-knit ka'nuk* or “narrow pass between cliffs” in the Kootenai language and *st'ipmétkw* or “the place of falling waters” in the Salish language.⁵⁸ Burton Wheeler was among those who disapproved of the FPC's decision, especially after hearing of an alcohol soaked meeting between Montana Power executives and respected members of the tribe.⁵⁹ Wheeler managed to secure payment for the tribe from Montana Power, which he later

⁵⁷ Bailey, 290–95.

⁵⁸ Thompson Smith, “A Brief History of Kerr Dam and the Reservation,” in “Lower Flathead River: Interactive Map and Resource Guide.” *CSKT Division of Fish, Wildlife, Recreation, and Conservation*. Accessed April 2, 2022. <http://fwrconline.csktnrd.org/Map/Main/InteractiveMap/Segment1/>

; See Figure 14.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 98–99; I have not been able to determine the veracity of this claim in other sources, including Wheeler's autobiography.

claimed was, “the first time in the history of the United States that Indians were indemnified with royalties.”⁶⁰ In a speech at the Lake County Fair that fall he lamented that the government was unable to construct the dam on its own, but conceded that rapid development was of the utmost importance and thus the private sector should proceed with construction. Polson residents were excited to see test drilling begin, with the *Flathead Courier* reporting that “The Indian should be the happiest man in the Flathead valley... The white residents of the valley should rejoice...” because the new dam would provide cheap power for irrigation and attract new industries.⁶¹

The rejoicing was premature, as the onset of the Great Depression led Montana Power to delay construction and reduce payments to the tribes. The agreed upon annual payment of \$60,000 which was based upon a low-end estimate of power production, was reduced to a mere \$1,000 per month. By 1934, construction was still halted, and Interior Secretary Harold Ickes threatened to cancel the FPC license, even floating the possibility of handing the project over to the WPA. The issue was resolved by Attorney General Homer Cummings who gave Montana Power five years to complete the project before their contract would be declared void and the company would be forced to pay damages for the delay.⁶²

The threats from Washington D.C. got the project back on track, and it was completed in 1938. At the dedication ceremony, effusive praise was laid upon Montana Power Company president Frank Kerr, for whom the dam was named. Cornelius F. Kelly, president of the Anaconda Company delivered the keynote address and declared Kerr to be, “more than any other responsible for the consummation of this great accomplishment.” Kelly described Kerr as a

⁶⁰ Wheeler, *Yankee from the West*, 316.

⁶¹ “Senator B. K. Wheeler Addresses Big Crowd At Lake County Fair” *Flathead Courier*. October 13, 1927. “Montana Power Company At Work On Flathead Dam Site” *Flathead Courier*. November 3, 1927; Kerr Dam groundbreaking see Figure 15.

⁶² Voggesser, 106–110; Bailey 288–89.

“great engineer who rose from obscure and difficult beginnings,” but Kelly was not describing Kerr’s ability to design and construct power plants—something which he had done, but never received any special training in—but rather the engineering of business which Kerr had mastered. He excelled at creating useful machines out of people for shareholder profit. Kelly’s address went on to place Kerr at the center of a fundamental transformation of Montana from a useless wilderness into a thriving empire: “Within that time [the 50 years Kerr lived in Montana] a mountain empire has been opened and developed... In every stage of this development Frank Kerr did his part, and in a large measure in it he led.” If Kelly’s assessment of his friend and colleague was hyperbolic, even more so was his hope for the longevity of Kerr’s memory. The dam was to be a monument to Kerr that would outlast “The snows of endless winters” and preserve his name, “for an unmeasurable time...” Seventy-seven years after his speech, the name was changed by the Confederated Tribes to the Seli’š Ksanka Qlispe’Dam.⁶³

While Cornelius Kelley sang the praises of a self-made industrialist whose will had single handedly shaped Montana, other speakers emphasized the role of the government in directing the project to its final completion. Burton Wheeler remarked that “No place in the United States has the government written as stringent a contract with a power company as they have here and they have done it for the benefit of the Indians and of the white settlers upon this reservation.” Montana’s Democratic Governor Roy Ayers lauded the dam as a model of public-private partnership describing it as “the first instance

⁶³ Kelly’s address quoted in full in “Thousands Witness Huge Celebration: Wheeler, Ayers, Kelley, Kerr, and Two Chiefs Talk” *The Flathead Courier*, August 11, 1938; for Kerr Dam renaming see Lailani Upham, “Welcome to Salish Kootenai Dam” *Char-Koosta News*, 10 September 2015.

in which private capital has joined with state and federal governments in such a program.”⁶⁴

The opening ceremonies were filled with calls for unity between public and private and between white and native. Former state senator A. J. Bower served as master of ceremonies, opening the event by stating “There is not an individual on this program, be he red or white, whose ancestral roots do not go down into the very soil upon which we are here gathered.” Bower doubled down on his claim about the Native roots of the white politicians and industrialists present by emphasizing the honorary tribal memberships that each of them had. He introduced Governor Ayers as an honorary Gros Ventur, introduced Burton Wheeler as “another of the aborigines” joking about whether or not his “feet are white or black,” and introduced Kerr himself as “one of our own Injuns.” Bower’s comments were played for laughs in the *Flathead Courier* the next day, but Salish Chief Martin Charlo and Kootenai Chief Koostahtah did not seem amused in their brief remarks. Charlo stated simply that he was glad that Mr. Kerr was happy, but that he had yet to receive any money for the dam and “will be glad when the money is paid in.”⁶⁵ His remarks were followed immediately by a performance of the showtune “Indian Love Call” by Soprano Courtney Proffitt before “red men and whites gathered together to eat barbecued buffalo.”⁶⁶

In 1938 the dam was completed and began transmitting power, but the arduous and corrupt process had lent credence to the accusations that Pinchot and others had leveled against

⁶⁴ Both quoted in “Thousands Witness Huge Celebration: Wheeler, Ayers, Kelley, Kerr, and Two Chiefs Talk” *The Flathead Courier*, August 11, 1938.

⁶⁵ Speeches quoted in “Thousands Witness Huge Celebration: Wheeler, Ayers, Kelley, Kerr, and Two Chiefs Talk” *The Flathead Courier*, August 11, 1938; see also “Indian and White Chiefs Meet to Dedicate Dam” *Big Timber Pioneer*, August 18, 1938.

⁶⁶ “Regatta, Picnic, Showboat Are All Part of Program” *The Flathead Courier*, August 11, 1938.

private power.⁶⁷ The mission of the BIA to provide jobs and revenue for the tribes while securing power for both white and native irrigators on the reservation had only been achieved by threats from the highest levels of government. While the dam was built and monthly payments were made to the tribes, Montana Power resisted paying any more than \$60,000 per year even as their revenue from Kerr rose with the installation of new turbines and augmented water supply from Hungry Horse Dam upstream, an issue that was only resolved when the CSKT sued MPC in 1962.⁶⁸ As for attracting the industry which had made the *Courier* editors rejoice, no new factories relocated to Polson, the nearest town to Kerr. Years later Mike Mansfield would claim that, “the vast majority of the power generated at those plants [Kerr, Cabinet Gorge, and Noxon Rapids Dams] is exported out of Montana, not utilized within the State.” Utilizing Montana’s resources in order to improve life in Montana would motivate the Senator from Butte to write his first piece of legislation and leave his mark permanently on the physical and social landscape of the state.⁶⁹

The arduous process of seeing Kerr Dam through to completion was viewed by western Democrats as a clear example of the problems inherent to power monopolies and the risk that comes with trusting for-profit entities to carry out what was seen as the moral project of natural resource development. The profit motive and the wise-use principle laid competing claims to the irreplaceable natural resources of the nation. Investor-owned utilities were lithe to delay construction, file applications for projects they had no intention to build, renege on commitments to compensate landowners, limit power supply to higher paying urban customers, and sell energy

⁶⁷ For an image of the Kerr Dam see Figure 16.

⁶⁸ *The Montana Power Company v. The Federal Power Commission*, United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, January 25, 1962, 298 F.2d 335 (D.C. Cir. 1962).

⁶⁹ “Private or Public Power Development? RE: Hungry Horse News” March 31, 1961, MMP, series 21, box 41, folder 10.

without regard for its social impact. Having seen that pattern repeated time and again by Idaho Power, Montana Power, Washington Water Power, and others, liberals and progressives sought a greater role for the federal government in the power market than merely planning and licensing.⁷⁰

The Bureau of Reclamation and the Army Corps of Engineers planned and constructed dams throughout the 1930s as part of the larger public works and reclamation programs, constructing impoundments that would have seemed impossible a generation previous. In the massive concrete facades and vibrating powerhouses of Grand Coulee, Shasta, and Boulder Dam, the engineers of the New Deal were forging in a literal sense, the “instrument of unimagined power for the establishment of a morally better world” of the President’s second inaugural address.⁷¹ When war broke out in Europe the excessive amounts of energy generated by the rivers of the rural West were imbued with strategic importance. The War Department took control of power production and sought out more generating capacity to keep factories humming. The ample hydropower resources of the Northwest and the demand for aluminum to build airplanes made the Columbia Basin the leading aluminum producing region in the world, despite there being no natural source of aluminum in the region. To meet the rising demand, dozens of dams were planned for the Inland Northwest including Noxon Rapids, Cabinet Gorge, Nine Mile Prairie, Hungry Horse, Glacier View, Spruce Park, and Paradise in the Clark Fork-Flathead basin alone. New hydroelectric projects, however, would take two or three years to complete and each would require the labor of hundreds of fighting age men. In order to get more power online

⁷⁰ The Bureau of Reclamation had been generating electricity at the Theodore Roosevelt Dam outside of Phoenix, AZ since 1909, but the federal government did not fully embrace the role of power producer until Franklin Roosevelt took office in 1933. In 1937, Roosevelt signed the Bonneville Power Act and dedicated the Boulder (later Hoover) Dam, making the federal government the owner of the world’s largest hydroelectric power plants. “History of Reclamation Power.” *Bureau of Reclamation*.

⁷¹ Franklin D. Roosevelt, “Second Inaugural Address” Speech, Washington, D.C., 1937, “The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy,” *Avalon Project*.

quickly, the Army Corps of Engineers devised a short list of projects that could be completed in under a year, including a plan to raise the height of Kerr Dam.⁷² That proposal sparked a controversy that launched the political career of one of Montana's most decorated statesmen and reshaped the landscape of western Montana.

“This is the most important letter I have ever written in my life” began Representative Mike Mansfield's letter to the president in July 1943.⁷³ Earlier that year, the Army Corps of Engineers and the Bonneville Power Administration had begun investigating the possibility of raising the level of Lake Pend Oreille in Idaho and Flathead Lake in Montana to provide a greater supply of water to Grand Coulee and Bonneville Dams downstream. The plan was to raise Flathead Lake by 17 feet in the first two years and an additional 20 feet after that. Were the lake level to be raised according to the 1943 plan, the towns of Bigfork, Somers, Elmo, and Dayton, as well as parts of Polson and Kalispell would have been permanently submerged. Montana's congressional delegation was not initially briefed on the plan until Mike Mansfield had heard so many rumors from his constituents that he demanded answers from BPA administrator Paul Raver. With the help of his colleagues in Congress and his constituents, particularly Perry Melton of the Flathead County Central Trades and Labor Council, Mansfield set about finding a suitable replacement project to save the lake towns while still providing the necessary power for war industries.⁷⁴ He appealed to President Roosevelt stating that “The Flathead has sent between 3,000 and 4,000 of its sons and daughters into the Armed Forces of the United States to fight to protect their homes and their country. I sincerely hope that when they return they will not find they have won the war abroad only to find they have lost their

⁷² Interior Secretary Julius Krug to Perry Melton, July 9, 1943, Perry Melton Papers (PMP), box 13, folder 14.

⁷³ “My dear Mr. President,” Mike Mansfield to Franklin Roosevelt, July 8, 1943, PMP, box 13, folder 14.

⁷⁴ Mike Mansfield, Speech to US House of Representatives on Raising Flathead Lake, undated (July 1943?) PMP, box 13, folder 14.

valley.”⁷⁵ Reflecting on his career in a 2000 interview with Don Oberdorfer, the longest serving Senate Majority Leader and former ambassador to Japan insisted that preventing the raising of Flathead Lake was the most important thing he had done in his entire career.⁷⁶

Defeating the Kerr Dam modification had the knock-on effect of jump starting the Hungry Horse project which had been a desire of Flathead County boosters for some time. The South Fork of the Flathead River begins its long journey to the Pacific Ocean high on the continental divide in the middle of one of the largest roadless areas in the contiguous United States flowing north for nearly 100 miles and draining more than 1,072,680 acres of land before combining with the Middle Fork to form the main Flathead River at Bad Rock Canyon in Martin City, Montana.⁷⁷ The Canyon Area, as it is known by locals, was one of the last regions of Montana to be reached by the railroad due to the difficult terrain between Flathead Lake and the continental divide and the resistance of the Blackfoot Nation. Following the Blackfoot Treaty of 1895 and the creation of Glacier National Park in 1910, the area became a popular destination for tourists, although visitors seldom ventured into the wild valleys of the South Fork.⁷⁸ For hydropower advocates, the wilderness character of the South Fork made it an ideal place to locate a reservoir. Seeing the demand for power as inelastic and ever increasing, the alternative was to flood half a dozen towns along with roads and farms along the lake. Areas such as the South Fork which had not been settled were not seen as ecological oases, but rather as sacrifice zones, areas of wasted potential not yet serving a human need.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ “My dear Mr. President,” Mike Mansfield to Franklin Roosevelt. July 8, 1943, PMP, box 13, folder 14.

⁷⁶ Mike Mansfield, “Mike Mansfield Interview, July 21, 2000” (2000), *Don Oberdorfer Interviews with Mike Mansfield Oral History Project*. 18.

⁷⁷ Land area figure from George Sundborg, *The Economic Base for Power Markets in Flathead County, Montana*, (Bonneville Power Administration: 1945), 5.

⁷⁸ Richard Hanners. “Taming the Flathead Wilderness” in *Superstar to Superfund*, (Self Published: 2017); Richard Hanners, a resident of Columbia Falls and former aluminum worker, put together an extensive history of the Columbia Falls Aluminum Company plant accessible on his website, <https://montana-aluminum.com/>

⁷⁹ For a visualization of the South Fork Valley and the Hungry Horse Dam see Figure 20.

In addition to the zero-sum logic by which either the lake towns or the South Fork Valley were destined to be flooded, Hungry Horse was also a product of the economic conditions of Flathead County. Like many rural areas throughout the Mountain West, Flathead County's economy in the early twentieth century was primarily supported by extractive industries. Mining, timber, and railroad construction in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—including a brief period of coal mining on land that later became Glacier National Park—were responsible for much of the region's early development.⁸⁰ Founded the same year that Montana gained statehood, Columbia Falls offered "Liberal inducements in the way of Water Power, Cheap Coal, Wood, Lumber and Millsites to Millmen and Manufacturers" according to an 1890 ad in the *Daily Interlake*.⁸¹ A dispute between local boosters and James J. Hill led the railroad magnate to route his Great Northern line around Columbia Falls, but that proved only a minor setback in the development of a booming timber town. The population of Flathead County rose by 26% in the 1930s as farm families migrated from the dusty plains and settled west of the continental divide. Yet that growth was not sustainable without new industry. Farmers moving west in the dust bowl overestimated the productivity of Flathead lands and settled in cut over areas that could not yield crops. Farm incomes in Flathead Country were lower in Flathead County than the state or national average and in 1939 as many as 77.2% of farmers in the county were classed as "stranded" or "migratory" by the Montana State Planning Board.⁸² Coal mining along the North and South Fork had not taken off due to the low quality of the deposits and the funding required to transport ore out of the remote valleys. In his report on the economic prospects of the region,

⁸⁰ K. Ross Toole, *Montana: An Uncommon Land*, 2nd ed. (University of Oklahoma Press, 1984) 162–63; See also Hanners, "Taming the Flathead Wilderness" 7, and Patrick Heffernan & Sarah Dakin, *The History of the Canyon Area*, Columbia Falls, MT: Canyon Citizen Initiated Zoning Group, 1994.

⁸¹ Quoted in Hanners, "Taming the Flathead Wilderness," 8.

⁸² Sundborg, 11.

BPA surveyor George Sundborg concluded that employment in the timber industry would continue to decline, “if exploitative cutting practices on private lands continue” and recommended that a true sustained yield approach be adopted immediately.⁸³ Through mechanization and exhausting finite resources, these extractive industries were accounting for a declining share of the economy.

The New Deal had brought Civilian Conservation Corps jobs within the Glacier National Park and Emergency Conservation Work Camps, but most of the public works programs drew working age men and women away from rural regions and toward the industrial hubs on the coasts.⁸⁴ The general trend of population away from places like Columbia Falls was accelerated further by World War Two, during which time the population of Flathead County declined by about 15%. For those who remained, the work was tough and inconsistent as the long harsh winters slowed logging to a halt for much of the year. While many Americans were enjoying increasing living standards for the first time since the start of the depression, workers in western Montana faced seasonal unemployment that made it difficult to provide for their families. The end of the War only exacerbated that condition further as men returning from service competed for limited jobs back home. Montana as a whole experienced a loss of population even amidst the post war baby boom. The Hungry Horse Dam gave people hope that they would be able to find stable work for a while longer and not have to move to the city. The structure of power marketing at the dam would guarantee that steady jobs remained in Columbia Falls for generations.⁸⁵

⁸³ Ibid., 21, 2; see also C. W. Buchholtz, *Man in Glacier*, (Bozeman, MT: Artcraft Printers, 1976).

⁸⁴ Historian Paul Sutter describes the CCC road building project in Glacier National Park and how that specific New Deal program inspired backlash among a subset of environmentalists, Sutter, 136–40; E. W. Morigeau describes his time working in these camps throughout Montana and the West in *Valley Creek*, 37–46.

⁸⁵ “Western Montana Economic Facts” MMP, series 17, box 227, folder 6; Data from census.gov indicates a steep drop in the population of Montana 1940–1945 and Idaho 1940–1943, “Intercensal Estimates of the Total Resident Population of States:1940 to 1949” *US Bureau of the Census*: <https://www2.census.gov/programs->

Mike Mansfield was not known to make enemies, but when Montana Power lodged a protest against appropriations for transmission lines to deliver power from Kerr Dam to the construction site at Hungry Horse in 1946, he went on the attack. Without the lines, Hungry Horse was never going to get off the ground. Cornering J. E. Corrette as he attempted to leave the Congressman's office, Mansfield told the Vice President of Montana Power, "Just a minute. I want you to know where I stand on this. As far as I am concerned, I do not intend, if I can help it, to allow any individual, organization, or corporation to stand in my way in getting these appropriations." Later that same year a political rival accused Mansfield of being a paid supporter of "The Company" due to his reluctance to support Senator Murray's Missouri Valley Authority proposal. Having fought with Company men to save the Lake towns and wrest Flathead County from the hands of the timber interests, Mansfield resented the accusation and carried it with him for the rest of his life.⁸⁶

Construction of Hungry Horse was ongoing between 1947 and 1953, far behind schedule in Mansfield's view. He sent a string of letters to engineers and planners at the Department of the Interior as well as to his congressional colleagues urging increased funding in order to speed the project along.⁸⁷ While the reservoir was filled, its future footprint was clear cut which supplied timber for the nationwide post-war housing boom. The project was a boon to the workers of Flathead County and much of western Montana, as out of work miners, electrical engineers, and

surveys/popest/tables/1980-1990/state/asrh/st4049ts.txt. (Accessed June 25, 2021); Senator Mike Mansfield expressed his concern about these demographic trends many times, noting the need to "keep Montana's young people in Montana" at a luncheon held in Kalispell on September 23, 1955. "Mansfield in Favor of Glacier View Dam" *Daily Interlake* (Kalispell, MT), September 25, 1955; See Figure 19.

⁸⁶ Mike Mansfield, "Mike Mansfield Interview, July 21, 2000" (2000), *Don Oberdorfer Interviews with Mike Mansfield Oral History Project*, 18; "Hungry Horse Dam" (1946), MMP, series 21, box 51, folder 48; Implication that Mansfield had an off the books lunch meeting with John Corrette of the Montana Power Company from a radio address by Zales Ecton can be found in "Dear Mike" letter from Don Treavor to Mike Mansfield, March 10, 1949, MMP, series 14, box 12, folder 22; Image of Mike Mansfield see Figure 17.

⁸⁷ MMP, series 14, box 12, folder 24.

lumbermen traveled from elsewhere in the state to work alongside 800 others on the colossal concrete edifice.⁸⁸

Four years after the first kilowatts were generated at Hungry Horse Dam, Senator Mansfield boasted that the 564 foot high dam “is the greatest development, economically, that has ever happened in the State of Montana. Nobody has been hurt. Everyone has been benefited by it.”⁸⁹ The Senator doubled down on his claim to the universal benefit of the project two years later in a 1959 session of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs stating that the project had been completed “without harming anybody in the state of Montana, but as a matter of fact, helping everybody.”⁹⁰ He attributed much of the success of Hungry Horse to a special provision of the bill he had written in 1943. In that bill—the first law he had ever written—Mansfield included a power pricing scheme which allowed firms located within fifteen miles of the dam to purchase a guaranteed portion of the nearly one billion kilowatt hours of electricity generated at Hungry Horse at a lower rate than those located further away.⁹¹

This unique amendment signaled a shift away from the extractive logic that had long governed Montana economically. The Mansfield Amendment was predicated on a vision for Montana’s future in which the mountain state would be the site of manufacturing rather than merely a source of raw materials. Montana Historian K. Ross Toole famously described Montana as “a place with a colonial economy.”⁹² In the 1970s, Michael Malone and Richard Roeder argued that if state leaders did not continue to actively pursue development projects, “Montana

⁸⁸ Heffernan & Dakin, *The History of the Canyon Area*, 30; see also Morigeau, *Valley Creek* 99–102; and for a well researched fictional telling of the construction see Patrick Lee, *Canyon Secret* (Butte, MT: Self Published, 2008).

⁸⁹ Mansfield, "Hells Canyon, Hungry Horse Dam and the Columbia River Power System" (1957), MMP, series 21, box 38, Folder 66.

⁹⁰ Mike Mansfield, “Paradise Dam,” 1959, MMP, series 21, box 40, folder 2.

⁹¹ Hungry Horse Dam informational brochure, Bureau of Reclamation, 1957, Clifton Merritt Papers (CMP), box 3, folder, 13.

⁹² K. Ross Toole, *Montana: An Uncommon Land*, 9.

will no doubt continue to fall farther behind the economic standards of the nation and will continue to lose its most valuable resource of all, its youth.”⁹³ Mike Mansfield offered the same dire warning, stating that the growth of Montana was “dependent on the equitable and proper exploitation of its abundance of resources.”⁹⁴ Mansfield saw the power pricing scheme at Hungry Horse as exactly that, a measure which all but guaranteed that new industries would set up shop in Columbia Falls. By enticing manufacturing business to locate near the dam, the communities of Bad Rock Canyon avoided the boom and bust cycle that often came with public works projects. The aluminum smelter allowed the employment benefits of dam construction to continue long after the concrete had settled. While advocating for the Libby, Yellowtail, and Knowles Dams in 1959, then Senator Mansfield stated that Hungry Horse had, “brought in new industry, broadened the tax base, created greater employment, lowered Rural Electrification Administration rates, and increased the valuation of Flathead Country from thirty-six million to eighty-six million dollars.”⁹⁵ In this same speech, he insisted that the local preference pricing scheme be incorporated in the authorization for the Knowles Dam on the Lower Flathead River.

While copper mining had been the motive for the first hydro-plants in the state, the power of the rivers themselves later justified shipping ore from the other side of the country to be smelted in Montana. Aluminum smelting requires an astronomical amount of electricity, so much so that quantities of molten aluminum are sometimes measured in kilowatts rather than tons. Even before Hungry Horse was finished, aluminum companies were competing for the favor of Montana’s Congressmen. Mansfield and BPA administrator Paul Raver used the competition to

⁹³ Michael P. Malone and Richard B. Roeder, *Montana: A History of Two Centuries*. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1976), 264.

⁹⁴ Mike Mansfield, “Hydroelectric Power—The Key to Montana’s Future” (March 16, 1959), MMP, series 21, box 40, folder 19.

⁹⁵ Mike Mansfield, “Paradise Dam,” (1959), MMP, series 21, box 40, folder 2.

their advantage, playing the big aluminum companies off of each other to secure the best deal they could.⁹⁶ Initially, the Harvey Machine Company, a small firm which had grown through war production contracts and the distribution of surplus production after the war had committed to relocating equipment from their smelting operations in California up to Montana. In the end it was the Anaconda Company that secured the right to power from Hungry Horse Dam and established an aluminum reduction plant at the base of Teakettle Mountain which opened on August 15, 1955. The irony of Anaconda—which alongside the Montana Power Company and the Northern Pacific Railroad had funded a public relations campaign against federal dams including Hungry Horse—reaping the profits from a federal dam was not lost on Senator James Murray, who openly criticized the hypocrisy of “the private power companies and other short sighted interests.”⁹⁷

With the interconnected grid, dams alone did not guarantee that heavy industry would relocate to the Flathead Valley, that required planning such that policy could reverse the demographic trends which otherwise seemed determined by technological progress. More than just electricity, publicly marketed electricity had saved the upper Flathead from population decline and seasonal unemployment. Hungry Horse served as a powerful example of what was possible when federal agencies built power plants and regulated the electricity market. Montana’s rural electric cooperatives would later boast that “In many respects Hungry Horse is the perfect dam” as it embodied “the conservation principle of optimum, comprehensive, multiple purpose development.”⁹⁸ Through congressional appropriations, the federal government

⁹⁶ Mansfield to Raver, March 1950, MMP, series 14, box 12, folder 22.

⁹⁷ Hanners, *Superstar to Superfund*, “Chapter 15: The Harvey Affair” <https://montana-aluminum.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/AL-book-Chapter-15.pdf>; Congress, Senate, Senator Murray of Montana speaking on “The Contribution of Hungry Horse Dam,” *Congressional Record* (March 21, 1960), 6096.

⁹⁸ “The Water Powers of Montana,” *Montana State Rural Electric Cooperative Association*, date unknown, found in JRG, box 1, folder 7.

was capable of financing far larger dams than private firms and the power produced from those dams could be marketed at minimal cost to all customers with a preference given to REA co-ops. Without the necessity to make a profit and exempt from taxation, public power was able to serve rural communities where private producers were unwilling to extend service. Private power boosters argued that the federal projects deprived local governments of tax revenue, but when all of the production and wages generated by a federal dam are considered, federal dams generate a larger tax base than smaller private dams.

The arguments expressed by Mansfield in his speeches defending Hungry Horse and criticizing dams such as Kerr and others operated by the Montana Power Company were made throughout the New Deal and Post-War Eras by reformers intent on reshaping the American West. Public power and all that it entailed was seen as the core of the New Deal. Preserving and expanding the work of the New Deal, for the public power lobby, would mean reshaping water and power governance in order to reshape the landscape and demographics of the West. In order to accomplish that vision—to achieve full development in the public interest and avoid the problems of underdevelopment, unemployment, and population decline that resulted from private river development—they took up Franklin Roosevelt's call for river valley authorities to manage the economic, ecological, and demographic future of the nation's largest watersheds. The public power project and the backlash it engendered from private electricity companies in the Post War Era played a significant role in shaping politics in the twentieth century.

Chapter Two:

“Democracy in Retreat”: Breaking the New Deal Public Power Legacy¹

Sitting high atop North America and the world’s only triple divide, Montana is upstream from just about everywhere.² The Treasure State lays claim to the headwaters of two of the greatest rivers of North America—the Columbia and Missouri. The source of both mighty streams lie within National Parks considered to be among the crown jewels of the US preservation scheme. The eponymous glaciers of Glacier National Park feed the North and Middle Forks of the Flathead River which go on to add more than seven million acre-feet of water per year to the Columbia. Near the town of Paradise, Montana, the Flathead joins the Clark Fork River which by that point has gathered the combined flows of the Blackfoot and Bitterroot Rivers to become Montana’s largest stream by volume. The combined rivers carry on across the Idaho Panhandle, paralleling the Kootenai River to the north as that other mighty Columbia tributary makes its brief 140 mile detour south into the United States. Of the three major tributaries of the Columbia—Clark Fork, Kootenai, and Snake—Montana is cut off only from

¹ “Democracy in Retreat” is taken from a resolution of the Lower Valley Grange against the proposed Columbia Valley Administration, it is a play on the title of David Lilienthal’s public power manifesto *Democracy on the March*.

² Triple Divide Peak in Glacier National Park is considered by the International Hydrographic Organization to be the only spot in the world where the drainage basin of three oceans (Atlantic, Arctic, and Pacific), however some publications consider the Hudson Bay to be a part of the Atlantic, not the Arctic Ocean, which would place the true triple divide at Snow Dome in Canada’s Jasper National Park; see “Limits of Oceans and Seas,” Third ed. International *Hydrographic Organization*, (1953), 13; and Quinn Feller “Where the Water Flows: Understanding Glacier’s Triple Divide Peak,” *Open Rivers: Rethinking Water Place and Community* 9, (Winter 2018).

the Snake, which lies on the Idaho side of the Bitterroot crest which forms Montana's southwestern border.³

On the East side of Glacier National Park, creeks feed the Marias and Milk Rivers which join the Missouri at Loma and Fort Peck respectively. Just over Montana's southern border in Wyoming, The Yellowstone River begins its journey to the sea at the 8,130ft Two Ocean Pass before exiting Yellowstone National Park and gathering water from the scattered ranges of Eastern Montana. By the time it joins the Missouri at Buford, North Dakota the Yellowstone is the largest tributary to the Missouri River at more than nine million acre-feet per year. The Madison River, famed for its fly fishing, cascades down from the western edge of Yellowstone Park just below the Old Faithful geyser, crashing through Bear Trap Canyon before joining the Jefferson and Gallatin Rivers to form the Missouri at Three Forks, Montana. Just East of the capital in Helena the Missouri itself spins the turbines of Hauser Dam, which powered the mines of Butte before running north through Black Eagle Dam and Ryan Dam above the cascades which grace the seal of the state of Montana in the "electric city" of Great Falls, where the river lent its power to the town's copper smelter from 1890–1980.⁴

Development of these two vast watersheds was a national priority which Montana Senator James Murray called "the most important national project since the Louisiana Purchase," but how exactly that development ought to be carried out divided politicians, bureaucrats, and

³ For maps of the Columbia Basin and other watersheds in Montana see Figures 1-5.

⁴ Water data for Yellowstone, Milk, and Marias Rivers from "National Water Information System," *USGS Water Data for the Nation*, accessed January 18, 2022, https://waterdata.usgs.gov/nwis/dv/?referred_module=sw&site_no=06329620; for Madison River see "Madison River," *Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks*, accessed March 31, 2022, <https://myfwp.mt.gov/fishMT/waterbody/searchByID?waterBodyID=53611>; Johnson, Carrie. "Electrical Power, Copper, and John D. Ryan." *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 38, no. 4 (1988): 24–37; "Under the Big Stack: The Great Falls Smelter Remembered" *Montana PBS* video 58:21, Originally aired February 13, 2014, accessed January 18, 2022, <https://www.pbs.org/video/montanapbs-presents-under-big-stack-great-falls-smelter-remembered/>

everyday citizens of the various states affected.⁵ At stake were the competing visions of democracy, development, and the American identity. For many progressive public power advocates, comprehensive development of these two river systems held the potential to create a more equal and prosperous nation. For the executives of private electricity companies, selective development held the potential for enormous profits. For the many thousands of who farmed, fished, and lived their lives along these rivers, the fight over when, where, and how to dam them was a fight for survival.

The New Deal was the high water mark for public power in the United States. Through the presidency of Franklin Roosevelt and the tenure of Interior Secretary Harold Ickes, the progressive dream of reigning in the power monopolies and distributing the blessings of electricity to all was becoming a reality. Roosevelt had envisioned an overhaul of the nation's major river systems under new federal river valley authorities. Following Roosevelt's death in 1945, many New Dealers sought to build upon the late president's legacy by carrying out his wish to repeat the success of the Tennessee Valley Authority in the seven major watersheds of the nation. For all the planning and years of effort, they were ultimately defeated, opening the door for private utility companies to regain primacy in the power market in the 1950s.

During the Roosevelt administration, latter-day progressives harnessed the unimagined power of the new instruments of government in accordance with what James MacGregor Burns called Roosevelt's most important single idea: "Not that the government must do everything, but that everything practicable must be done."⁶ Everything practicable included the construction of dozens of dams throughout the West and the control of electricity markets by federal agencies.

⁵ Quoted in Donald E. Spritzer, "One River, One Problem: James Murray and the Missouri Valley Authority" in *Montana and the West: Essays in Honor of K. Ross Toole* Rex Myers and Harry Fritz eds. (Boulder, CO: Pruett Publishing 1984), 125.

⁶ James MacGregor Burns, *Roosevelt: The Lion and the Fox* (1956, New York: Smithmark) 476.

While the New Deal itself changed shape throughout the Roosevelt years with the coming and going of various administrators, congresspeople, and judges, the most steadfast arm of the government was the Department of the Interior. Interior Secretary Harold Ickes was known, over his thirteen years in office, for his passionate—often wrathful—defense of his beliefs and plans. He fought against segregation and Japanese internment, in favor of taking in more refugees, and for a dual program of water power development and wilderness preservation.⁷ Ickes recognized that these two prerogatives of the Interior were often at odds with one another, but nonetheless he sought the middle path between preserving nature and developing resources for human use. That narrow road, in Ickes' view, could only be walked through careful planning and attention to the best available information. To that end, he made a priority of coordinating the patchwork of state, private, municipal, and federal water projects into coherent entities capable of balancing national oversight with local input. While Ickes was not always in favor of relinquishing the Bureau of Reclamation's authority over water in the West, in 1937 he joined with Nebraska Senator George Norris, President Roosevelt, and TVA co-director David Lilienthal in calling for new regional valley authorities. In the interest of rapid but sensible development and following the success of the Tennessee Valley Authority, they proposed “seven little TVAs” encompassing the major watersheds of the nation including the Connecticut, Arkansas, Colorado, Ohio, Potomac, Columbia, and Missouri Rivers.⁸

The proposed river valley authorities were the subject of political campaigns and newspaper editorials from 1936–1953. For the New Dealers, these not-so-little TVAs were plans

⁷ Bailey, 138–41.

⁸ There were considerable disagreements and differences of opinion within the Roosevelt Administration and within the Democratic Party in Congress on this issue, with Henry Wallace notably objecting to any program that would encroach upon the Department of Agriculture; for the details of those debates in 1937 see William E Leuchtenburg, “Roosevelt, Norris and the ‘Seven Little TVAs,’” *The Journal of Politics* 14, No. 3 (Aug., 1952), 418-441.

for both a redistribution of wealth and of population. One version of the Columbia Valley Administration (CVA) plan promulgated by the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) in 1949 emphasized spreading populations throughout the northwest to maintain vibrant communities and dilute environmental damage. As may be expected, such proposals were controversial. Opposition to river valley authorities was multifaceted and complex, ranging from claims of a Soviet conspiracy to counter proposals of interstate and interagency compacts. The alternatives suggested by all members of the opposition involved greater participation of private utilities and a diminished role for the federal government in the planning and construction of dams. Stoking fears about the competence and loyalty of federal planners ultimately led to the defeat of CVA and other planned valley authorities. The failure of coordinated river valley authorities signaled a weakness in New Deal governance following the death of Franklin Roosevelt. Investor-owned utilities and their allies in government seized upon that weakness in order to secure prime dam sites for themselves and roll back the gains public power had made in the 1930s and 40s. The march of democracy was pitted against the preservation of free enterprise, with accusations of underdevelopment and stymied progress on one side and tyrannical overreach on the other. On the Columbia and Missouri, public power interests won the authorization of dozens of dams, but failed to bring about a reorganization of federal power policy. At Hells Canyon, Idaho in the 1950s, private power won a crucial victory. At Paradise Montana in the early 1960s, both camps found themselves in a quagmire from which neither would emerge victorious.

Missouri River development—long a dream of politicians with their sights set on western wealth—carried inherent difficulties due to the extensive and varied land area drained by the river. The Missouri watershed spans ten states with vastly different topography and two separate

systems of water law. Annual rainfall in the Eastern Missouri basin is routinely above forty inches per year, while in the West, the town of Belfry, Montana receives as little as six inches each year.⁹ The opposing water and power demands of the various states had stymied Missouri river dam construction until 1933. From 1933–40 workers in pop-up boom towns on the Montana plains built the world’s largest earthen dam in order to stabilize seasonal flows for navigation on the lower Missouri while generating electricity and storing irrigation water for the farmers of the north plains.¹⁰ For all its grandeur however, Fort Peck Dam was not able to prevent the disastrous flooding of 1943, which prompted competing proposals to fully tame the Missouri and its tributaries. Army Chief Engineer Lewis A. Pick devised a plan for a series of large mainstem dams in the upper basin which would flood huge tracts of land—primarily on Indian reservations—in North Dakota and Montana in order to provide predictable navigation and reduce flooding in the lower basin states. Reclamation engineer W. G. Sloan sent Congress a competing plan for the creation of ninety smaller reservoirs on tributary streams which would optimize irrigation and power production in the upper basin states. While he had initially supported the Sloan plan, the unproductive squabbling between the states inspired Montana Senator James Murray to revive the Missouri Valley Authority bill that George Norris had originally introduced in 1937.¹¹ The Army Corps and Bureau of Reclamation engineers, seeing their own river control dreams evaporating, quickly settled their differences at the Stevens Hotel in Omaha and produced the “Pick-Sloan Plan” which combined elements of both in what

⁹ Rainfall data from “Climate of Montana,” *Western Regional Climate Center*, Accessed 8 February 2022, https://wrcc.dri.edu/Climate/narrative_mt; and “Climate of Missouri,” *Missouri Climate Center*, University of Missouri, Accessed 8 February 2022, <http://climate.missouri.edu/climate.php>.

¹⁰ Fort Peck construction detailed in Bailey, 170–75.

¹¹ Richardson, *Dams, Parks, and Politics*, 15; Norris’ original MVA Bill suffered the same fate as much of Roosevelt’s 1937 legislative agenda amidst the recession that year, as Alan Brinkley notes, “support for Franklin Roosevelt was not the same, either within Congress or among the public, as support for a liberal vision of a powerful state” *Brinkley*, 17.

historian Donald Worster called a “paste-together job” and Donald Spritzer described as “more of a peace treaty than a comprehensive development program.”¹²

As the merits of a Missouri Valley Authority were debated in the halls of Congress and the editorial section of newspapers across the region, the agencies set about planning and constructing as much as they could of the Pick-Sloan Plan. In the course of doing so, they flooded 155,000 acres of farm and range land on the Fort Berthold Reservation along with 200,000 acres across five Sioux reservations.¹³ Murray’s attempt to add MVA to the Flood Control Act of 1944 failed, leaving that law as a permit for the agencies to proceed on course. MVA supporters did not take that single loss to spell the end of their vision for a valley authority, picking up the issue again in 1946 under a new president. However, in the intervening years, opposition to MVA had grown in Montana. Republican Wesley D'Ewart, who had spearheaded opposition to MVA while head of the Montana Reclamation Association, was elected to Congress following the death of Montana Representative James O'Connor in 1944. Murray accused D'Ewart of being a paid agent of the Montana Power Company, the powerful private electricity company that controlled power distribution throughout most of the state. The Anaconda Mining Company, which was closely tied to Montana Power, circulated anti-MVA editorials in all of the major newspapers they owned, with the *Montana Standard* referring to MVA as “an irresponsible economic dictatorship.”¹⁴ Joining the chorus of opposition to MVA was the newly formed National Association of Electric Companies—a trade organization

¹² For the formation of the Pick-Sloan Plan and its impact on the Three Tribes reservation in North Dakota see: Michael Lawson, *Dammed Indians: the Pick-Sloan Plan and the Missouri River Sioux, 1944–1980*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994); Reisner, 181–91; Brian K. Russel, "Flooded Lifeways: A Study of the Garrison Dam and its Environmental Impact upon the Three Affiliated Tribes of the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation" (PhD diss. University of North Dakota, 2000), Worster, 267–69; Spritzer, “One River, One Problem” 123–130.

¹³ Lawson, *Dammed Indians*.

¹⁴ Quoted in Spritzer, 126.

representing 167 private utilities—which distributed pamphlets such as “Totalitarianism on the March” and “Bureaucracy Rides the Rivers.”¹⁵

The Missouri Valley Authority failed amidst the opposition of electricity companies from across the country and lackluster support from key members of the Democratic Party. Historian Donald Spritzer laid most of the blame for MVA’s failure at Truman’s feet, arguing that the President never gave the issue his full throated support. However much Truman believed in the river valley authority model, he was not committed enough to face the opposition mounted by private utilities and overcome the political hurdles required to unite the interests of ten states. In 1946, the White House lost the strongest political force for river development in the administration when the old curmudgeon Harold Ickes resigned over Truman’s appointment of an oil executive to Undersecretary of the Navy. Ickes resignation was seen by many as a definitive break between Truman and the New Deal, with the vast majority of letters written to Truman objecting to the loss of an "old warrior" for the crime of "honesty and defense of the public interest."¹⁶ Ickes was replaced at Interior by Julius Krug, who had a track record on public power from his time at TVA and the War Production Board, but lacked the political instincts required to navigate western water development. Later that year the Republican Party won their first congressional majority since 1932 and began to limit funding for Reclamation and TVA water projects, fearing that federal dam builders were using their printing offices to spread socialistic ideas. Cutting funding for water in the West cost Republicans in 1948 when they once again lost control of Congress. Within Montana the MVA issue divided Senator Murray and

¹⁵ McAlister Coleman, “Private Power Fights Against MVA,” Publication unknown, clipping found in Perry Melton Papers, box 13, folder 6; Coleman was a journalist and a perennial candidate of the Socialist Party of America.

¹⁶ Quoted in Richardson, 21.

Congressman Mansfield who, later in his life, claimed that the infighting between federal agencies was his primary concern and that had been resolved by the Pick-Sloan agreement.¹⁷

While Montana's Congressmen were at odds with one another and with the President about the Missouri Valley, they all found common cause on the other side of the divide. The Columbia Basin, alongside the Tennessee, was the heartland of public power. The Bonneville Power Act of 1937 authorized the Bonneville Dam and created the Bonneville Power Administration, a federal entity tasked with marketing power generated at federal dams throughout the Columbia Basin. While BPA managed hydroelectricity, the Bureau of Reclamation distributed irrigation water to the Columbia Basin Project, and the Army Corps of Engineers managed navigation locks along the lower river. Large federal dams were constructed with multiple use in mind, but the various agencies tasked with looking after that use left the river basin suffering under jurisdictional confusion and competing interests. In his history of Grand Coulee Dam written in 1954, Murray Morgan commented on the complexity of jurisdiction over the Columbia Basin noting that when he asked a Reclamation public relations employee for a chart depicting agency responsibilities the PR man retorted "no chart could make clear what is not clear in the first place."¹⁸ A catastrophic flood in 1948 completely wiped out the town of Vanport, OR, raising basin-wide demands for more flood control dams, just as 1943 Missouri floods had.¹⁹ In addition to the flood, power demand began to outstrip supply, leading

¹⁷ Richardson, 24–30; Mike Mansfield, "Mike Mansfield Interview, July 21, 2000" (2000), *Don Oberdorfer Interviews with Mike Mansfield Oral History Project*, 18.

¹⁸ Morgan, *The Dam*, 71.

¹⁹ C. G. Paulson, ed. "Floods of May-June 1948 in Columbia River Basin: A presentation of data on floods, gathered from selected gaging stations and other sources" US Geological Survey, Dept. of Interior, 1949 Accessed April 29, 2021 <https://pubs.usgs.gov/wsp/1080/report.pdf> pages 1–3, 80–91, 112–117; "Floods Have CVA Advocates Croaking" *Portland Oregonian*, July 3, 1948; "Floods And A CVA" June 7, 1948, *Oregon Grange Bulletin*, "Flood Control by Dams" *Portland Oregonian*, June 2, 1948, clippings in WHM, series2, box 49, folder 4; The location of Vanport—a working class African American community—within the floodplain of a turbulent river, was a product of the racial and class divide in Oregon, see Ellen Stroud, "Troubled Waters in Ecotopia: Environmental Racism in Portland, Oregon," *Radical History Review* 74 (May 1999): 65–95.

to a Pick-Sloan-esque race between the agencies to plan and construct all they could. The result was the Pick-Straus plan, an ambitious roadmap for damming nearly every inch of freely flowing water left in the Northwest, tripling the river's generating capacity and creating a system of locks and levees that would make Pasco, Washington, and Lewiston, Idaho, seaports. Not wanting to see their region transformed by the agency engineers alone, Columbia basin labor and congressional leaders called for the creation of a Columbia Valley Administration, introducing several versions of the bill to Congress in 1948 and 49. During the 1948 presidential campaign, Harry Truman toured the northwest extolling the benefits of a Columbia Valley Administration. CVA was about streamlining bureaucracy and allowing for greater democratic control of natural resources. At a campaign stop in Salt Lake City Truman stated that big business "had done their best to make the West an economic colony" but through river development in the public interest, the West could secure an independent economic future.²⁰ The second Truman administration began with high hopes for transformational change in the Columbia Basin with the Assistant Secretary of the Interior boasting, "so far the Republicans and power companies are against it and the Democrats, labor, and farmers are for it. What more could we ask?"²¹ His confidence was misplaced, as the animated debates that ensued ultimately led to the demise of CVA and the decline of public power nationwide. Before examining the businesses, civic organizations, and politicians who organized against CVA, it is worth considering just what was at stake from the view of Columbia Valley Administration advocates.²²

²⁰ Quoted in Richardson, 28.

²¹ Quotes in Richardson, 30.

²² "CVA Requested by President Seeks to Build up Northwest" *The Western News* (Hamilton, MT), January 27 1949; "Dear Mr. Melton," Letter from Jerome G. Locke to Perry S. Melton, February 22, 1949, PMP, box 13, folder 6; "CVA Issue Grows Warm" *Daily Inter Lake*, March 5, 1949; the word "authority" was substituted for "administration" in the 1949 CVA Bill H.R. 4286, which also rearranged the advisory roles of State governors laid out in Murray's 1945 Bill S. 555; "Statement of J. Howard Toelie" Congress, House, Committee on Public Works, *Columbia Valley Administration: Hearings*, Eighty-first Congress, First Session, on H.R. 4286 and H.R. 4287

For many twentieth century reformers, the redistribution of population was considered to be as crucial to the prosperity of the nation as was the redistribution of wealth. In fact, the two were inextricably linked in the minds of Progressives and New Dealers. Basil Manly, who served as Vice Chairman of the FPC under Roosevelt had begun predicting a great depression as early as 1924 which he believed would result from “the alarming decline of American agriculture and the astounding migration from the farms to the cities” that he described as, “the greatest menace to the national prosperity and general welfare of the United States.”²³ Urbanization, which Manly and others saw precipitating a decline in living standards for the working class, had been accelerating with the advent of each new labor saving technology and was further sped along by the United States’ entrance into the second world war. Federal direction of the economy for war industries was predicated on maximizing efficiency, not balancing out existing disparities or curbing negative trends in population. The primary goal was to get guns in the hands of soldiers, boats on the water, and planes in the air. As War Production Board Director William H. Harrison stated, “There is only one answer to those who seek to rule the world by force of planes and ships and tanks and guns. The answer is more planes, more ships, more tanks, and more guns.”²⁴ Yet for old progressives like James Murray, the social upheavals of war production merited the same consideration as the rapid deployment of munitions. Born in Ontario and raised in Butte, Murray began his political career in 1906 as the County Attorney of Silverbow County. While the Murray family were millionaire copper magnates, they had close ties to the labor movement and radical Irish politics. After losing a considerable share of his fortune in the stock crash of

(Washington D.C. United States Government Printing Office, 1949), 386–99, 388; The first CVA Bill was introduced by Hugh Mitchell in 1945 see Richardson, 24.

²³ Quoted in Jean Christie, “Giant Power: A Progressive Proposal of the Nineteen-Twenties” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 96, no. 4 (1972): 486.

²⁴ Quoted in Bailey, 152.

1929, James Murray launched headlong into Franklin Roosevelt's Democratic Party, winning one of Montana's Senate seats in 1934. In the Senate, Murray took on business interests, especially those using war production as an opportunity to consolidate monopolies. He fought for universal full employment and universal health insurance for everyone following the war—not just those who served in the military—and pushed for electric power development and marketing that would foster evenly distributed populations rather than sprawling industrial cities.²⁵

The CVA ideal was perhaps best stated in a pamphlet entitled *Magnificent Columbia* distributed by the CIO in 1949. The authors made it clear that CVA would be a bulwark against recreating the sprawl and industrial pollution of the East and Midwest in the Pacific Northwest. The CIO authors saw those negative outcomes emanating from the patterns of private development. Crowded, inhuman cities were “the stupid and tragic outcome of a bad development plan, or no plan at all” and “if these things are left to chance, profit, or pressure, overcrowding and human misery will necessarily result.” CIO saw the ultimate goal of a river valley authority as the creation of “smaller, more pleasant, more human towns” through federal planning guided by local democracy. While they fought for passage of each CVA bill, they did not believe that their vision was fully realized in those bills as they were written and introduced, providing critiques of all existing federal development plans.²⁶

In *Magnificent Columbia*, the CIO authors set their sights on the environmental record of the federal agencies and private corporations. The pamphlet opens with the tone

²⁵ Biographical note from Finding Aid to James E. Murray Papers, 1918–1969, Mansfield Library Archives and Special Collections, University of Montana; for Murray's small business advocacy and the Full Employment Bill see Brinkley, 227–64.

²⁶ *Magnificent Columbia* pamphlet distributed by CIO with a foreword by John Brophy and Anthony W. Smith for the CIO Committee on Regional Development and Conservation, 1949, pgs. 19, 7, found in MMP, series 14, box 12, folder 10; See figure 23.

of a preservationist manifesto: “Too long our American forests, rivers, and minerals have been exploited for private profit. Too long our soils have been neglected and abused. Too long our wildlife and recreational resources... have been wantonly destroyed.”²⁷ The CIO authors believed that under a Columbia Valley Authority, federal administrators would be required to look after the wellbeing of the whole region, rather than merely providing power, water, flood control, and navigation. They argued that the flooding experienced in 1948 had been exacerbated by the timber industry which had clearcut the natural flood protection of the region's forests, even stating that “If the beaver population of the northwest could be restored, it would help considerably to control floods.” In a particularly prescient section, the authors stated that “90 percent of all the fingerlings [juvenile salmon] coming down the Columbia will be killed by the dams already built or authorized” and that those dams will “almost certainly destroy the salmon runs on the Columbia-Snake-Salmon-Clearwater.”²⁸ CIO’s writers had clearly been reading the best available science, and as such they advocated for the Mid Basin Preservation Program. The program would have set aside the Lower Snake, Clearwater, and Salmon Rivers as protected salmon habitat, as well as the Cowlitz River, where Tacoma Power’s Mossyrock and Mayfield dams cut off salmon runs in the 1960s. In addition to the creation of a protected area, CVA’s emphasis on providing cheap electricity and thereby attracting industry to smaller cities would have enabled Lewiston, Idaho to become a manufacturing hub, rather than staking its economic future on becoming a seaport through the construction of the Lower Snake River Dams. The extinctions, loss of cultural resources, and loss of jobs in fishing in the four decades since the Lower Snake

²⁷ *Magnificent Columbia*, 1.

²⁸ *Magnificent Columbia*, 10.

River Dams were constructed, have led many in recent decades to call for their removal.²⁹ The loss of salmon in the Snake River and the political battle over dam removal are exactly the sort of problems that CVA advocates sought to prevent by forming a river valley authority. Yet, despite their attention to the looming salmon crisis, the CIO authors ignored those who suffered most from the loss of salmon—Native American tribes. In fact, the destruction of culturally significant sites and the poverty experienced on the Colville, Nez Perce, and Yakima Reservations did not receive even cursory mention in any of the union’s documents.

A notable point of contention around CVA and the development of the Columbia Basin generally was the controversial question of locating hydropower dams within National Parks. While the controversy around the Echo Park Dam in Dinosaur National Monument is remembered as a pivotal moment in the rise of environmental politics in the mid twentieth century, an equally significant proposal to dam the North Fork of the Flathead River within Glacier National Park has received less attention from historians.³⁰ The Glacier View proposal took advantage of a clause within the 1910 Act creating Glacier National Park which specified that, “The United States Reclamation Service may enter upon and utilize for flowage or other purposes any area within said park which may be necessary.”³¹ Montana politicians, public power advocates, and Flathead County

²⁹ See Jim Lichatowich, *Salmon Without Rivers: A History of the Pacific Salmon Crisis* (Washington D.C.: Island Press, 1999); Kieth Peterson, *River of Life, Channel of Death: Fish and Dams on the Lower Snake* (Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press, 2001); David James Duncan “A Prayer for Salmon’s Second Coming” in *My Story As Told By Water* (Berkeley, CA: Sierra Club Books, 2001) 181–214; see also the 2021 “Northwest In Transition” initiative proposed by Idaho Representative Mike Simpson, “At Long Last, A Workable Plan to Remove Lower Snake River Dams and Save Idaho’s Salmon,” *Idaho Statesman*, February 7, 2021.

³⁰ For the Echo Park controversy see Mark W. T. Harvey, *A Symbol of Wilderness: Echo Park and the American Conservation Movement*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000); Shawn Patrick Bailey’s recent dissertation “Worth A Dam: Glacier View and the Preservation of Wild America” is a significant step toward reversing this trend.

³¹ Glacier National Park Act, 16 U.S.C. Chapter 1, Subchapter XX (1910).

boosters, seeking more power and flood control for the towns of Columbia Falls and Kalispell, proposed damming the North Fork of the Flathead, which forms the western boundary of the park.³² In 1943, the Army Corps of Engineers took up the challenge, submitting plans for a five-hundred-foot-high earthen dam that would rival Hungry Horse Dam nineteen miles away on the South Fork. Seeing this as a threat not just to elk habitat and old growth forests, but to the sanctity of the National Park system as a whole, preservationists rallied nationwide to stop Glacier View citing the example of the Hetch Hetchy Valley controversy which split preservationists from conservationists in the 1910s. Proponents of the Glacier View Dam argued that a dam on the North Fork could only enhance the scenic and recreational value of the park, as it would allow families to access seldom appreciated views of the snowcapped peaks from the comfort of a motorboat. Bernard DeVoto, in a feature story for the *Saturday Evening Post* countered the argument for recreational lakes writing, “Nobody doubts that the American people need facilities for recreation and will need more of them as our population increases. But what kind, where, at what cost, and who shall pay for them? ... Should Philadelphia and Birmingham be taxed to provide sailboating for Las Vegas?”³³ Following a series of tense public hearings and months of competing editorials in local and national newspapers, Glacier View was taken off the table on April 11, 1949, when Interior Secretary Julius Krug and Army Secretary Kenneth Royall made a formal agreement not to pursue construction of the Glacier View Dam.³⁴

³² For a map of the proposed reservoir see Figure 12.

³³ Bernard DeVoto, “Shall We Let Them Ruin Our National Parks?” in *DeVoto’s West* (Athens, Ohio, Swallow Press, 2005) 189–202; Mike Mansfield letter to Bernard DeVoto in response to DeVoto’s “Shall We Let Them Ruin Our National Parks?” July 24, 1950; Bernard DeVoto response to Mike Mansfield August 1, 1950, in MMP, series 17, box 233, folder 1.

³⁴ Bailey, 338–40; Mike Mansfield continued to press for Glacier View despite the Secretaries’ agreement, introducing H.R. 6153 in 1949, which did not receive a floor vote. In the following years, Mansfield responded

CIO believed that a Columbia Valley Administration would be better equipped to protect places like Glacier than the federal agencies as they were. The authors of *Magnificent Columbia* praised the coalition that had fought to stop Glacier View Dam. They made the case that National Parks and wilderness areas are especially important for industrial workers as a refuge from the noise of the city and factory. Hunting, camping, and fishing were seen as truly working class pastimes that ought to be preserved through careful government planning of parks and preservation of wild rivers. But despite their defense of the national parks, they still included Glacier View on a map of potential dams.³⁵

While not all versions of CVA displayed the environmental consciousness of *Magnificent Columbia*, even the more development focused promoters saw the Administration as an opportunity to move beyond the extractive model of the past. The League for CVA distributed their own pamphlet with more classic development themes featuring images of miners, ranchers, and lumbermen. Yet in the document they advocated for an end to the “cut and get out tradition.” They claimed that “this area will be richer than ever before and it will be more like it used to be in the days when the Indians roamed and the fish leaped in every river and the deer were found on every hill and in every valley.”³⁶ The Department of the Interior also endorsed the Columbia Valley Administration with Secretary Julius Krug declaring CVA the best mechanism for both, “maximum development and wise use of Columbia Basin resources.” Krug welcomed the

optimistically to several letters calling both for Glacier View Dam on the North Fork and Spruce Park Dam on the Middle Fork of the Flathead River, MMP, series 17, box 233, folders 1-4.

³⁵ See Figure 11; Perhaps this was meant simply as geographical reference, however that raises questions around other proposed dams such as the Paradise Dam which were not included on the map.

³⁶ “CVA” *League for CVA*, PMP, box 13, folder 6.

prospect of handing over Interior Department projects to a CVA stating “I think they will do better work and be of more value to the people of the Columbia Basin states as part of an integrated, regional, at-home administration with its headquarters in the Pacific Northwest.” Despite the endorsement, Secretary Krug’s statement made clear that no authorized project was to be canceled, including the navigation dams on the Lower Snake River.³⁷ In Krug’s testimony before the Senate Public Works Committee, he clarified further why he believed in CVA citing the strong protections for laborers and Indian Reservations in the bill.³⁸ However, despite Krug’s insistence that Native Americans would be protected by CVA, the primary topic of discussion regarding the reservations during a 1949 congressional hearing was how CVA could speed up the process of mining phosphate rock on tribal land.³⁹

Yet despite the support of labor unions, federal agencies, and President Truman, no CVA bill was ever passed. The opposition which had rallied against the MVA fought even harder against the CVA, and in the process laid the groundwork for a full-scale rejection of the public power vision of the New Deal. Republicans and state’s rights Democrats campaigned against river valley authorities but continued to support federal engineering of rivers.⁴⁰ Without questioning the role that the Army Corps of Engineers and Bureau of Reclamation had to play in creating shipping channels and providing irrigation water, they insisted that the federal government hand over control of the power market to private companies. Historian Elmo

³⁷ Office of the Secretary of the Interior, “Interior Department Endorses Columbia Valley Administration” April 14, 1949, PMP, box 13, folder 6.

³⁸ “Why the Nation Needs a Columbia Valley Administration, Testimony Before the Senate Public Works Committee, 81st Congress” Julius Krug, June 2, 1949, located in PMP, box 13, folder 6.

³⁹ “Rights of Indians” Congress, House, Committee on Public Works, *Columbia Valley Administration: Hearings*, Eighty-first Congress, First Session, on H.R. 4286 and H.R. 4287, (Washington D.C. United States Government Printing Office, 1949), 479–516.

⁴⁰ Paul Hauser, “Dewey Offers Plan Aimed to Develop Resources of the West” *Portland Oregonian*, May 10, 1948, clipping in WHM, series 2, box 49, folder 4.

Richardson assessed the flaws of that model writing: “Although they insisted that they were defending private enterprise and democracy, such a policy in fact would mean that a few local monopolists would reap the benefits of highly profitable projects financed by the taxes of the entire population.”⁴¹

The private power interests had their own claims to unfairness rooted in the preference BPA gave to utility cooperatives and the fact that federal power projects were exempt from taxation. Consulting engineer Thomas Robins made just such an argument at a meeting of a utility trades group in Spokane in 1948. Robins argued that the misguided wording and ideologically motivated interpretation of all major water power legislation had not allowed for “fair dealing and due regard to economics.” The preference for public customers was seen as an unjust inequality based on what valley one happened to live and do business in. He concluded his remarks with a call for new overarching water power legislation that would give the same price to all customers, regardless of their business model, stating: “it should be made certain that the proceeds from the sale of power get back into the national treasury instead of being squandered on ideologies... there is no doubt in my mind that our system of free enterprise is doomed unless something is done without delay.”⁴²

Depending on which newspaper one read, they may have been convinced that CVA was the next step toward perfecting human civilization or the next step on the road to serfdom. While labor friendly papers ran front page stories extolling the virtues of river valley authorities, the Anaconda and Montana Power Company aligned press ran stories comparing valley authorities to all shapes of totalitarianism. Following a meeting of the Upper Columbia Development

⁴¹ Richardson, 3.

⁴² Statement by Thomas M. Robins, Consulting Engineer, at meeting of Columbia River Resources Committee, Spokane, WA, September 30, 1948, in Walter H. McLeod Papers (WHM), series 2, box 49, folder 4.

Association in Missoula, the *Daily Missoulian* equated the opinion of that organization with half of the state, reporting that “West Montanans Oppose CVA as Dictatorial” describing an “unswerving opposition to the principle of valley authorities.”⁴³ Lewie Williams, president of the West Coast Mineral Association wrote in a letter to the *Seattle Post Intelligencer* thanking them for their coverage of the CVA debate that, “No one who believes in our republican form of government will support such socialistic and totalitarian ideas if fully informed.”⁴⁴ In the margins of an article describing the creeping socialism of the UK Labor Party, Walter H. McLeod, the owner of Missoula Mercantile and a board member of the Montana Power Company wrote of CVA supporters like James Murray, that “public-ownership-socialist-collectivist leaders” sell their valley authority ideas to common people by promising lower prices, while forcing people to pay “through increased taxes and through loss of freedom.” Setting his sights on public power, McLeod quoted David Lilienthal’s own words “Those who control energy, control people” fearing government control of the people through energy, while dismissing the critique that the line’s original author had been aiming at men like McLeod.⁴⁵

Not all who opposed the CVA, and valley authority plans generally, shared the vocabulary of Jack D. Ripper and the John Birch Society.⁴⁶ Many who fought the creation of river basin agencies opposed the general principle of federally directed regional development. In his testimony against H.R. 4286–7, Montana State University law professor J. Howard Toelie

⁴³ “West Montanans Oppose CVA as Dictatorial” *Daily Missoulian*, February 20, 1949.

⁴⁴ Lewie Williams, “TVA and CVA: to the Post Intelligencer” *Seattle Post Intelligencer*, June 25, 1948 clipping in WHM, series2, box 49, folder 4.

⁴⁵ Walter McLeod, margin notes to article, “Backward America—Bunk!” *Myrtle Point Herald*, June 17, 1948, in WHM, series2, box 49, folder 4; McLeod’s file of CVA related material contains several articles about the Communist Party of the United States of America, demonstrating the fear that public power was a communist plot; See also Figure 22 for an anti CVA pamphlet with red-scare imagery.

⁴⁶ While Jack D. Ripper is invoked here hyperbolically, a connection between the anti-fluoridation movement and questioning the federal government on environmental grounds has been suggested by Brian Alan Drake in *Loving Nature Fearing the State: Environmentalism and Antigovernment Politics before Reagan*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2013), 52–79.

challenged the claims to rational and efficient governance posited by proponents of valley authorities. He argued that the water law as it existed in the West, with three separate systems reflecting the aridity of the land—riparian doctrine in wetter states, prior appropriation in dryer states, and a combination of the two in transitional states—already reflected a development focused regionalism. In addition to the problem authorities would face working across separate legal systems, he contested the development goals envisioned by the CIO. Pointing to the example of the Big Thompson project in Colorado, Toelie argued that inter-basin water transfer was convenient, as was the transfer of electrical power over long distances in order that it “may find its best market in the industrialized urban area of another basin.” In his view, the government was trying to solve a legal problem that was already resolved by local interests generations earlier, while sabotaging the full use of technology to resolve the accidents of geography. On the latter point he far oversimplified what had been and would continue to be a monumental undertaking for both engineers and politicians.⁴⁷

While organized labor was generally on the side of public power, there were some notable exceptions. The more conservative Utility Workers Union of America-CIO—the first CIO member to ban communists—saw many locals defect from the national organization when it came to river valley authorities and public electricity generally. Utility Workers Local 270 of Cleveland protested a TVA steam plant on March 3, 1949, stating: “the construction of a steam generating plant by the government is a direct intervention in the electric utility industry and contrary to the American way of thinking.” Local 175 of Dayton, Ohio, joined them, describing

⁴⁷ “Statement of J. Howard Toelie” Congress, House, Committee on Public Works, *Columbia Valley Administration: Hearings*, Eighty-first Congress, First Session, on H.R. 4286 and H.R. 4287 (Washington D.C. United States Government Printing Office, 1949), 386–99; for details of the Colorado Big Thompson Project see Daniel Tyler, *The Last Water Hole in the West: The Colorado-Big Thompson Project and the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District* (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1992).

the proposed plant as “going a little too far towards socialism.” The UWUA Locals were not opposed to power dams outright, as hydroelectricity was merely an advantage of building multi-use infrastructure, but a standalone power plant went beyond the theoretical bounds of American governance.⁴⁸ The AFL’s IBEW Local 1245 of Vacaville CA passed a preemptive resolution against the government taking ownership of Pacific Gas and Electric in May 1948.⁴⁹ Granges throughout the West were likewise split over expanding public electricity.⁵⁰ The Oregon Grange strongly supported a CVA, especially after the 1948 floods, while the Idaho Grange and the Lower Valley Grange of Flathead County, Montana voted unanimously on a resolution opposing CVA. Calling the plan “democracy in retreat,” The Lower Valley Grange resolution went so far as to speculate that the president would not choose westerners to head the CVA and thus the three member board would not be familiar enough with western water law to make good decisions.⁵¹ Montana’s Grange Master Winton Weydemeyer, who had caught the attention of every possible camp when he testified against Glacier View Dam at a 1948 hearing in Missoula, opposed the CVA and fought against public power throughout his life, becoming a significant voice for environmental protection and conservative politics throughout the 1950s and 60s.⁵² In January of 1950 he wrote a detailed letter to the editors of *Nature Magazine* responding to their arguments in favor of CVA. Weydemeyer characterized the views of the *Nature Magazine* editorial as being essentially reactionary, that their argument came down to: “If the damned

⁴⁸ “CIO Unit Wants ‘Progressive Capitalism’” *Dayton Daily News*, February 12, 1949 clipping found in Harry Billings Montana Power Collection (HBM), box 1, folder 1.

⁴⁹ HBM, box 1, folder 1.

⁵⁰ Granges are farmers organizations similar to labor unions with thousands of local granges throughout the country.

⁵¹ “Floods and a CVA” *Oregon Grange Bulletin*, June 7, 1948, “Grange Opposes CVA by Unanimous Vote” date and publication unknown, clipping in PMP, box 13, folder 6.

⁵² Weydemeyer’s testimony garnered the attention of wilderness advocates, Republican state politicians, the Montana Power Company, and Montana’s Congressmen; Transcripts of the testimony can be found in CMP, series 2, box 3, folder 12.

power interests are ag'in it, I'm all for it."⁵³ He warned that knee jerk opposition to the power companies had led his fellow conservationists to blindly support a plan that amounted to nothing more than wishful thinking. The federal government was already unresponsive to the people on resource issues, rearranging their authority and handing power to a new set of administrators wasn't going to change that. He argued against the notion—which he attributed to Theodore Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot—that public ownership was always the best means of conservation, writing that it was, “high time we realize that programs of conservation-for-use can never be adequately successful if applied primarily as government programs devised by the planners and dictated to our citizens—even if Congress approves.”⁵⁴

Members of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes rarely weighed in on the debate over valley authorities. For many native people in both the Columbia and Missouri watersheds dams were an outside imposition which could only do harm. The Spokane, Okanogan, and Coeur d'Alene tribes had all had their primary food source eradicated by the construction of Grand Coulee Dam in 1942. The Yakama, Umatilla, Warm Springs, Nez Perce, and Palouse witnessed once great salmon, steelhead, and lamprey runs steadily diminish with each addition to the Columbia Power System.⁵⁵ George Gillette, chairman of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara tribes of the Fort Berthold Reservation could not hold back tears as he watched Julius Krug sign away his people's land beneath the waters of Lake Sakakawea.⁵⁶ The Crow Tribe saw what little monetary compensation they were granted for land flooded by Yellowtail Dam cut in half twice without their consent.⁵⁷ By and for whom hydropower was being generated was not a primary

⁵³ Winton Weydemeyer, “The CVA and Conservation: Open letter to The Editors, *Nature Magazine*,” January 7, 1950, WWP box 3, folder 4.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Lichatowich, 76–80, 98–101, 130–135.

⁵⁶ Bailey, 325.

⁵⁷ Megan Benson, “The Fight for Crow Water: Part 1, the Early Reservation Years through the Indian New Deal,” *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 57, no. 4 (Winter, 2007), 24–42, 94–96.

concern among those who were certain it was not for them. However, among the Salish and Kootenai there was one tribal council member who was greatly concerned about the possibility of a Columbia Valley Administration. Lorena Burgess, first woman to serve on the CSKT council, had a regular correspondence with Governor John Bonner in 1949 in which she insisted that he oppose the CVA bills. Her letters were biting in their criticism of the West's lone Democrat governor. "I admit you wrote a nice letter, but am I to think as others think that you at heart are a CVA man?" she asked in one. She went on to accuse Bonner of not having read the bill before writing, "I realize this is still America and every one is entitled to their own opinion, some of us are loyal to our friends..." Bonner took the criticism silently, only replying that he had not yet decided his position on CVA. While Burgess' anti-CVA position is noteworthy, she cannot be considered to represent the position of her whole tribe, who have left few records regarding their thoughts on the matter.⁵⁸

Historians have given several explanations for the failure of CVA under Truman. Spritzer blamed Truman's lackluster leadership. Clayton Koppes claimed that under Truman's Fair Deal, "corporate liberalism" replaced "commonwealth liberalism" as the guiding administrative ideology, dooming redistributive projects like valley authorities.⁵⁹ Richardson argued that western Democrats failed to rally enough support from Eastern and Midwest Congressmen.⁶⁰

Mark Reisner, while not directly writing about CVA, theorized that the intensely local issue of

⁵⁸ "Dear John," Letter from Lorena Burgess to John Bonner, March 28, 1949; "Dear John," Letter from Lorena Burgess to John Bonner, October 20, 1949; "Dear Lorena," Letter from John Bonner to Lorena Burgess, April 7, 1949; "Dear Mrs. Burgess," Letter from John Bonner to Lorena Burgess, October 26, 1949, LBP, box 4, folder 16; Aside from the fact that Native people are not a monolith, Burgess in particular was an outlier politically as she supported the termination of the CSKT, a policy which is discussed further in Chapter 3.

⁵⁹ Clayton R. Koppes, "Environmental Policy and American Liberalism: The Department of the Interior, 1933–1953," with commentary from Gerald D. Nash and Harold L. Burstyn, *Environmental Review* 7, no. 1 (1983) 17–53; Koppes makes a compelling argument that Interior Secretaries Krug and Chapman are more to blame for the break with the New Deal than Douglas McKay, however in his piece he downplays and condenses the timelines of both the Termination policy and the Hells Canyon controversy.

⁶⁰ Richardson, 17.

water development legislation is the “grease gun that lubricates the nation’s legislature” a theory which supports Richardson’s argument.⁶¹ Historians David P. Billington, Donald C. Jackson, and Martin V. Melosi in their official history of hydropower for the Department of the Interior cited fear—fear for the future of democracy and free enterprise—as the primary cause of CVA’s defeat.⁶² Each of these explanations has truth to it, but each also lacks something. Those who point to fear are correct, but that explanation does not address who stoked those fears. Truman and Krug lacked the will and political prowess of Roosevelt and Ickes, but to focus solely on their failure ignores those who tested their will and organized against them. Likewise, emphasizing the eastern and midwestern representatives who did not support western water projects is lacking without addressing the national publications which encouraged those representatives to question the costs of western water projects. The failure of CVA can only be understood by drawing attention to the coalition of business interests who harnessed the fear of communism to prevent the expansion of state power that had begun with the New Deal. Chief among them in Montana were the Montana Power Company, the Anaconda Mining Company, and the Northern Pacific Railroad, all companies that had built their wealth in the heyday of extractive industry. In their successful campaign against the creation of another TVA they unintentionally gave a voice to conservationists like Winton Weydemeyer who questioned both public and private development, a phenomenon that will be discussed in the next chapter.

The dream of coordinated development had begun to fade by the time Truman left office. Adlai Stevenson made no mention of CVA during the 1952 campaign and went so far as to agree with Eisenhower that the TVA model was perhaps not the right one for other river basins.⁶³

⁶¹ Reisner, *Cadillac Desert*, 308.

⁶² David P. Billington, Donald C. Jackson, and Martin V. Melosi, *The History of Large Federal Dams: Planning, Design, and Construction* (Denver: U.S. Department of the Interior, 2005), 228.

⁶³ Richardson, 75.

Progressive Democrats like James Murray had tried and failed to expand the public power legacy of the New Deal in the Truman years. After nineteen years of success, public power was on the defensive, but not defeated. Mike Mansfield beat Zales Ecton in the 1952 senate race even while Eisenhower carried the state by more than nineteen percent. Mansfield won while making a firm stand in defense of public power, citing his own record on Hungry Horse Dam throughout the campaign.⁶⁴ At the dedication of Hungry Horse Dam just a month before the election, President Truman warned that it would be a long time before another such project would be built if Ike won the election, stating that “Just as we have created this dam to better regulate the management of water resources and power we need to in our government regulate power and resources” and that we “should be wary of turning the government over to special interest and money men” who he saw as the power behind the Republican Party.⁶⁵ But with Eisenhower’s inauguration in 1953, the private utilities and their newly invigorated grassroots support would have their opportunity to gain ground in the western power market, and they would make their next stand on the Oregon-Idaho border beneath the peaks of the Seven Devils range.

The Hells Canyon High Dam controversy was perhaps the most significant natural resource issue of the Eisenhower years. Historian Ken Boyd Brooks wrote in his definitive account of the ordeal *Public Power, Private Dams*, that Hells Canyon determined the future of the western electrical and political landscape: “Had the federal government built Hells Canyon High Dam, publicly owned electricity would have captured the nation’s greatest untapped hydroelectric resource. Instead, a small private power company received a limited license to

⁶⁴ Ibid., 78.

⁶⁵ Chris Walterskirchen, “Truman Dedicates Hungry Horse Dam 50 Years Ago” *The Missoulian*, September 27, 2002; Truman’s speech also referenced in United States Congress, Senate, Senator Murray of Montana speaking on “The Contribution of Hungry Horse Dam,” *Congressional Record* (March 21, 1960), 6096; In this same speech, Murray criticized the Northern Pacific Railroad and other business interests for standing in the way of federal dams while benefiting from the economic development that such dams brought to the West; See Figure 18.

manage a small portion of the Snake’s total potential power.”⁶⁶ The symbolic significance of Hells Canyon to the Republican Party was immediately apparent in 1952, as Eisenhower’s first campaign stop after receiving his party’s nomination was in Boise, Idaho where the decorated general played to the Mountain West’s frustrations with the New Deal legacy. In his Boise speech, Eisenhower declared his intent to replace the “federal monopoly over power” with a system of “regulated power” in which the federal government would operate as a “cooperating partner where this seems necessary or desirable.”⁶⁷

To achieve his vision of public-private power partnership, Eisenhower staffed the agencies in charge of public power in the Interior Department with friends of private electricity, nominating former Oregon Governor Douglas McKay as Secretary. Douglas McKay was known for his “folksy phrases, platitudes” and was known to “to overuse the label ‘socialist.’” He had received praise from Thomas Dewey upon his selection for Interior Secretary: “I am looking forward with great happiness to the wonderful job I know you will do in slaying the Socialist dragon of the Interior Department.”⁶⁸ Eisenhower’s Chief of Staff deemed McKay to be the most conservative member of the Republican cabinet. Upon his ascension to Interior, the *New York Times* declared “the end of an era of active government involvement in the development of the country’s natural resources.”⁶⁹ As Governor, McKay had testified passionately against the CVA which he termed an “autocratic Federal corporation... which is dangerously similar to the devices of a totalitarian state” warning that attempts to simplify governance were akin to taking a short cut, but “the short cut never leads back to the trail.”⁷⁰ McKay, reflecting on his first year as

⁶⁶ Brooks, xx–xxi.

⁶⁷ Quoted in Brooks, 177.

⁶⁸ Richardson, 84, 85.

⁶⁹ Quoted in Brooks, 184.

⁷⁰ “Statement of Hon. Douglas McKay, Governor of the State of Oregon” Congress, House, Committee on Public Works, *Columbia Valley Administration: Hearings*, Eighty-first Congress, First Session, on H.R. 4286 and H.R. 4287 (Washington D.C. United States Government Printing Office, 1949), 400–01.

Secretary, attempted to sooth the fears of his critics, stating “I do not agree with some views that the federal government should pull out to the power business entirely.”⁷¹ BPA administrator Paul Raver broke from the consensus of his erstwhile colleagues and praised Eisenhower’s selection of McKay in a statement which a *Flathead Courier* columnist saw as yet another example of the duplicitous nature of government power administrators.⁷² Still, most politicians and commentators saw McKay’s appointment as a sea change in natural resource policy which would have immediate consequences, particularly with regard to licensing dams in the West.

Since at least as early as 1947, federal planners had been pushing for a single high dam on the Snake River at Hells Canyon “in order to permit this Department to achieve the goal of the fullest economic development of the Pacific Northwest.”⁷³ The plan was to utilize Hells Canyon power to process phosphates for fertilizer and power irrigation pumps to water the Reclamation Bureau’s Mountain Home Project on the plains east of Boise. Truman had campaigned across the Northwest in 1948 promising to repeat the success of Grand Coulee in the upper basin with a High Dam on the Snake. In 1950 however, the Hells Canyon bill failed to pass the Senate. Seeing a weakness in public power's grip on the Columbia Basin, the Idaho Power Company applied to the Federal Power Commission in December 1950 for authorization to construct the much smaller Oxbow Dam in the same stretch of river. Power company lawyers and bureaucrats at Interior kept the application and any new High Dam bills tied up in the courts and at the FPC for years. With Eisenhower’s appointment of McKay to Interior, Idaho Power doubled down on their plan for the Snake, filing two further applications for dams above and

⁷¹ “Cabinet Officers give Short Review of Activities in Eisenhower Administration” *The Flathead Courier*, December 31, 1953.

⁷² H.M. “Has Raver Shortened His Name?” *The Flathead Courier*, January 1, 1953.

⁷³ Julius Krug, quoted in Brooks, 8.

below Oxbow. In 1955, Idaho Power was granted authorization for a three-dam complex and set to work constructing Brownlee Dam with Oxbow soon to follow.⁷⁴

Even as concrete was being poured at Brownlee, public power advocates continued to keep the High Dam dream alive, but bill after bill was voted down. On July 11, 1957 *The Flathead Courier* ran two articles side by side headlined “Hell’s Canyon [*sic*] Farce is Over” and “Paradise Dam Farce Continues.” The first article, reprinted from the *Spokesman Review*, confidently declared that “it was inevitable that the Hells Canyon bill could not become law” despite the effort of “public ownership zealots” bent on “advancing their program for a welfare state in which private enterprise would be supplanted by socialism.”⁷⁵ But that second article indicated that the confident proclamation of public power’s defeat was perhaps premature, as the Paradise Dam, a once defeated dam, arose once more as a live option.

With the Hells Canyon High Dam defeated for the last time in 1957, public power interests turned to Montana’s Clark Fork River as the last best hope for expanding federal control of electricity. Just five miles downstream from its confluence with the Flathead, the Clark Fork River flows calmly between the Pritchard Formation cliffs that separate the towns of Paradise and Plains.⁷⁶ The canyon is not imposing in either width or depth and was not difficult to access with heavy machinery like the sites proposed on the wild North and Middle Forks of the Flathead at Glacier View and Spruce Park. Anchoring a 243-foot-high concrete dam in the rocky cliffs, Army engineers could fill a reservoir all the way back to the base of Kerr Dam at the mouth of Flathead Lake and eight miles upstream from the town of Superior on the Clark Fork. Because of

⁷⁴ Brooks, 141, 162, 185.

⁷⁵ Ashley Holden, “Hell’s Canyon Farce is Over,” *The Flathead Courier*, reprinted from *Spokesman Review*, July 11, 1957.

⁷⁶ Earle R. Cressman, “The Pritchard Formation of the Lower Part of the Belt Supergroup (Middle Proterozoic), Near Plains, Sanders County, Montana” *Geological Survey bulletin* no. 1553 (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1985) 1–3; See Figure 21.

the steady grade of both Clark Fork and Flathead upstream from the site, studies suggested that Paradise Dam was projected to produce four times as much electricity as Hungry Horse despite being only half of its height. This 66,000-acre reservoir would add over a million kilowatts of generating capacity to the Columbia hydropower system, while supplementing downstream generation by regulating flows. “Rare indeed is the opportunity to control two rivers with one dam!” promotional flyers proudly proclaimed.⁷⁷

In the fight over Paradise Dam, both public power advocates and private interests formed nonprofit organizations, brought in high profile speakers, and mailed pamphlets all over the region. By the early 1960s, the Montana Power Company was spending \$25,000 each year on ad campaigns opposing Paradise Dam.⁷⁸ They did so primarily through a nonprofit organization called the Upper Columbia Development Council (UCDC). This Missoula based outfit traced its roots to the citizens organized to fight the 1937 proposal to raise the level of Flathead Lake and had reformed under the UCDC name in 1957 when hearings were called for the Paradise Dam. In the 1940s UCDC members had organized successfully against the Glacier View Dam and the Paradise Dam and sent expert witnesses to testify in Congress against MVA and CVA.⁷⁹ In the 1950s, they sent out mailers and bought ads in western Montana Newspapers detailing the drawbacks, not just of Paradise Dam, but of large storage reservoirs in general in what Congressman Lee Metcalf called an “oratorical flood submerging facts” in a 1962 article for *Public Power*.⁸⁰ In their fundraising materials the UCDC explicitly placed themselves in opposition to the “exponents of the philosophy of public ownership of the means of production”

⁷⁷ Paradise dam figures from “Paradise Project: Clark Fork, Montana” in JRG, box 1, folder 1; Montana State Rural Electric Cooperative Association mailer, Cory, Hanson, Norwood, and Walker, in JRG, box 1, folder 1.

⁷⁸ “Attention: Mr. Ralph F. Gates,” Letter to Federal Power Commission Chief Accountant Ralph Gates from Montana Power Company February 1964 found in HBM, box 1, folder 2.

⁷⁹ Law professor J. Howard Toelie, whose testimony was cited earlier, was a member of the UCDC.

⁸⁰ Lee Metcalf, “Knowles Dam Battle Rages” *Public Power* July 1962, found in MMP, series 17, box 252, folder 1.

and in favor of, “the Free Enterprise system under which we have grown and prospered.”⁸¹ Miles Romney of Hamilton, Montana, complained about the influence Montana Power was having through the newspapers in a 1963 editorial for *Western News*. He blamed the outpouring of articles critical of federal dams on the “carpetbaggers” at Lee Enterprises who bought seven Montana newspapers from the Anaconda Company in 1959. UCDC leaders responded writing that the authors of the editorials were from Montana, and thus not “carpetbaggers,” asking if Mr. Romney would prefer the copper company go back to controlling the press. The UCDC were right about the fact that editorials were coming from Montanans, but considering the funding that UCDC received through Montana Power, in a roundabout way copper money was still controlling what got printed in the state’s major newspapers.⁸²

Despite their funding source, UCDC members were not simply puppets of the Montana Power Company, they were true believers in alternative approaches to water conservation and the supremacy of “the free enterprise system.”⁸³ Their newsletter was filled with alternate dam proposals, appeals to reduce the size of government, and warnings about the ever-present threat of communism. Council president Ray Loman wrote in an August 1963 Newsletter that centralized government “by its nature is dictatorial and not concerned with the rights and dignity of the individual man.” A November 1957 newsletter carried an article about the REA which

⁸¹ “Dear Mr. McLeod,” Letter from Ray M. Loman to Walter H. McLeod, February 28, 1959, in WHM, series 2, box 49, folder 5.

⁸² Despite Romney’s opinion, Lee taking over the Anaconda papers has largely been seen as a step toward more objective reporting in the state, see John T. McNay, “Breaking the Copper Collar: Press Freedom, Professionalization, and the History of Montana Journalism” *American Journalism: A Journal of Media History* 25 (Winter 2008); Romney’s opinion and UCDC Response from Ray M. Loman in “Use the Facilities of Free Enterprise” *UCDC Newsletter* 15, No. 3, August 1963 in Winton Weydemeyer Papers (WWP), box 3, folder 4.

⁸³ Lawrence Glickman, *Free Enterprise: An American History*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), provides an in-depth study of this phrase, which saw its peak usage in the postwar years; Electricity company executives are the most quoted figures throughout Glickman’s survey of the free enterprise ideology; Further insinuations that public power advocates such as Mike Mansfield and BPA Administrator Paul Raver were communist sympathizers can be found in MMP, series 14, box 12, folder 22.

warned of “the threat of a socialist, federally-owned power system” and the December 1959 newsletter carried a cartoon entitled “first lesson in economics” in which a worker is mocked for suggesting that labor is entitled to a share of corporate profits.⁸⁴ The UCDC recruited members from the state Republican Party, even coaching Republican governor Hugo J. Aronson ahead of a speech in Missoula in October 1957.⁸⁵

By contrast, the Committee for Paradise Dam—the inverse organization of the UCDC—sponsored talks and published pamphlets extolling the virtues of public ownership of the means of electricity production. The Committee’s 800–1,160 members were primarily residents of Plains, Charlo, Hot Springs, and Missoula, Montana with ties to organized labor and the Democratic Party. The Committee’s official stationary in the 1950s carried the phrase “The Hells Canyon of Montana” across the bottom, clearly indicating how important they saw Paradise for the future of public power.⁸⁶ They organized letter writing campaigns, sent out mailers, and brought speakers to Missoula including Northwest Public Power Association executive secretary Gus Norwood and Special Council to the Senate Interior Committee Milton C. Mapes Jr.⁸⁷ Mapes and Norwood laid out their defense of Paradise Dam in the context of a long struggle for public control of utilities that began with Gifford Pinchot.⁸⁸ In a 1958 address to an audience of Montana Farmer Labor Institute in Missoula, Milton C. Mapes argued that if the United States failed to expand public power, it did not deserve the title of civilization and asserted that creating new TVAs around the world would be “our generation’s acid test of our belief in the Golden

⁸⁴ *UCDC Newsletters* in WWP box 3, folder 4.

⁸⁵ “Dear Clyde,” Letter from Clyde Fickes to Winton Weydemeyer, 1957 in WWP, box 3, folder 3; Aronson speech in J. Hugo Aronson Papers, box 17, folders 11 & 45.

⁸⁶ See “Dear Mr. Gies,” letter from Archer S. Taylor to Noel M. Gies dated May 13, 1957, in PMP, box 15, folder 2.

⁸⁷ Committee for Paradise Dam promotional material located in JRG box 1, folders 1, 7, 9; Biographical info on M.C. Mapes from obituary, “M.C. Mapes Dies” *Washington Post*. June 13, 1984, accessed April 5, 2021 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/1984/06/13/mc-mapes-dies/48430822-1b49-4464-bc57-3def3a57ee34/>

⁸⁸ See Christie, “Giant Power.”

Rule.” Mapes echoed Pinchot’s concerns about the power of private utilities to subvert democracy. “Think for a moment of the economic and political power concentrated in an industry... with a \$100-billion annual gross income, and with its employees in every hamlet, town and city in the country!” Mapes warned.⁸⁹ While channeling Pinchot, Mapes’ line of reasoning also mirrored that of the anticommunists, warning of a network of agents acting on behalf of an outside power to subvert democracy at all levels.

Anaconda may have owned the major newspapers, but The Committee for Paradise Dam had their own allies in publishing, particularly Harry Billings, editor of the Helena based farmer-labor newspaper *The People’s Voice*. Billings was the son of a lumberman from Hot Springs, Montana, a small town on the Flathead Reservation uphill from the proposed banks of Paradise Lake. His wife Gretchen’s family had homesteaded in Plains, Montana, not far from the Paradise damsite. The Billingses had a long history of support for public power and a long-standing conflict with the MPC. *The People’s Voice* published dozens of articles about Hells Canyon, Yellowtail, Glacier View, and Hungry Horse, but most of all, Paradise Dam. In addition to journalism about the progress of dam construction or committee hearings on future projects, *The People’s Voice* ran articles extolling the benefits of public power. Harry Billings also organized rallies at the Montana Power offices in Helena to protest natural gas rates and wrote several investigative pieces sifting through the stock dealings and tax records of the company. Billings expressed his contempt for private utilities in a radio broadcast on Helena’s KCAP in March 1957, stating that while he understood the tendency of private companies to seek maximum profit; he did not understand the failure, “of the public officials to resist when those tendencies

⁸⁹ M. C. Mapes, “Wise Conservation and Utilization of Our Resources: Key to Freedom’s Survival,” Address to the Montana Farmer Labor Institute, November 22, 1958, pamphlet distributed by Committee for Paradise Dam, in John R. Garber Papers, box 1, folder 7, p. 6, 14.

collide with the general public welfare.” In Billings’ view, Montana Power was not solely responsible for their price gouging, so long as legislators failed to rein them in.⁹⁰

What constitutes the “public interest” has always been a matter of debate, especially when it comes to electricity marketing. In the post-New Deal period, Montana Democrats continued to air their grievances with private utilities for overcharging customers, stymying development, and sowing doubt about the role of state agencies in providing for the public good. In 1951, Montana Agricultural Commissioner Alfred R. Anderson, addressing the Richland County REA, extolled the progress he had witnessed in his lifetime before turning his attention to the private utilities. Anderson expressed his “contempt for segments of that group who would seek to monopolize for their own selfish interests, against the interest of the people and nation,” to “deny the people the full enjoyment of one of the greatest blessings God has bestowed upon Montana—abundant hydroelectric potentials.”⁹¹ For Anderson and many others like him, the “public interest” which had guided federal policy during the New Deal and World War II, required the full development of resources through federal planning. He feared that by the second Truman administration, full development for the benefit of everyone was no longer guiding principle of leaders in Washington.

At a meeting of the Kiwanis Club of Helena in 1965, Brit Englund, a longtime assistant to then Senator Lee Metcalf, delivered an impassioned speech on the magnitude of the private electricity threat.⁹² He opened his address with an obligatory call to fight Soviet communism, an

⁹⁰ *The People’s Voice* articles supporting Paradise-Knowles and critiquing Montana Power include: “Paradise Dam, Key to Western Montana’s Progress and Future” March 22, 1957, “Big Dams Draw Most Vacationers” March 29, 1957, “Off Their Base” April 12, 1957, “Utilities Should be Ordered to Cut Rates” March 20, 1964, and “Montana Power Out to Block Paradise Dam” April 30, 1964; Articles found in JRG, box 1, folder 1; Billings’ speech and research on MPC finances in HBM, box 1, folders 2, 9, 15; Billings biographical information from Finding Aid to HBM.

⁹¹ “Agriculture Chief Attacks ‘Selfish’ Private Companies” *Great Falls Tribune* June 10, 1951; full text of speech in HBM, box 1, folder 15.

⁹² Brit Englund, Speech to the Kiwanis Club of Helena, MT, 1965, in HBM, box 1, folder 15.

appeal to a common enemy intended to galvanize his audience's sense of a common interest. In the speech he laid out the contours of a domestic force which was undermining the capacity to fight the external Soviet threat. For Englund, this pervasive domestic threat was the media network set up by the executives of private utilities and former members of the Eisenhower administration with ties to the John Birch Society. This shadowy network of free market fundamentalists utilized the rhetoric of anticommunism and taxpayer advocacy to sow doubts about the government's ability to regulate markets in the public interest. Chief among these nefarious actors, Englund argued, were Clarence Manion and Edward Vennard. Manion had been fired by Eisenhower for disrespecting Alen Dulles and suggesting that the TVA be sold off. Vennard managed the Edison Electric Institute, a trade association of investor-owned electric utilities. Together Vennard and Manion created the *Manion Forum*, a talk radio program carried by over 250 stations which broadcast claims that the "socialistic planners" at the FPC, BPA, and TVA had set their sights on eliminating "private property and private enterprise."⁹³ While tarring all public power advocates from the local co-op board to Senator Metcalf as agents of Khrushchev, *Manion Forum* programs touted private electric utilities as "the largest taxpayers in the country" and routinely compared their businesses to independent retailers, despite the obvious differences between a Main Street grocer and an electrical utility.⁹⁴

Brit Englund closed his speech with an appeal to unity and a defense of planning. "We are partners in competition with the Soviet Union. We are partners in the orderly development, wise management and highest possible use of our resources," he argued, "it is high time we

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ See Montana Power shareholder letters found in HBM box 1, folder 1 and various national electricity company advertisements contained in JRG box 1 folder 1, as well as MMP, series 14, box 12, folder 22; for biographic information on Clarence Manion see Rick Perlstein, *Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the Unmaking of the American Consensus* (New York: Nation Books, 2009) 1–16; and Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Businessmen's Crusade Against the New Deal*, (New York: Norton, 2010), 81–86; Phillips-Fein, citing David Horowitz, claims that Eisenhower fired Manion over his support for the Bricker Amendment.

stopped trying to out each other up—and got back to partnership in our best interest.”⁹⁵

Anderson, Englund, and Billings, along with Mansfield, Murray, and Metcalf, all appealed to a fading sense of a unified public interest. They highlighted a larger trend in American political culture that Ira Katznelson and others have illustrated. Katznelson wrote in *Fear Itself* about the loss of a singular public interest in the aftermath of the New Deal and World War II, replaced instead by the competition between various private interests to gain support from a theoretically impartial, procedural state.⁹⁶ The dream of seven little TVAs and of public power generally was indelibly tied up in that vanishing consensus, and was disappearing along with it.⁹⁷ That was what the public power lobby saw as the lesson of Hells Canyon and what they were beginning to see in their efforts to get Paradise Dam built in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Comprehensive development in the public interest, which had been the dream of the Roosevelt years, was being replaced by ad hoc private development sanctioned by the FPC and later FERC. Public Power’s moment in the sun was quickly fading. Private Power’s claim to the public interest, however, was also peaking. Soon both would be challenged by a rising interest opposed to development of all kinds. This amenity-based lifestyle interest manifested through tourism, recreation, and ecological preservation in many ways represented the same ideals as those expressed in *Magnificent Columbia*. However, rather than a river valley authority, they sought to create a legal regime for the preservation of wilderness and scenic rivers.

⁹⁵ Brit Englund, Speech to the Kiwanis Club of Helena, MT, 1965, in HBM, box 1, folder 15.

⁹⁶ Ira Katznelson, *Fear Itself: The New Deal and the Origins of Our Time*, (W.W. Norton, New York, 2013), 18–20, 475–481.

⁹⁷ Donald Worster presents a compelling counterargument to the notion that TVA style agencies were ever capable of truly representing the public interest, writing that “In the capitalist state, private good does in fact become identified with the general welfare. However, removing power from local elites to some national center does not change that identification but only enlarges it, making power more concentrated than ever, more difficult to escape or overturn” *Rivers of Empire*, 282.

Chapter Three:

Preserving Paradise: The Buffalo Rapids Controversy

While the battle lines of national debate over energy development had been drawn between free enterprise and federal planning, local conditions and desires made for more complicated alignments when it came to proposed dams in the late 1950s and early 1960s. In the wake of the Hells Canyon High Dam fight, local boosters, Native American leaders, traditional conservationists, and wilderness advocates clashed over the fate of Montana's Clark Fork basin. Competing proposals for how and whether or not to dam the Clark Fork and Flathead Rivers realigned the political landscape of western Montana, at the same time that national economic, legal, and ideological shifts changed the dam building calculus.

Initial studies of the hydroelectric potential of the Lower Flathead River between the mouth of Flathead Lake and the confluence with the Clark Fork near Paradise, Montana identified five viable damsites. Of these, only the site closest to Flathead Lake—the site of Kerr Dam—was developed, as discussed in Chapter 1. Where the wild river remained, especially at the sites identified as Buffalo Rapids #2 and #4, both Montana Power and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) held out for the possibility of one day constructing run of river dams to supply power to businesses in Polson and the irrigation pumps of surrounding farms. These reserved sites were threatened by the proposal from the Army Corp of Engineers to

build a high dam at Paradise impounding both Clark Fork and Flathead valleys up to the Trout Creek lumber mill on the Clark Fork and the base of Kerr Dam on the Flathead.

In the 1940s, debate over damming Paradise arose entangled with the politics of preservation surrounding the Glacier View Dam. This saga forms the core of Shawn P. Bailey's dissertation "Worth A Dam". According to Bailey, calls for the Paradise Dam arose from groups nationwide opposed to development within the national parks.¹ Seeing some power development as both necessary and inevitable, entities such as the Sierra Club petitioned Congress to reconsider the plan for a dam on the North Fork of the Flathead which would flood a portion of Glacier National Park, instead emphasizing alternative projects. In 1949 Sierra Club President Lewis F. Clark proposed a dam on the Middle Fork of the Flathead at Spruce Park as the best alternative to Glacier View, but this option both upset local wildlife advocates and failed to measure up to the kilowatts demanded by the hydropower lobby.² When environmental groups then offered up Paradise as a worthy trade to preserve the upstream wilderness, Mike Mansfield was not receptive to their argument. Mansfield saw himself as the elected representative of the people first and the land second. Because of Mansfield's commitment to preserve communities before preserving wilderness, CSKT leaders worked with the Congressman to promote his Glacier View bills in 1949 and throughout the 1950s.³ According to Bailey, CSKT "supported the construction of the Glacier View Dam, not for the promise of cheap hydroelectric power, economic development, or flood control," but rather, "because the construction of a dam that

¹Bailey, 219–346.

² "RE: Glacier View Dam," Letter from Lewis F. Clark to House Committee on Public Works, November 2, 1949 MMP series 17 box 233 folder 1; for a map of the proposed Spruce Park reservoir and tunnel see Figure 13.

³ Correspondence between Mike Mansfield and George M. Tunison, Counsel for Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribe, MMP series 17, box 233, folder 2; Mansfield did however state his support for the Knowles project briefly in 1946, while acknowledging that it would, "have significant social impact, on people directly affected, that cannot be fully compensated in monetary terms" see Mike Mansfield "Knowles Plan," Speech, in MMP series 21, box 51, folder 34.

ruined the remote wilderness of Glacier National Park would preempt the destruction of their treaty-protected homeland.”⁴ They argued that Glacier View was the fiscally responsible option, as the land to be flooded was already the possession of the United States and thus no private land holders would need to be bought out.⁵ Ultimately, the 1949 push for the construction of Paradise Dam ended with a handshake and a joint memorandum signaling an uneasy alliance between the Interior Department and the Army Corp of Engineers as Julius Krug and Keneth Royall informed the president that neither of their offices would pursue the Paradise or Glacier View dams.⁶

In the years following the 1949 defeat of Paradise and Glacier View, increasing power demand meant that no project could stay defeated forever. Initial needs to put servicemen back to work domestically and power the growing suburbs filled with new electrical appliances was met by the completion of dams throughout the Columbia and Missouri basins, including Hungry Horse Dam on the South Fork of the Flathead in 1953. Yet in the high energy economy of the post war era, demand continued to grow. Before the Columbia Falls aluminum smelter was even constructed, metals companies were lobbying for another dam in the Upper Flathead to expand the plant.⁷ Throughout the 1950s, Flathead County boosters continued to raise the possibility of constructing Glacier View, a project which Mike Mansfield had never quite abandoned. For Montana’s other Congressmen, Paradise became the preferred project. In particular, Congressman Lee Metcalf took up the torch of public power promotion with Paradise topping his list of favored sites.

In the late 1950s, as Lee Metcalf became a reliable ally of the wilderness movement, his position on federal dams in the Flathead Basin became a matter of some controversy. In 1955,

⁴ Bailey, 273.

⁵ Ibid., 315.

⁶ Ibid., 335–39

⁷ Hanners “The Harvey Intrigue”

labor organizations in Flathead County circulated a petition to Montana’s Congressional Delegation asking them to revive calls for the Glacier View Dam. Mike Mansfield reaffirmed his unconditional support for the dam believing it to be a boon for both industry and tourism in the region, but Lee Metcalf was not as committed.⁸ Metcalf insisted that while he believed the region could use more hydropower to spur economic growth, the Glacier View Dam was a losing battle, especially in the wake of the Echo Park Dam controversy in Utah’s Dinosaur National Monument. The fight to save Dinosaur from a dam—which Metcalf had taken part in—had turned national attention to the potential encroachment of industrial development on the National Park System. Outcry from around the country resulted in Congress explicitly stipulating that no part of the Colorado River Storage Project would be located within National Parks or Monuments.⁹ In Metcalf’s view, staking hopes for a new dam in western Montana on a once defeated proposal that threatened the sanctity of Glacier National Park would only bring disappointment and further erode the political will for federal hydropower. He advised instead that public power advocates seek authorization for the dams at Paradise, rather than reigniting the Glacier View controversy.¹⁰

As the Paradise Dam once again became the primary objective of the public power movement in Montana, people living in the footprint of the potential reservoir pressed their Congressmen to reconsider. Letters from farmers, orchardists, and railroad workers in Paradise,

⁸ For Mansfield’s view see “Mansfield In Favor of Glacier View Dam” *Daily Interlake*, September 25, 1955; and “Dear Clifton” letter from Mike Mansfield to Clifton Merritt, January 12, 1956, in CMP, box 3, folder 12.

⁹ For the Echo Park saga see Mark W. T. Harvey, *A Symbol of Wilderness*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000); congressional language directly referenced in regard to the Glacier View push of 1955–57, see “Sir:” letter from Howard Zanhiser to Editor, November 28, 1956 in LMP box 121, folder 2.

¹⁰ Frederick H. Swanson, “Lee Metcalf and the Politics of Preservation: Part 1— A Positive Program of Development” *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 63, no. 1 (2013), 13; “Dear Lee,” letter from Fred Packard to Lee Metcalf, February 20, 1957 in LMP box 121, folder 2; and “Dear Fred,” letter from Lee Metcalf to Fred Packard, February 23, 1957 in LMP box 121, folder 2; Metcalf also advised that effort be put toward the Spruce Park Dam on the Middle Fork of the Flathead, a proposal that played a significant role in the development of the Wild and Scenic rivers system, see Bailey, 384–88.

St. Regis, and Superior, Montana, seemed to have an effect on their legislators over time, as the Paradise Dam proposal steadily became the Paradise-Knowles proposal and simply Knowles by 1962. The Knowles plan shifted the damsite five miles to the east, such that the dam would impound only the Flathead and not the Clark Fork River, sparing the most populous towns and the main highway to Missoula.¹¹ While a significant reduction in potential kilowatts and flood control, the Knowles Dam would nonetheless have been an enormous hydropower project capable of producing 267 MW of prime power.¹² The site change was enough to win over the support of Mike Mansfield, who joined with Metcalf in support of the dam. However, the railroad lines, the National Bison Range, the Flathead Reservation, and the Buffalo Rapids sites were still in the flood path of the public power vision.

Advocates of Paradise generally employed the rhetoric of power for all, drawing a throughline from Pinchot's fight against the National Electric Light Association through Roosevelt and Lilienthal's TVA to their contemporary fight for expanding BPA in Montana. Opposition, as discussed in the previous chapter, tended to employ McCarthyite fears of socialism in the energy market as a counter to any and all public projects. The false binary employed by newspapers and trade associations created two distinct camps that paradoxically allowed room for novel arguments to be made. Seeking any and all help to prevent the expansion of a federal energy monopoly, the private electricity industry welcomed the voices of environmentalists who challenged the federal government on ecological grounds. *Public Utilities Fortnightly*, the trade journal of the electrical industry, shared the thoughts of Wilderness Society member and later director of the Izaak Walton League Olaus Murie, along with members of the

¹¹ See Appendix Figures 6 and 7 for comparative maps of Paradise and Knowles, see Figure 24 for Montana Congressmen advocating the Knowles plan.

¹² "Dear Mr. Corette," letter from Senator Lee Metcalf to John E. Corvette, June 21, 1962, in FLM box 13, folder 1.

National Wildlife Federation who decried the “great race to bury the Northwest in concrete.”¹³ In the lower Columbia Basin where salmon and steelhead trout still migrated to their spawning streams, ecological opposition to federal dams focused primarily on their role in destroying the salmon industry.¹⁴ Historian Karl Boyd Brooks argued that in their effort to protect their industry against competition from low cost federal hydropower, the private utilities played a role in the formation of the modern environmental movement by arousing, “citizens' interest in the cost, control, and consequences of natural resource development.”¹⁵

In Montana, the Upper Columbia Development Council was among those capitalizing on the public’s skepticism of federal resource management, advancing a novel theory of river development. Anticomunist rhetoric could rile up Montanans skeptical of federal engineers, but it did not resolve the persistent problems of flooding, rising power demand, and the need for a steady supply of irrigation water. To address these, the UCDC put together a plan so ambitious in scope that it rivaled the schemes of the public power lobby. The “Common Sense Flood Control Plan” proposed constructing 193 small dams in the headwaters of the Clark Fork, with 50 dams planned for the Blackfoot basin alone. The UCDC theory of “Common Sense” flood control, water conservation, and power development was meant to have a smaller impact on wildlife and existing infrastructure by dispersing those impacts across the basin rather than concentrating all of them in one large reservoir. These smaller dams would theoretically provide flood control at the source, protecting upstream communities as well as those along the main river channel. Pamphlets promoting the plan argued that upstream dams would save on power by providing irrigation water without the need for uphill pumping, and would cause minimal

¹³ Murie and others referenced in Brooks, 135; quote from “Wild-life Opposition to Present Water Planning” *Public Utilities Fortnightly* 47 (10 May 1951): 645.

¹⁴ See James H. Cellars article in *Public Utilities Fortnightly* quoted in Brooks, 135–36.

¹⁵ Brooks, 133.

destruction of trout, eagle, and elk habitat. These benefits, however, would only accrue once a significant number of upstream dams had been built. Pieces of the headwaters scheme already existed in the form of irrigation diversion dams such as the Nevada Creek dam south of Lincoln and the Rattlesnake Dam in Missoula, but in 1957 when the plan was published, the vast majority of the creeks designated for damming still ran free.¹⁶ On their own, each undeveloped creek represented a flood risk and a waste of potential water and power. Whereas a large dam like Paradise would achieve its power and irrigation aims in a single action, the headwaters scheme required the coordination of several local conservation boards and irrigation districts across ten counties. UCDC reframed this challenge as a benefit of their program, arguing that it would put water policy in the hands of local governments, rather than far off planners in Helena and Washington D.C. While the likelihood of such widespread voluntary action being undertaken was slim, Montana Power disseminated the concept far and wide, sowing doubts about the wisdom of federal engineers.¹⁷

In addition to their arguments about conserving energy and encouraging local self-determination, the UCDC made an ecological case for their development scheme. They appealed to anglers in their printed material and public testimony arguing that Paradise Dam would substitute “rough fish for excellent fishing” on the Clark Fork and Flathead Rivers. The UCDC also sounded the alarm on the threat that Paradise-Knowles posed to the national Bison Range and the Flathead Reservation. Development Council pamphlets claimed that Paradise Dam would flood over one third of the National Bison Range and 20,000 acres of treaty protected CSKT land.¹⁸ Senator Metcalf questioned the accuracy of those figures, citing reports produced

¹⁶ Rattlesnake Dam was removed in the summer of 2020 to restore fish habitat after its structure had been damaged in a flood; David Erickson, “Watch this: Rattlesnake Dam, built in 1904, demolished” *Missoulian* 10 August 2020.

¹⁷ UCDC Common Sense Flood Control Plan, WWP, box 3, folder 3; See Figures 9 and 10.

¹⁸ See Figures 25, 26.

by the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service and the Army Corps of Engineers which claimed only 10.8% of the Bison Range would be flooded. Metcalf argued that the flooded Bison Range could be replaced by the purchase of additional acreage, the cost and location of which would be included in appropriations for dam construction. While the UCDC may have been rounding up and Metcalf rounding down, there is no question that a dam at Paradise-Knowles would certainly have a negative impact on the bison, the fish, and the birds which enjoy the riparian habitat along the free-flowing river. No land exchange could reverse that fact.¹⁹

The environmental arguments advanced by the UCDC were not merely opportunistic, but the result of the passions and expertise of their members, which included respected conservationists such as Winton Weydemeyer. Weydemeyer was a writer, a resident of Fortine, Montana, a tree farmer, Master of the Montana Grange, a Republican legislator, and most of all, a conservationist. Between 1923 and 1975, Weydemeyer published 81 articles on conservation and in 1986 he published a book on wildlife photography titled *Picture Taking in Glacier National Park*. He wrote articles in support of early versions of the Wilderness Act to protect the, “last fragments of wilderness from the unheeding motor car.”²⁰ As the master of the Montana Grange, his opinion was seen to represent many of the state’s farmers. As a legislator he represented the Kootenai Valley in Helena and served as a delegate to the 1972 constitutional convention. When the Upper Columbia Development Council contacted him in 1957 to help with their campaign against the Paradise Dam, it was his stature as a wildlife and water conservationist that caught the group’s attention. Weydemeyer was selected by the executive

¹⁹ MMP, series 17, box 252, folder 1.

²⁰ “Comments on the Wilderness Plan” WWP, box 3, folder 4.

committee of the UCDC to speak with Governor Aronson prior to the hearing in Missoula to help the Republican governor compose his response to the dam proposal.²¹

Yet while the UCDC had hit upon significant ecological critiques of large federal dams, their alternative proposal and ties to private electricity put them at odds with the nation's leading environmental organizations. The Common Sense plan called for small dams to be built in each of the scenic valleys of the Bitterroot Mountains including the popular hiking destinations of Blodgett and Kootenai Canyons. The Wilderness Society under the leadership of Howard Zanihser, was seeking to include a large section of the Bitterroots among the first designated wilderness areas, in part to stop the construction of dams of any size on the scenic creeks of the range. As the wilderness bill progressed through congress and boundaries were being drawn, irrigators' plans for headwaters dams put them in conflict with the Forest Service and preservationists. Each group petitioned Senator Metcalf with their own proposal for how the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness boundary ought to be drawn.²²

The UCDC's flood control plan is striking in its scope, but the more likely alternative to Paradise-Knowles was Buffalo Rapids #2 and #4. In 1956, the Montana Power Company and the Army Corps of Engineers began drilling to test the viability of the Buffalo Rapid's sites. Not long after the test drilling began, CSKT chair Walter McDonald expressed his mixed feelings about the proceedings. While he was disappointed that the findings of test drilling had not been shared with the tribes, he was optimistic about the Buffalo Rapids dams, writing "We need industry on our reservation as well as income from our vast resources."²³ The tribes' interest in constructing the Buffalo Rapids dams was twofold: economic development on the reservation,

²¹ "Dear Winton," Letter from Clyde Fickes to Winton Weydemeyer, September 10, 1957, WWP box 3, folder 3.

²² Letters regarding a potential Blodgett Dam, Lee Metcalf Papers (LMP), box 120, folder 3; Selway Bitterroot Wilderness Proposal, *US Forest Service* (Missoula, MT: 1960) Missoula Public Library Montana Clippings.

²³ Walter McDonald, "Editorially Speaking" *Char-Koosta*, Vol. 1, No. 2, December 1956.

and preventing Paradise-Knowles. Many Native people, while rejecting the federal plans to flood 20,000 acres of their reserved land, embraced modest hydropower projects as an engine of economic development. This was the case with regard to resource management on the reservation broadly. Members had not opposed all timber harvest, but rather opposed the fact that Northern Pacific was making money hand over fist on Flathead timber while native lumbermen were living in poverty.²⁴ Members of the CSKT who hoped to benefit from timber, minerals, and hydropower had fought against the implementation of roadless rules on tribal forests in the 1930s and again against the wilderness bill of 1958.

Wilderness preservation as a coordinated national project began on Indian Reservations. In the 1930s, under the direction of Bob Marshall, sixteen roadless areas were designated on reservation land throughout the West, including a section of the Mission Mountains on the Flathead Reservation.²⁵ Indian Reservations were the testing ground for systematized wilderness preservation largely due to Marshall himself. Marshall was a zealot for the sanctity of wilderness. Having grown up in the crowded smog of New York in the early twentieth century, he saw undeveloped places as a refuge from the noise and stress of industrial cities. Marshall applied the social science lens of the Progressive Era to the more spiritual wilderness ethic of previous generations, arguing that wild places were necessary for individual mental health as well as to provide adventurous opportunities to young men who may otherwise be driven to lives of crime. In addition to the social psychology of progressive reformers, Marshall adopted the pro-democracy outlook of the New Deal to argue that the preservation of undeveloped land constituted a minority right which ought to be protected against the majority interest in the

²⁴ Voggesser, 59–88.

²⁵ Diane L. Krahe, “A Confluence of Sovereignty and Conformity: The Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness,” (PhD dissertation, University of Montana, 1995) 36-39.

comforts and conveniences of modern industrial life which threatened to eradicate the last of the wild and dangerous. Yet for all of his insistence on the wilderness as a refuge for rugged individuals to be free of the degradation of industrial society, Marshall was also an avowed socialist who believed in the New Deal project of uplifting the common man through direct government intervention into the economy. A leading forester, he was called to Washington DC to manage the recreation plan for the Forest Service before being picked to head up the forestry division of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Historian Paul Sutter critiqued Marshall's approach to wilderness preservation on the reservations, arguing that Marshall idealized the pre-industrial economy of the tribes, mistaking, "tribalism for organic socialism; he assumed that Native Americans were single minded avatars of his critique of modern America... offering his own romantic conceptions of the best interests of native peoples instead of seeking a truly democratic expression of native interests."²⁶

When a generation of preservationists steeped in the ideas of Marshall, Leopold, and Muir sought to codify their love of the wilderness into federal law, they were met with opposition from the tribal leadership. James Murray presided over a hearing held in Salt Lake City on Nov 12, 1958, to discuss the proposed Wilderness Preservation bill introduced by Representative John Saylor and Senator Hubert Humphry. Walter McDonald attended and testified against the bill because it merely required that tribes be "consulted" when their lands were considered for wilderness designation, not that the tribes give their consent. The Wilderness Bill, in its early form, represented another step in the saga of dispossession of native American lands. Whether for preservation or for extraction, the tribes did not want to lose sovereignty over their rightful territory. When questioned about his reasoning prior to the hearing, McDonald

²⁶ Nash, 201-05; Sutter, 229.

stated that, “if this bill becomes law it will amount to abrogation of a sacred instrument, the 1855 treaty between the United States and the Flathead Indians,” but it was not merely the legal question of who owned the land in the Mission Mountains on the eastern edge of the reservation that turned McDonald against the wilderness bill, it was the idea of preservation itself. “We have all joined hands in encouraging industrial development on all reservations, and certainly we do not want any obstacles in the way.”²⁷

The “messy pluralism” which Sutter argues was as much a feature of Native American democracy as any other, continued to manifest in the 1950s and 60s. Varied positions and changing views over time can be seen in the response of various members of the CSKT council to the threat of termination and prospect of damming the Flathead River. For more than two decades, council member Lorena Burgess organized against the Paradise Dam and public power generally, while supporting tribal termination. Council chairman Walter McDonald fought against termination while pursuing a development program based on the Buffalo Rapids dams. E. W. Morigeau was open to the idea of termination while working with McDonald on the Buffalo Rapids Dams. Kootenai elder and tribal council member Jerome Hewankorn went to great lengths to oppose other tribal members on the Buffalo Rapids dams.

Termination was the legal process by which the federal government would end the special trustee relationship that tribes held with the United States. The policy, which had been considered for decades before its formal implementation in 1953, was a reversal of the self-determination policy which had followed the passage of the Wheeler-Howard Act in 1934 and a

²⁷ “McDonald to Attend Wilderness Preservation Bill Hearing in Salt Lake” *Char-Koosta*, Vol. 3, No. 11, September 1958; In the decade prior, timber sales on Reservation lands across the US more than tripled from \$2,500,000 in 1948 to \$8,500,000 in 1957, Figures from U.S. Dept. of the Interior, reported in “Indian Forest Lands Become Asset to Tribes” *Char-Koosta*, Vol. 3, No. 11, September 1958; The Missions were delisted from roadless in 1959, then made tribal wilderness in 1982.

return to the assimilationist policies of the allotment era which had followed the Dawes Act of 1887. On July 27, 1953, Congress passed Resolution 108 which announced the termination policy. Effective January 1, 1954, selected tribes including the Confederated tribes of the Flathead Reservation were to submit an official roll of all their members so that the United States government could make one final payment to each and end their trustee relationship. The policy was seen by some in Congress—including Henry M. Jackson and Frank Church—to be about civil equality. For others, access to the timber, power, and mineral resources of reserved lands was the primary motive for ending trusteeship. This was the case in Secretary Douglas McKay's home state of Oregon where the Klamath, Siletz, and Grande Ronde Reservations were officially terminated under the 1954 Western Oregon Indian Termination Act. Eliminating their reservations made way for the logging of old growth forests in southeastern Oregon.²⁸

Termination was a controversial issue among Native Americans. On the Flathead Reservation, the tribal council refused to submit an official roll, considering the policy to be, in the words of Walter McDonald, a violation of their "sacred rights." Kootenai elder Jerome Hewankorn echoed McDonald stating that God had "put the Indians here and gave us this land. Then the white man came and kept pushing us back and back. Finally we had only this reservation. Now they want to sell us out." But the tribal council was not entirely in concert on the matter. Councilman Morigeau insisted that he would prefer a cash payment to a broken treaty, stating "a cash bond would protect us better. There is no protection in our treaty." CSKT members and founders of the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) Steve de Mers and

²⁸ Bailey, 308-10; David G. Lewis, "John Collier and Indian Termination Policy" *Quartux: Journal of Critical Indigenous Anthropology*, March 2020 <https://ndnhistoryresearch.com/2020/03/22/john-collier-and-indian-termination-policy/> (accessed February 3, 2022); The Menominee Tribe of Wisconsin was also terminated in 1954, see Nancy Oestreich Lurie, "Menominee Termination: From Reservation to Colony," *Human Organization* 31, no. 3 (1972), 257-70.

D'arcy McNickle made a joint statement laying out conditions under which they would be willing to comply with the termination policy. Their seven-part plan required among other provisions, that the agreement be mutual, that the federal government repair all roads on the reservation prior to termination, that they complete a comprehensive survey of timber and mineral resources, that the tribal government be allowed to form a corporation and take control of those resources, and that both parties be given the opportunity to review the policy in court at a later date.²⁹

While termination remained federal policy until 1975 Interior backed down slightly from its aggressive pursuit of the policy when Fred Seaton replaced Douglas McKay in 1957.³⁰ At a meeting of the NCAI in Missoula, September 1958, Assistant Secretary of the Interior Roger Ernest claimed that termination would only be sought in necessary cases and with the informed consent of all involved. Congressman Lee Metcalf spoke at the meeting as well, where he contested Ernest's claim that Interior had the good of Native people in mind, pledging "war on the Bureau of Indian Affairs on behalf of Indian rights."³¹ Termination was generally unpopular on the Flathead Reservation, with only twenty percent of respondents in one survey and thirty percent in another expressing a desire to dissolve the reservation in return for a cash payment.³² For pro-termination voices such as Lorena Burgess and those who at least briefly considered the

²⁹ It is not clear from the record if this statement was given by Walter H. Morigeau or E. W. Morigeau; Statements from Tribal Council members as well as McNickle and de Mers found in Flathead Salish and Kootenai 2, 1953–1976, MS 253: 7, The Association on American Indian Affairs: General and Tribal Files, 1851–1983: Tribal Files, Mudd Library, Princeton University, *Indigenous Peoples of North America*, page 21–23; E. W. Morigeau's position regarding termination is difficult to pin down, as in his own autobiography *Valley Creek*, he claims to have fought hard against termination in 1953 on page 81 but continued to advocate for a termination like policy of "optional withdrawal" later in his life on page 127–29; Image of several CSKT leaders see Figure 27.

³⁰ Some members of the CSKT have stressed that termination is still possible and even likely, see Jaakko Puisto "This is my Reservation; I Belong Here': Salish and Kootenai Battle Termination with Self-Determination, 1953–1999," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 28 No. 2 (2004), 1–23.

³¹ "National Indian Group Meets in Missoula" *Char-Koosta*, Vol. 3, No. 11, September 1958.

³² Puisto, 9; Jaakko Puisto claims as well that the majority of pro-termination votes were from those living off reservation.

policy such as E. W. Morigeau, what mattered most was that federal oversight had generally led to the development of on reservation resources for no on reservation benefit.³³ Evidence to support that belief abounded, such as in Montana Power's miserliness when it came to paying rent on the Kerr Dam, the designation of Mission valley timber lands as roadless wilderness without tribal consent, or the repeated efforts to flood the lower Flathead River under Paradise Lake. However, looking at the example of the Klamath River tribes, it is clear that extracting wealth from native lands was a feature not merely of federal trusteeship, but of American capitalism.

Whereas Lorena Burgess was an outlier with regard to termination, she was in line with much of the tribe regarding Paradise-Knowles. The Burgess family established their homestead eight miles east of Paradise, just upstream from the Knowles site in 1911. Lorena and Harry spent the early years of their marriage establishing an orchard out of the 800 acres they owned, raising nine children, and in time renting another 9,000 acres as their farm and ranch expanded. All of the life that they had built was set to be flooded if either Paradise or Knowles dam were ever built.³⁴ That possibility spurred Lorena Burgess towards a determined activism against Paradise Dam and against federal power development writ large. Burgess was well known by Montana's elected officials for her constant correspondence on dam proposals. During the 1948–49 Paradise Dam debate, Burgess gathered seven pages of signatures on a petition against the dam, with names representing a significant portion of the populations of Plains and Paradise, Montana. The cover letter to those petitions indicated that 96% of those Burgess approached

³³ E. W. Morigeau's position with regard to termination changed over time from the pro-termination opinion that he (or possibly his cousin Walter Morigeau) expressed in 1953, to a firmly anti-termination position in a 1961 editorial, and finally to a position of optional withdrawal which would give individual members the opportunity to take a single payment and disenroll from the tribe, see "Morigeau Writes Views of Proposed Indian Charter" *Char-Koosta* 4, no. 7 (March, 1961); and Morigeau, *Valley Creek*, 81, 127–29.

³⁴ Biographical details from "I am Lorena Burgess," Lorena Burgess to Army Corps of Engineers Missoula, Montana, October 21, 1957, Lorena Burges Papers (LBP) box 4, folder 8.

were eager to sign, and those who refused were all “tavern, beer parlor or gas station owners.”³⁵ In 1958, she penned a letter to the District Engineer of the Army Corps detailing her objections to Knowles and endorsing the headwaters flood control plan of the UCDC. In that letter, she praised both private enterprise power development and public power champion Julius Krug, who had in 1949 condemned the flooding of Crow land for the Yellowtail Dam.³⁶ In a 1960 issue of tribal newsletter *Char-Koosta*, Burgess wrote an open letter to James Murray urging the senator to consider all that would be destroyed by the dam, including wildlife, ranches, mills, and highways, but putting extra emphasis on the violation of treaty rights. In addition to all that the dam would destroy, Burgess questioned who would benefit from a federal dam, asking the senator, “why should successful stable citizens give up their possessions to satisfy the unstable elements of Western Montana?”³⁷ Burgess’ argument was not purely about protecting the land, she also seems to have embraced the reactionary individualism common among private electricity promoters.

While Montana’s Congressional delegation continued their attempts to attach Knowles appropriations to every version of the Rivers and Harbors Act, the Montana Power Company formed their own plans for new Flathead dams. MPC drew up plans with the help of San Francisco's Bechtel Corporation and began test drilling at the Buffalo Rapids sites to ensure their viability. In 1961 they submitted an application to the FPC for two dams: a 788 ft long, 110 ft high dam at Buffalo Rapids 2 with 1,360 ft earth fill abutments on either side which would hold back a 3,350 acre reservoir reaching the foot of Kerr Dam when full, and a second 830 ft long,

³⁵ Objections to Paradise Dam, June 29, 1948, LBP box 4, folder 7.

³⁶ Krug’s record on the sanctity of reservation land is complicated to say the least, as he was involved in the Garrison Dam in 1948 which flooded the Three Tribes Reservation, see Bailey, 325-26; “Dear Sir,” Letter from Lorena Burgess to Seattle District Engineer, April 27, 1958, LBP box 4, folder 6.

³⁷ “On Proposed Federal Dams Tribe Members Express Views” *Char-Koosta* 4 No. 2, February, 1960.

130 ft high dam at Buffalo Rapids 4 with a 1,120 ft earth fill abutment on the East side forming a 3,370 acre reservoir extending 24 miles back to the base of the Buffalo Rapids 2 Dam. The two dams, according to Montana Power, had a theoretical capacity of 688 megawatts, a figure which was likely exaggerated. When asked about their plan for the dams, MPC President John Corrette described the project as a partnership with CSKT, “because the Indians own the land and would receive a rental for it, while the company would own the dams and facilities.” Despite the fact that the MPC plan was not supported by the tribal council, Corrette went on to say that getting the project approved and constructed would “undoubtedly require the combined efforts and co-operation of the tribal council, the company and other organizations in western Montana.”³⁸ Those sorts of statements boldly declaring a partnership where there was open competition earned Corrette his nickname of “inCorrette” from Lee Metcalf.³⁹

Relations between the Montana Power Company and the tribes had been strained since the construction of Kerr Dam and had only gotten worse once the company installed a third turbine at the Kerr in 1954. The additional turbine added fifty-six megawatts to the dam’s capacity, increasing the revenue that MPC made off of the power. CSKT leaders believed that additional revenue should be reflected in the rent paid to the tribes, as the ability to add additional turbines was implied in the dam's original design and explicitly stated in the FPC license. The license agreement stated that increased revenue from the dam would “result in a corresponding increase of Indian rental based upon the increased earning.”⁴⁰ Not wanting to cut into their profits, Montana Power under John Corrette applied for an early renewal of their FPC

³⁸ “Montana Power Company Files Application For FPC License to Build Buffalo Dams” *The Flathead Courier*, March 9, 1961.

³⁹ Metcalf’s usage of the nickname “inCorrette” mentioned in “Dear Lee,” Letter from Francis Logan Miriam to Lee Metcalf, June 10, 1962, Francis Logan Merriam Papers (FLM) box 13, folder 1.

⁴⁰ Quoted in Voggesser, 112.

license which would not expire until 1980, hoping to readjust their rents to the tribes according to their own calculations, rather than those imposed by the Power Commission. The early relicensing was denied. In 1961, the FPC decided that the third turbine would merit an increase of \$50,000/year, before Interior Secretary Stewart Udall increased that amount to \$63,375/year. MPC refused to pay until forced to do so by a court order later that year. The conflict over payments for Kerr Dam led the tribes to pursue their own dams without the government or the Montana Power Company.⁴¹

With the termination policy threatening to open what remained of the tribal trust lands to extraction by outside corporations, Walter McDonald, and Walter Morigeau after him, led the CSKT council to seek economic sustainability from within the tribe. At a public hearing on the Paradise-Knowles proposal held in Missoula on March 9, 1959, Walter McDonald claimed that the tribes had no official position on the public-private power debate. From the position of the tribal council, what mattered was that the tribes be fairly compensated no matter what dams were built. But compensation was not merely a single payment, or even a fixed recurring payment. Fearing that what had happened to the Crow Tribe with the Yellowtail Dam authorization may happen to the CSKT, he called for recurring payments and guaranteed power with frequent adjustments to keep those payments at a market rate. According to the consulting engineer that had assessed the Buffalo Rapids sites on behalf of the tribe, that amount would need to start at \$355,000 per year for power revenue in addition to compensation for flooded land.⁴² In

⁴¹ “License Applications on Kerr and at Thompson Falls Not to Affect Buffalo Rapids” *Char-Koosta*, Vol. 3, No. 11, September 1958; “Secretary of Interior Decides Tribe Should Get \$13,000 More” *Char-Koosta*, Vol. 4 No. 2, February, 1960; See also Morigeau, *Valley Creek*, 83–85 in which the author recounts the process of securing increased rent for the third generator at Kerr Dam, although with some discrepancy about dollar amounts and dates.

⁴² McDonald’s thoughts on public and private power and the full text of his speech at the March 9 hearing can be found in Walter McDonald, “Editorially Speaking” *Char-Koosta* 4, no. 3 (March, 1959); The Yellowtail Dam comparison referred to the fact that the Crow Tribe originally demanded \$1,000,000 per year, were then promised a \$5,000,000 one-time payment, and only received \$2,500,000, for the full saga see Megan Benson, “The Fight for

November of that same year, the council moved beyond the ambivalent position expressed by McDonald at the hearing and resolved officially against Knowles or any other downstream dam by a unanimous vote. In their resolution, CSKT leaders cited the loss of the Buffalo Rapids sites, insisting that the tribe be allowed to “develop these sites for the best long-range advantage of the Flathead Indians.”⁴³ McDonald’s vision for Buffalo Rapids was a reflection of what Mansfield had done with the Hungry Horse Dam years earlier. At a 1962 Congressional hearing on the Rivers and Harbors Act, CSKT leaders made it clear that their plan for the Buffalo Rapids Dams aligned with the public power vision of Metcalf and Mansfield. The CSKT stated that the tribes’ opposition to Knowles should not imply support for the Montana Power Company or the private enterprise doctrine of the private electricity industry: “Our proposal is for public power development by the tribes as a government... as opposed to the private development by Montana Power Co.” For McDonald, the Buffalo Rapids Dams did not represent underdevelopment of water power, but rather the development of water power by and for the people who possessed a rightful claim to the resource. The public power visionaries had constructed their imagined public too broadly, sacrificing the people living in the Flathead Valley for the economic advancement of Montana and the West. The tribes adopted the social vision of power production in the public interest, however the public which they represented was composed only of those living within their sovereign territory, not ratepayers in Missoula or Portland.⁴⁴

At that same 1962 Hearing on the Rivers and Harbors Act, the CSKT statement against Knowles objected primarily to the Army Corps’ assessment of the value of tribal resources that

Crow Water: Part 1, the Early Reservation Years through the Indian New Deal,” *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 57, no. 4 (Winter, 2007), 24–42, 94–96.

⁴³ “Tribe Opposes Knowles Dam,” *Char-Koosta*, Vol. 4 No. 2, February 1960.

⁴⁴ U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Public Works, “Statement of Walter H. Morigeau Chairman Tribal Council, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation, Accompanied by E. W. Morigeau and Walter W. McDonald” in *Rivers and Harbors - Flood Control Act: Hearings before the Committee on Public Works*, 87th Cong., 2nd sess., 1962, 68–70.

Knowles Dam would destroy. In their reports, the Corps had emphasized the recreational value of a potential reservoir, which the CSKT representatives claimed was tantamount to replacing “subsistence fishing by tribal members” with “mere sport for the white man.” The disregard for tribal sovereignty continued in the text of the bill itself, which Walter Morigeau pointed out framed the preservation of treaty rights as merely an act of “congressional generosity” rather than the supreme law of the land. Their concerns about Knowles encompassed also the ecological impact of the project, as they defended the riparian area, claiming that, “the lowlands where are bred Canadian geese, pheasants, and winter forage for deer which would be preserved by the low head dams proposed for building by the tribes as compared the the high dam at Knowles.” However, the greatest concern that CSKT leaders had with the Knowles Dam was the loss of the Buffalo Rapids sites. According to Morigeau, these sites were among the most valuable hydropower sites in the country and had not been accurately appraised by the Corps of Engineers who had not included compensation for lost power revenue in their budget for the Knowles project. If the true value of the damsites were to be assessed and paid to the tribes in annual payments of firm power from Knowles or cash equivalent, the CSKT expressed a willingness to negotiate. If however, the lost power revenue were not considered or it were to be paid in a single lump sum, the tribes were unequivocally opposed to Knowles. The final bill passed with the Knowles appropriation removed.⁴⁵

The tribes’ appeal to public power ideology failed to sway Lee Metcalf, who in a Summer 1963 public communication from his office stated that he “differed with some of his friends of the Flathead Tribe” on what dams ought to be built. Mansfield, however, was less clear in his position. While avoiding any overt conflict between the two Democratic senators,

⁴⁵ Ibid.

Mansfield's office consistently reported that his support for Knowles was contingent on local support from a majority of the people affected. The UCDC took this cautious statement and the senator's past statements in support of the rights of the Confederated Tribes as evidence of a split between the two senators.⁴⁶

As private and tribal dam advocates struggled to secure permits, Knowles Dam supporters also found little success. Democratic National Committeewoman for Montana and Executive Secretary of the Committee for Paradise Dam Francis Logan Merriam complained throughout 1962 of a media and letter writing blitz carried out by the Montana Power Company against public power plans. The retired teacher who owned a ranch near Charlo, Montana, noted in her letters to Senator Metcalf that the destructive power of a Knowles Reservoir grew every time John Corrette spoke.⁴⁷ When the American Crystal Sugar Company came out against Knowles, Merriam conducted an independent investigation, interviewing sugar beet growers throughout the valley and reporting her findings to Metcalf.⁴⁸ Merriam's letters often referred to the Knowles debate as if it were a military campaign, an apt metaphor considering the sheer volume of words being lobbed against the federal hydropower proposal by allies of Montana Power.⁴⁹ The *Sanders County Ledger* ran two full pages with graphs, images, and quotes insisting on the superiority of the Buffalo Rapids Plan over Knowles.⁵⁰ *The Flathead Courier* of

⁴⁶ "Sen Mansfield - Metcalf Split on Knowles Issue," *UCDC Newsletter*, July 1963, found in WWP, box 3 folder 4; Statements regarding Mansfield's contingent support on the basis of community input in Mike Mansfield, "Paradise Dam," Speech to the Senate Interior Committee, (1959) MMP, series 21, box 40, folder 2; see also multiple letters in MMP, series 17, box 252, folder 1.

⁴⁷ "Dear Lee" Letter from Francis Logan Merriam to Lee Metcalf, May 5, 1962, in FLM box 13, folder 1.

⁴⁸ "Dear Chairman Chavez" Letter from H. von Bergen, President of American Crystal Sugar Company to Sen. Dennis Chavez, June 4, 1962; and "Dear Lee" Letter from Francis Logan Merriam to Lee Metcalf, 18 July 1962, both in FLM box 13, folder 1.

⁴⁹ See for example her use of the terms "pillbox," "big guns," and "frontlines" in "Dear Lee," Letter from Francis Logan Merriam to Lee Metcalf, June 23, 1962, FLM box 13, folder 1.

⁵⁰ "Knowles Dam Would Cost County... Towns of Dixon, Perma, Indian Agency," "These Western Montanans Say: No to Knowles," "Compare Flathead with Sanders County," "From a Moral 'Viewpoint' Knowles is Wrong, Robs Indians of their Tribal Lands," "Private Power Projects Would Reduce Levies By Widening the Tax Base," and others, all in *Sanders County Ledger*, August 9, 1962.

Polson, a reliable ally of the Montana Power Company since its founding, churned out a steady stream of editorials against Knowles and in favor of Buffalo Rapids.⁵¹ *The Ronan Pioneer* insisted based on anecdotal evidence that the majority of western Montanans favored Buffalo Rapids and were disappointed with their Senators' support of Knowles.⁵² The *Daily Missoulian* highlighted the fact that federal dams paid no local tax in their editorials supporting Montana Power's designs.⁵³ Even Mel Rudder's *Hungry Horse News*, which had generally favored public over private development, was ambivalent toward the whole affair, wishing instead that Montana Democrats would work toward quicker completion of the Libby and Yellowtail projects rather than wrangling over the Flathead.⁵⁴ Lee Metcalf described the media blitz as an "oratorical flood submerging facts" under which public power Democrats struggled to catch their breath.⁵⁵

While president Kennedy had promised at a campaign rally in Billings that he would "not stand by and permit another Hells Canyon blunder in the Clark Fork basin," when pressured by John Corrette three years later, the President was less than committed.⁵⁶ Corrette, attending a meeting of the Committee for Economic Development in Washington D.C. asked the President why the government insisted on holding up private development in areas such as High Mountain Sheep on the Snake River and Buffalo Rapids on the Flathead. His line of questioning, intended to put Kennedy on his back foot, succeeded as the president replied that, "if a private company can develop a site and provide a service more satisfactorily than the federal government, then the private company should go ahead. Indeed as I said, I would put the burden of proof on the federal government" to demonstrate that private interests were not capable of developing a

⁵¹ Citation needed

⁵² F. G. L. "The Buffalo Dams," *The Ronan Pioneer*, reprinted in *The Flathead Courier*, February 2, 1961.

⁵³ "Who Shall Build Flathead Dams?" *Daily Missoulian*, reprinted in *The Flathead Courier*, February 2, 1961.

⁵⁴ Mel Rudder, "Buffalo Rapids or Knowles" reprinted in *The Flathead Courier*, February 2, 1961.

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⁵⁶ Kennedy campaign speech in Billings, MT September 22, 1960, quoted in "Montana Needs Knowles" *Committee for Paradise Dam*, 1961, in JRG box 1, folder 7.

resource.⁵⁷ That statement in itself did not rule out the administration's support for Knowles over Buffalo Rapids, but it was not the ringing endorsement of the public power scheme that Montana's senators wanted to hear from the president

At the height of debate over damming the Flathead, disparate groups began to find common cause. In 1963, Winton Weydemeyer encouraged UCDC leader Clyde Fickes to leverage the interests of the Confederated Tribes of the Flathead Reservation in their campaign against Knowles, writing "I think the truthful but politically naive excuse for Knowles offered by our Congressmen is going to backfire. Perhaps our best chance for blocking the project is the tribal rights and treaty angle."⁵⁸ In June of 1963, 25 representatives from conservation, agriculture, business, and tribal groups opposing Knowles traveled to Washington to plead their case. The appeal had little effect on Secretary Udall, who saw the fact that the tribes were not opposed to river development as tacit approval for Interior to build the best dam possible. Were the tribes to oppose dams outright, Udall argued, he might be sympathetic to their claims, but if development was to happen at all, it would happen on his terms.⁵⁹ In the years previous the UCDC had insisted repeatedly that Montanans completely reject Paradise Dam and all of the alternative projects, including Buffalo Rapids 2 & 4. Preferring their headwaters flood control plan to any development on the mainstem of the Flathead River, they called for "complete rejection of these proposals." However, in 1963, they reversed course, with a 1963 *UCDC Newsletter* containing maps extolling the benefits of Buffalo Rapids 2 & 4.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Quoted in "Kennedy Plugs for Private Power" *UCDC Newsletter*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (August 1, 1963) in WWP box 3, folder 4.

⁵⁸ "Dear Clyde," Letter from Winton Weydemeyer to Clyde Fickes, 1963 WWP, box 3, folder 3.

⁵⁹ "Montanans Carry Knowles Fight to Washington," *UCDC Newsletter* 15, no. 3, August 1, 1963, WWP box 3, folder 4.

⁶⁰ *UCDC Newsletter* from 1957 and 1959 both refer to "the ultimate choice of complete rejection of these proposals" while the 1963 newsletter contained maps extolling the benefits of Buffalo Rapids 2 & 4, WWP box 3, folder 4.

After years of conflict between the two entities, the Montana Power Company and the CSKT filed a joint application to build the Buffalo Rapids Dams in 1964. The joint application included both Buffalo Rapids dams and an early relicense for the Kerr Dam. Not all members of the Confederated Tribes were in favor of this new partnership. Jerome Hewankorn, a former council member of the Confederated Tribes of the Flathead Reservation collected donations from friends and family for a petition drive in which he traveled around the reservation collecting signatures on a petition to Secretary Udall and FPC Commissioner Swidler. At least thirty-nine tribal members signed a letter insisting that the Buffalo Rapids dams and early licensing of the Kerr Dam would not be in the tribe's best interest and calling for a full vote of CSKT membership on the matter. They feared that by funding dam construction and providing securities for loans, the tribe would not have enough money to cover per capita payments to members. They also doubted that the jobs dam construction would provide would be Native jobs, although Salish and Kootenai people had worked on the Kerr Dam in the 1930s and some had also worked on Hungry Horse Dam.⁶¹ Most of all, they were skeptical of the Montana Power Company's intentions in renewing its license for Kerr Dam. Tribal ownership of Kerr had long been a priority, but if the Buffalo Rapids application were granted, the opportunity for the tribe to take control of Kerr would be postponed an extra thirty years.⁶²

When Jerome Hewankorn served on the CSKT Council, he had fought the Paradise-Knowles dams, but in his cover letter to Secretary Udall and Commissioner Swidler, he reversed course and recommended that Knowles Dam be built as soon as possible. Hewankorn's reversal

⁶¹ Native workers at Kerr Dam in Voggesser, 91; Native workers at Kerr and Hungry Horse in Morigeau, *Valley Creek*, 47–50, 99–102.

⁶² "Dear Mr. Secretary," Letter and petition from Jerome Hewankorn to Int. Sec. Udall, May 26, 1965. LMP box 120, folder 6. Resolution opposing FPC application for Kerr relicense, Committee for Paradise Dam, July 1965. HBM box, 1, folder 9.

on Knowles is perplexing, but there are a few possibilities for his change of heart. Jerome did not own a typewriter, and he did not mail the petitions himself. The logistics of typing and mailing the petitions was handled by Francis Logan Merriam of the Committee for Paradise Dam. It is possible that she swayed Hewankorn's opinion or that she typed the cover letter herself. Merriam denied any involvement, writing in a letter to Lee Metcalf that the line about Knowles was "absolutely spontaneous" and that she had "made no effort to get him to commit himself on the controversy, pro or con."⁶³ Another possibility is that Hewankorn, knowing the Interior Secretary's preference for the Knowles project, was attempting to win Udall over with his plea. A third explanation arises from the accusations of corruption among Morigeau and McDonald that Hewankorn made in later appeals to Udall. The McDonald and Morigeau families had been accused throughout their time in tribal leadership of self-dealing and nepotism. Henry Lozeau of the Flathead-Kootenai Organization had called for a "full-scale and immediate investigation" of the Morigeau led council in 1962 and former tribal treasurer Robert McCrea had complained of financial misconduct in a letter to Mike Mansfield that same year.⁶⁴ Jerome Hewankorn, as a fellow council member and a longtime acquaintance of Morigeau, was familiar with these accusations and expressed his suspicion of the council's trustworthiness in letter to Udall. Accepting that one dam or another was going to be built—as was the assumption in the past—Hewankorn may have seen the Knowles Dam and the compensation that would come with it as the only chance for tribal members on the whole to reap any benefit. Of course, there is a fourth possibility, which should not go unmentioned and that is that Jerome Hewankorn sincerely believed in the public power vision of the Knowles Dam promoters. Whether Mrs. Logan had convinced him to support Knowles or if Hewankorn's dogged opposition to the tribe's joint

⁶³ "Dear Lee," Letter from Francis Logan Merriam to Lee Metcalf, 29 May 1965, LMP, box 120, folder 6.

⁶⁴ Puisto, 7.

venture stemmed from his lack of faith in the council is impossible to know. Regardless of his motivation, Hewankorn went to great lengths to gather signatures on his petitions, showing that Native American opposition to Knowles and support of Buffalo Rapids was not universal.

In addition to Jerome Hewankorn's petition, several other organizations submitted formal complaints against the Buffalo Rapids application. The Committee for Paradise Dam passed a resolution condemning the project and calling on the FPC to prevent "incomplete and wasteful development" of water power.⁶⁵ Labor representatives from the Montana Carpenters District Council to the national legislative secretary of the AFL-CIO wrote to the FPC to express their misgivings with Montana Power and the Buffalo Rapids plan.⁶⁶ The Swan Valley Farmers Union, invoking a catastrophic 1964 flood as justification, used the Buffalo Rapids licensing fight as an opportunity not merely to call for the Knowles Dam, but to revive calls for the Glacier View and Spruce Park Dams on the upper forks of the Flathead.⁶⁷

Perhaps the most surprising name among the collection of letters condemning the Buffalo Rapids application and calling for the construction of the larger Paradise-Knowles Dam instead was Sierra Club president David Brower.⁶⁸ Like previous club president Lewis F. Clark, Brower was motivated by his fear that if the public power lobby lost their project on the Lower Flathead, they would turn to the North Fork and the Glacier View Dam to meet power demand. Brower had faced a similar situation a decade previous when he stood down on the Glen Canyon Dam bill as a trade off for preserving Dinosaur National Monument from the proposed Echo Park

⁶⁵ "Before the Federal Power Commission" Resolution of the Committee for Paradise Dam (July, 1965), in HBM, box 1, folder 9.

⁶⁶ "Dear Mr. Chairman," Letter from Robert C. Weller to Joseph C. Swidler, December 18, 1964, in LMP, box 120, folder 6; "Dear Mr. Gutride" Letter from Andrew J. Biemiller to Joseph Gutride, July 16, 1965, in LMP, box 120, folder 6.

⁶⁷ "Dear Senator Metcalf," Letter from Olonder G. Slethaug to Lee Metcalf, December 8, 1964, in LMP, box 120, folder 6.

⁶⁸ "Dear Lee," Letter from David Brower to Lee Metcalf, May 21, 1965, in LMP, box 120, folder 6.

Dam. The diehard preservationist later expressed his deep regret for having been “a wimp” in 1957, reckoning that he could have stopped the Glen Canyon Dam if he had tried, but he did not feel the same way about his stance on Paradise-Knowles in 1965.⁶⁹ In his autobiography *For Earth’s Sake*, Brower chalked his support for Paradise up to the charisma of Lee Metcalf who he had considered a valuable ally on wilderness legislation, writing passively “I found myself writing an article in favor of a dam—the proposed Paradise Dam on the Clark Fork, to save it from underdevelopment at the hands of the Montana Power Company.”⁷⁰ Perhaps if Paradise-Knowles had been built the “archdruid” would have had more to say or written an impassioned call for it to be torn down.⁷¹

The various resolutions and petitions against the Buffalo Rapids application aligned with Swidler and Udall’s understanding of the public interest in the Flathead River, as they denied the Buffalo Rapids permit on the grounds that it did not represent a “comprehensive plan for improving or developing a waterway.”⁷² Reporting on the FPC decision, an editorial in the *Wall Street Journal* ran under the headline “Two Hats and a Mass Scalping” which was reprinted in the *Daily Missoulian* with the headline “Scalping Indians Pays and Pays and Pays.” The editorial ridiculed Udall for confusing his role as head of Reclamation with his role as head of Indian Affairs by cheating the tribe out of revenue in order to preserve dam sites for the federal government.⁷³ Hewankorn responded to that article in another letter to Udall in which he detailed

⁶⁹ David Brower, *For Earth’s Sake*, (Salt Lake City, UT: Peregrine Smith Books, 1990), 437.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 226.

⁷¹ The nickname “Archdruid” was given to Brower by John McPhee in his book *Encounters with the Archdruid* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1971).

⁷² “Dear Senator Metcalf” Letter from Joseph Swidler to Lee Metcalf, June 26, 1965, in LMP, box 120, folder 6.

⁷³ “Scalping Indians Pays and Pays and Pays” *Daily Missoulian*, August 29, 1965

numerous failed business ventures of the Confederated Tribes, writing that he was doubtful of their ability not to get cheated by Montana Power.⁷⁴

Stewart Udall's decision to intervene against the Buffalo Rapids dams may have been for the sake of seeing the river fully developed, but unbeknownst to the Interior Secretary, his actions were part of a chain of events which would ensure that the Flathead River flowed freely for generations to come. Paradise-Knowles was one of the last gasps of the public power movement that had started during the New Deal. In the 1950s, that movement had faced setbacks from private electricity developers and their allies in the Republican Party—especially at Hells Canyon, but in the 1960s public power Democrats also started to lose the support of their most committed partners in Congress as they began to reckon with the environmental impact of dams. Senator Frank Church of Idaho, whose first speech on the Senate floor was an impassioned call for the Hells Canyon High Dam, became one of the leading voices for river protection after the fish ladder at Idaho Power's Brownlee Dam failed in 1958, ensuring the extinction of salmon runs above the dam and shaking Church's confidence in engineers.⁷⁵ Stewart Udall, who had himself written the legislation that created the Glen Canyon Dam in Arizona, became a wild rivers crusader after a family trip down the Colorado River where he saw firsthand what would soon be buried beneath Lake Powell.⁷⁶

The environmental evolution of national Democrats in the 1960s was preceded by a similar development among Republicans in the previous decade. Many Republicans had a longer

⁷⁴ "Dear Mr. Secretary," Letter from Jerome Hewankorn to Int. Sec. Udall, September 1965, LMP, box 120, folder 6.

⁷⁵ See Sara E. Dant Ewert, "Evolution of an Environmentalist: Senator Frank Church and the Hells Canyon Controversy" *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 51, no. 1 (2001), 36–51.

⁷⁶ for Udall's Colorado River trip see John de Graaf, "Stewart Udall: A Remembrance" *Sierra: the Magazine of the Sierra Club*, April 25, 2020; the family river trip and its role in shaping Stewart Udall's views is also mentioned by Tom Udall in Nick Paumgarten, "A Voyage Along Trump's Wall" *The New Yorker*, April 16, 2018; While Stewart Udall became a major supporter of wild rivers throughout the rest of his life, he did throw his weight behind one more failed hydropower project before he left office, the High Mountain Sheep project in Idaho, see Ewert, 47.

history of preservationist sympathies than their Democratic colleagues, but even some who had previously supported private hydropower projects were converted to the wilderness ethic in the mid-twentieth century. Winton Weydemeyer was an archetypical Republican conservationist, although his endorsement of small dams set him apart from others. John P. Saylor of Pennsylvania, who had initially supported Idaho Power's dams in Hells Canyon, was converted to preservation by a river trip. The Republican Congressman and his family were taken on a float trip down the Yampa River in northwest Colorado in 1952 by veteran river guide and Sierra Club member Bus Hatch. Hatch later said that it was when Saylor saw how his children embraced the thrill of a wild river that he joined the fight against dams. David Brower later attributed the preservation of Dinosaur National Monument and the creation of the National Wilderness Preservation System to Saylor above anyone else except perhaps Wilderness Society President Howard Zahniser.⁷⁷ Walter Hickel, Interior Secretary during the Nixon Administration also had a whitewater epiphany, as a rafting trip through Hells Canyon informed his decision to deny permits for the High Mountain Sheep Dam in Idaho.⁷⁸

By the 1970s, the political calculus of dam building had changed entirely. Whereas in the Eisenhower Years, private electricity companies defeated the grand visions of the public power Democrats and won authorization for smaller dams, in the 1960s even comparatively small private dams faced intense scrutiny. In 1966, Udall appealed an FPC decision which had authorized the Pacific Northwest Power Company to build the High Mountain Sheep Dam on the Snake River on the grounds that such a dam would be contrary to the public interest and thus a violation of the Federal Power Act.⁷⁹ Writing for the majority, Supreme Court Justice William O.

⁷⁷ David Brower, *For Earth's Sake*, (Salt Lake City, UT: Peregrine Smith Books, 1990), River trip story on page 223, quotes from pages 224, 222.

⁷⁸ Ewert, 47.

⁷⁹ *Federal Power Act*, Public Law 115, *U.S. Statutes at Large* (1920): section 4, page 8.

Douglas wrote an opinion that redefined the public interest with regard to hydropower writing that the FPC in granting a license must explore, “all issues relevant to the ‘public interest,’ including future power demand and supply, alternate sources of power, the public interest in preserving reaches of wild rivers and wilderness areas... and the protection of wildlife.”⁸⁰ In that decision Douglas had given legal weight to the preservation of wild rivers. The following year, the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act passed by a near unanimous vote. That law, which had been drafted by Montana wildlife biologist Frank Craighead based on data gathered from river runners including Clifton Merritt of Kalispell, created a system for assessing the wild, scenic, and recreational value of a river and preserving it from future development. While he supported the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, Lee Metcalf still clung to the dream of damming the Flathead and lobbied to keep the Forks of the Flathead off of the initial list of protected streams.⁸¹

The energy crisis of the 1970s brought renewed calls for dams in western Montana, but they were met with lackluster support.⁸² Army Engineers studied the feasibility of the Lower Flathead dams in 1976 and a deeper study of the Clark Fork Basin in 1977 which included plans for a dam at Quartz Creek on the Clark Fork, a site which would drown the popular whitewater rafting destination known as the Alberton Gorge.⁸³ The initial report found that while the Buffalo Rapids 2 and 4 had the potential to secure congressional approval, Knowles was far too

⁸⁰ *Udall v. Federal Power Commission*, 387 U.S. 428 (1967).

⁸¹ Swanson, 18–21; The fact that the Flathead was not among the first wild and scenic rivers is truly remarkable considering that the whole concept of a national wild and scenic river system was devised by Frank Craighead and Clifton Merritt on a trip down the Middle Fork of the Flathead, See Clifton Merritt, “Wilderness Water,” *Naturalist* 9 no. 2 (1961), 52–56.

⁸² For a concise description of how the energy crisis came about and why new generating plants were suddenly demanded in the 1970s see Robert D. Lifset, *Power on the Hudson: Storm King Mountain and the Emergence of Modern American Environmentalism*, (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2014), 10–12.

⁸³ “Army Engineers to Discuss Potential Damsite Projects” *The Flathead Courier*, March 24, 1977; The rise of environmentalism in both the public consciousness and the legal system was on display in those same pages of the *Courier*, as other articles advertised a community viewing of “Wellspring” and a discussion of water pollution in connection with EPA studies going on in the region “Water Quality Workshop Friday” *The Flathead Courier*, March 24, 1977; for Alberton Gorge whitewater see Hank Fisher, *Floaters Guide to Montana*, (Helena, MT: Falcon Press, 1986), 112–116.

controversial.⁸⁴ At public hearings required by the 1970 National Environmental Policy Act, local people objected to each of the dams due to their potential to harm native trout, concerns that the tribes would not be properly compensated, and the possibility of a catastrophic failure, with one Paradise resident invoking the example of the 1972 Teton Dam disaster in Idaho.⁸⁵ In their final report in 1978, the Army Corps estimated that the Buffalo Rapids dams would only produce a maximum of ninety-four megawatts, a 60% reduction from the overconfident figures advertised by Montana Power in the previous decade.⁸⁶ The report concluded by considering conservation as a means of meeting power demand, although they did not believe that it could “eliminate the ultimate need for alternative sources of power” including coal, nuclear, and hydropower.⁸⁷

As the 1980 license renewal date for Kerr Dam approached, the Montana Power Company emphasized the need for more power. MPC president Joseph A. McElwain took aim at the Carter Administration’s energy conservation policy in an address to the Polson Rotary Club in July 1979, arguing that “we need to promote energy production in this country as well as to conserve.” The power company president set his sights on the environmental regulatory regime bemoaning the “Ninety-one permits from forty-three agencies” required to open a nuclear plant in California. After arguing for more nuclear power, the construction of an Alaska oil pipeline, and expanding coal mining in Colstrip, MT, McElwain waded into the controversial subject of hydropower. While he acknowledged that new dams were controversial and his opinions would

⁸⁴ “Army Engineers study Knowles and other area dams site possibilities” *The Flathead Courier* September 9, 1976.

⁸⁵ “‘Dam Studies’ Subject of Public Meetings,” *Char-Koosta* 6, no. 24 (April 15, 1977); for a vivid description of the Teton Dam disaster see Reisner, 383–410.

⁸⁶ “Buffalo Rapids 2 and 4 Sites Hold Most Promise” *The Flathead Courier*, March 30, 1978.

⁸⁷ Army Corps Brochure quoted in “Core Issues Study Brochure” *The Flathead Courier*, September 14, 1978.

be unpopular, he endorsed every private and federal dam from Libby to Buffalo Rapids and even Glacier View and Spruce Park. Every dam that is, except Paradise-Knowles.⁸⁸

Tribal leaders, however, were once again out of step with the power company. In 1972, Montana Power once again held closed door meetings with tribal leadership about building the Buffalo Rapids dams in conjunction with their application to relicense Kerr Dam in 1980.⁸⁹ In 1977, CSKT members voted to reject offers from Montana Power to buy the dam sites and questioned whether the claims of power shortage were to be trusted. Councilman Joe McDonald insisted that the tribe ought to consider the value they had not just in reserved dam sites, but in a free flowing river.⁹⁰ Interest in the river as it was had grown throughout the decade, with guided canoe trips on the calmer sections of the river and more daring rafting missions through the Buffalo Rapids themselves.⁹¹ Writing about the wild character of the river in 1972, a *Char-Koosta* reporter noted that “there are few untouched rivers left in this country” and that while “the river below Flathead lake is not as highly regarded as the upstream portion, there are abundant rainbow and Cutthroat trout ranging from pan to trophy size.”⁹²

Tribal pursuits of hydropower projects played a role in the decline of dam building in America. Since intellectual historian and Sierra Club member Roderick Nash wrote the first scholarly account of the Grand Canyon Dams fight, historians have tended to give the Sierra Club and their charismatic leader Brower all of the credit for saving the Grand Canyon, but lost in the David vs. Goliath narrative is the role that the Hualapai played.⁹³ Historian Byron Pearson

⁸⁸ “Glimpse of Energy Problems Given by MPC” *The Flathead Courier*. July 19, 1979.

⁸⁹ “Tribe-Montana Power Plan Power site,” *Char-Koosta* 2, no. 11 (October 6, 1972).

⁹⁰ “Ronan-Pablo District Meeting Held” *Char-Koosta* 7, no. 4, (June 15, 1977).

⁹¹ A float by a group of high school students from Polson was front page news in 1971, “Raftsmen Dunked in River Run” *Flathead Courier* October 7, 1971.

⁹² “Floating the Wilds of the Upper Flathead River” *Char-Koosta*, Vol. 2 No. 7, August 1972, the headline writer got the location wrong, as the article details the Lower Flathead, not the Upper.

⁹³ Nash, 227–237; for the historiography of the Grand Canyon Dams beginning with Nash see Pearson, 171–174.

points out that the Hualapai Tribe submitted their own application to dam the Colorado River on their own reservation and were roundly denied the right to do so, while the Interior Department maintained their designs within the National Park.⁹⁴ The narrative parallels that of the Salish and Kootenai, whose attempt to work around both the private schemes of the Montana Power Company and the public power schemes of Interior was met with delay and denial. While it would be too much to say that the threat of Native people seizing their own means of electricity production brought about the end of federal hydropower on its own, those attempts certainly heightened the tension both inside and outside of the tribes.

Within the CSKT, those who had opposed both the Paradise Dam and the Buffalo Rapids Dams gained political traction by the 1980s. In 1982, Salish elder and Wilderness Society president Thurman Trospen succeeded in his lifelong effort to protect the Mission Mountains where he had spent his youth. Having served his country in the Marine Corps at Guadalcanal, Trospen returned home to serve as a civilian in the Forest Service and later the National Park Service. Upon his retirement in 1973, he devoted his time to working with the Wilderness Society, presenting plans for a tribal wilderness in the Mission Mountains to the CSKT council in 1974 when a logging plan was being considered. He defeated the logging proposal with the help of three *yayas*—respected elders or grandmothers in the Salish Tribe—and eight years later ushered in the nation’s first Tribal Wilderness.⁹⁵ Preserving the Missions, while a rebuke of the vision for tribal economic development advanced by Walter McDonald in the 1950s, was a significant development in the enactment of tribal sovereignty on the Flathead Reservation. Four years later, the tribal council under the leadership of Ron Thirriault, voted to preserve the Lower

⁹⁴ Pearson, 100–102, 112–114; the later pitting of the interests of the Hualapai against those of the Navajo is also a significant element of the Grand Canyon Dam debate, see Pearson, 179–180.

⁹⁵Krahe, 65–91; Tom McDonald et al., “Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness: A Case Study,” Produced by the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes for the Native Lands and Wilderness Council (2005); See figure 28.

Flathead River from all future dam development.⁹⁶ These developments should not be understood as the preservationist logic of non-Indians coming belatedly to the tribes, but rather that the tribes had gained enough security in their control of their resources and built the tools of governance necessary to enact preservation.⁹⁷ Amidst the threat of termination, industrial development seemed the surest route to sovereignty. Once that threat had subsided, preservationist interests could assert themselves and gain favor in tribal governance. Some members of the tribe have insisted that preservation was always the goal, even if it was not always feasible. In an interview with historian Jaakko Puisto, CSKT member Noel Pichette remarked that if they had better lawyers, the tribes could have avoided allotment and the authorization of Kerr Dam.⁹⁸ Perhaps if the tribes possessed the tools to do so in 1882, Chief Eneas would have been able to keep the railroads out of the Flathead Lake country.⁹⁹ While the tribes were not able to avoid those decisions in the late 19th and early 20th centuries—and were likewise unable to secure permits for the Buffalo Rapids Dams in the 1960s—the struggle against termination and for resource development laid the groundwork for the tribe to assume greater control of their own resources in the 1970s and 80s.

⁹⁶ Puisto, 14; “Tribes Say No to Dams,” *Missoulian* 1986.

⁹⁷ For one example see CSKT members opposed to E. W. Morigeau’s 1959 proposal for open pit mining on reservation land, Morigeau, *Valley Creek*, 86.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 14, 22 n52.

⁹⁹ Kootenai Chief Eneas stated in 1882 during discussion of the Flathead Railroad treaty: “I don’t wish the road to pass through this reservation... This reservation is a small country, and yet you want five depots upon it. These are the best spots on the reservation. What is the reason I should be encouraged when you take the best part of my country?” transcript of the treaty negotiation can be found in William Kittredge and Annick Smith eds., *The Last Best Place: A Montana Anthology*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988), 354–364, Eneas quote on 357.

Conclusion

The political and economic dynamics of damming the Flathead and Clark Fork Rivers in the twentieth century and of economic development in the western United States broadly can be understood as the clash of at least three competing expressions of capitalism, identified by the geographer Peter Walker in 2003. Walker concluded from his study of California exurbs in the 1990s that resource conflicts in the American West result from the clash of “the older resource-based economy (ranching, timber); a development industry; and the newer rural-residential, amenity-based economy.”¹⁰⁰ Despite the differences between California exurbs and the river valleys of the Northern Rockies, his model holds considerable explanatory power in this case. The older extractive or resource-based economy is that which is embodied by ranching, timber, and mining, as well as private electricity development. That extractive mode of capitalism, sometimes described in colonial terms, was the baseline across the West in the early twentieth century. The second expression in Walker’s study—which he terms the “development industry”—is that of suburban property developers, but when looking at water power development, that role is better understood as that of the public power lobby. This group staked the economic future of the region on replacing temporary labor and unsustainable extraction with a permanent and stable residential workforce. Mike Mansfield, James Murray, and Lee Metcalf all sought to liberate their constituents from the timber and mining industry by harnessing the

¹⁰⁰ Peter A. Walker, “Reconsidering Regional Political Ecologies: Toward a Political Ecology of the Rural American West,” *Progress in Human Geography* 27, no. 1 (2003):15.

water power resources of the region to create a new industrial-residential landscape. By competing for control of dam sites, regulation of power marketing, and the livelihoods of workers who would otherwise be forced to take low paying seasonal jobs, the capitalism championed by the public power Democrats was a threat to the existing extractive industries, and thus maligned as totalitarian socialism. The final expression of capitalism competing for primacy in the West was that of the preservationists who opposed both of the earlier models in order to protect what they saw—whether for their spiritual, ecological, scenic, or recreational value—as irreplaceable amenities. This third expression is less obviously capitalist but considering the growth of tourism and real estate as major industries in the mountain states, it becomes clear that wilderness preservation also lends to the commodification of nature and (perhaps inadvertently) supports profit-driven industry. To these three, it is perhaps necessary to add a fourth competing interest—that of tribal self-determination. The methods employed by members of the Salish and Kootenai Tribes at various times resembled each of the three capitalisms described above, but almost always with the goal of employing those methods for their own sake and on their own terms.

The conflicts around private and public power and between preservation and development were deeply ideological and cultural, but also, as Walker points out, “reflect underlying tensions between competing capitalisms that commodify nature in incompatible ways.”¹⁰¹ Ideological and cultural differences between supporters of public power, private enterprise, various expressions of tribal sovereignty, and wilderness preservation are clearly evident in the newspaper editorials, the committee pamphlets and mailers, and the speeches given by those representing one camp or another. The American system, socialism,

¹⁰¹ Walker, 17.

underdevelopment, dispossession, totalitarianism, progress, sacred rights, self-determination, all of these phrases were cast about with true conviction by people intent on securing support for their own version of the West. That conviction flowed from the fundamental incompatibility of their plans for water power development. Both Walter McDonald and John Corrette's plans to build run of river dams at Buffalo Rapids were incompatible with Lee Metcalf's vision for a large federal dam at Paradise. Paradise Dam, Knowles Dam, and the Buffalo Rapids Dams were all incompatible with the desires of Salish and Kootenai preservationists like Thurman Trospen and Ron Therriault to see the river left unspoiled.

In the first half of the twentieth century, western progressives attempted to overcome extractive capitalism through coordinated river development. Extractive industry had generated tremendous wealth for the executives of Anaconda, Northern Pacific, and Montana Power, while working class people faced seasonal unemployment or worked on substandard farms without electric equipment. In order to bring the benefits of electricity to everyone, to stem the tide of migration out of rural towns and into industrial cities, and to maximize the public benefit and long term yield of natural resources, progressive reformers instituted conservation measures and attempted to regulate the power industry. Progress proved slow and regulation ineffective, leading the next generation of progressives to pursue the funding and construction of massive power projects by the federal government and direct financing of rural electrification. In some isolated cases, they managed to displace extractive capital and create suburban manufacturing communities, such as in the town of Columbia Falls, Montana, where the construction of Hungry Horse Dam and the power it supplied to the Anaconda Aluminum Company created stable union jobs for over 600 families. The New Deal model of public power production was successful in creating Bonneville Power and bringing the aluminum industry to the Columbia Basin states, but

attempts to expand the purview of federal dam builders and coordinate each of the nation's major river valleys ultimately failed.

While many factors contributed to the failure of public power to expand after the New Deal, the single greatest factor was the coordinated efforts of private electricity companies. Trade associations and business leaders both directly and through their allies in the press and civic organizations throughout the country painted the public power project as misguided and malicious, a step on the road to socialism, if not an outright sprint down the path to totalitarianism. During the presidency of Dwight Eisenhower, and especially Douglas McKay's tenure as Interior Secretary from 1953–56, private interests won control of Idaho's Snake River at Hells Canyon, one of the public power movement's most sought after dam sites. Democratic politicians tried to revive some long defeated federal hydropower projects during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations but were unable to secure their authorization in the changing political landscape.¹⁰²

From the stalemate between public and private power models in the early 1960s, the preservationist movement began to win fights over individual dams and secure legal protections for wild rivers. Those interests had gained recognition in part through private power publications which broadcast the views of anyone critical of the federal dam building agencies. By encouraging citizens to question the costs associated with New Deal style public works, the private utilities inadvertently opened the door to a new preservationist paradigm that was both

¹⁰² Two notable exceptions are Libby Dam on Montana's Kootenai River, which was authorized as part of the Columbia River Treaty in 1964 and constructed between 1966–75, and Dworshak Dam on Idaho's Clearwater River, which was authorized in 1962 and constructed between 1966–73, see Philip Van Huizen, "Building a Green Dam: Environmental Modernism and the Canadian-American Libby Dam Project," *Pacific Historical Review* 79, no. 3 (2010), 418–53; and "Dworshak Dam Collection Timeline," *University of Idaho Library*, accessed April 15, 2022, <https://www.lib.uidaho.edu/digital/dworshak/timeline.html> ; Other elements of the Federal Columbia River Power System were built throughout the 1960s and 70s with Lower Granite Dam on the Snake River in Washington state being the last dam completed in 1975, however with the exception of Wells Dam near Vantage, Washington, each of these projects had been authorized and funded in earlier decades, see Peterson, *River of Life, Channel of Death*.

critical of government and reliant upon it to enforce protections for scenic rivers, wilderness areas, and endangered species.

The sustainable economic future sought by public power Democrats proved elusive. Even in Columbia Falls, the greatest example of Mike Mansfield's policy in action, low-cost hydropower could not protect the town from deindustrialization. Changes in the global metals market sparked first by the nationalization of copper mines in Chile in 1970 eventually lead to the downfall of the Anaconda Mining Company in 1977.¹⁰³ After Anaconda ceased to be, the Columbia Falls smelter changed hands multiple times with each new owner questioning whether or not the plant was worth keeping online considering the costs associated with meeting new state and federal environmental quality standards. Clean Air Act litigation against the plant, spearheaded by local environmental activists, drove up the cost of production at the same time that smelting operations in countries that did not have clean air regulations were driving down the price of finished aluminum.¹⁰⁴ From 1985 until at least 1992, the investment company which owned the smelter defrauded workers out of millions of dollars in what were meant to be shared profits.¹⁰⁵ By 2009, the plant was being periodically shut down leaving many residents out of work, and in 2016 Columbia Falls Aluminum closed its doors for good.¹⁰⁶ The downfall of the smelter paralleled the growth of the tourism economy and skyrocketing real estate values.

Columbia Falls has become a place far more associated with nearby Glacier National Park than

¹⁰³ Michael Malone, "The Collapse of Western Metal Mining: An Historical Epitaph," *Pacific Historical Review* 55, no. 3, (August, 1986), pp. 455–64, 461–63.

¹⁰⁴ See Richard Hanners, "Lawyers and Scientists," in *From Superstar to Superfund*, (self-pub., montana-aluminum.com, 2017).

¹⁰⁵ See Hanners, "Power, Politics, and Greed," in *From Superstar to Superfund*.

¹⁰⁶ See Hanners, "The Downward Spiral," in *From Superstar to Superfund*; and D. Tabish, "The Rise and Fall of the Columbia Falls Aluminum Plant," *Flathead Beacon*, October 27, 2017.

with metals manufacturing.¹⁰⁷ The scenic beauty and recreation opportunities of the region have attracted newcomers to the area. Without the smoke stacks billowing toxic fumes into the air and the plant leaching poisons into the river, Bad Rock Canyon has certainly become a more pleasant place to live, but tourism jobs pay far less than manufacturing and housing costs continue to rise.¹⁰⁸ As Peter Walker noted, “The irony of the New West is that newcomers attracted by diverse imaginaries of rural lifestyles often make real rural livelihoods unviable.”¹⁰⁹

Whereas the public power vision was never realized, the vision of tribal sovereignty over water power on the Flathead Reservation has had greater success. The Confederated Tribes began the process of obtaining the Kerr Dam in the 1980s when Montana Power’s initial FPC license expired, finally succeeding in 2015.¹¹⁰ The tribes have since renamed the dam Seli’s Ksanka Qlispe’ Dam, posthumously invalidating Cornelius Kelley’s claim that the dam would stand as a testament to the memory of Frank Kerr for “an immeasurable time.”¹¹¹ Lake County officials have made the same complaints about tax exemption that were made sixty years prior by Mel Ruder regarding Hungry Horse Dam. Tribal councilman Rob McDonald responded to the accusation by stating, “We paid our taxes by ceding millions of acres of land in signing the

¹⁰⁷ One clear indicator of this is that the Columbia Falls Chamber of Commerce has replaced their slogan of “Industrial Hub of the Flathead Valley,” with “Gateway to Glacier,” see Aaron Teasdale, “The Future of Small-Town Montana Rides on Public Lands,” *High Country News*, January 9, 2018.

¹⁰⁸ J. Franz, “Prices Soar as ‘Montana Land Grab’ Continues,” *Montana Free Press*, October 29, 2020; J. Franz, “Priced out of House and Home,” *Montana Free Press*, June 3, 2021; Average home prices rose 65% between 2008 and 2018, see Tory Baugan & Zac Andrews, “2018 Flathead Valley Market Report” *Montana West Realty*, accessed December 13, 2021, <https://montanawest.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/2018-Market-Report.pdf>

¹⁰⁹ Walker, 18.

¹¹⁰ “Dam Hearings Attract Hundreds; Opinion is Split,” *Char-Koosta* 13, no. 6, (July 24, 1984); “The Twists and Turns of Acquiring Kerr Dam” *Char-Koosta News* 44, no. 8, (May 16, 2013); “Coming Full Circle at Kerr Dam” *Char-Koosta News* September 5, 2017; “Energy Keepers, Inc., successfully pays conveyance price for Kerr Dam,” press release of *Energy Keepers Inc.*, September 4, 2015, accessed April 7, 2022, <https://energykeepersinc.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Conveyance-Price-Paid9.4.15.pdf>

¹¹¹ Cornelius Kelley quoted in “Thousands Witness Huge Celebration: Wheeler, Ayers, Kelley, Kerr, and Two Chiefs Talk” *The Flathead Courier*, August 11, 1938

treaty.”¹¹² In 2021, the Confederated Tribes agreed to a historic compact with the state of Montana and the United States government settling thousands of water rights claims and transferring control of the National Bison Range over to the Tribes.¹¹³ The balance of development-for-use and preservation long sought by self described conservationists is being achieved by the CSKT, the first tribe in the nation to own and operate a major hydroelectric dam and the first tribe to create and manage a tribal wilderness area. Thanks to the efforts of tribal preservationists and the complex interrelation of political and economic forces over the course of the first half of the twentieth century, the Lower Flathead River still runs free, crashing through the ten foot waves of Buffalo Rapids, drifting calmly between the striated cliffs at Knowles, merging with the equally powerful force of the Clark Fork at Paradise, and onward to join the Columbia and eventually the Pacific Ocean.

¹¹² Quoted in Nicky Ouellet, “Dispute Over Dam Land Ownership at Heart of Lake County Tax Lawsuit,” *Montana Public Radio*, September 28, 2016, accessed April 7, 2022, <https://www.mtpr.org/montana-news/2016-09-28/dispute-over-dam-land-ownership-at-heart-of-lake-county-tax-lawsuit> ; Mike Mansfield, “The Greatest Benefit—Private or Public Power Development, re: Hungry Horse News,” in MMP, series 21, box 41, folder 10.

¹¹³ The water rights settlement is the result of decades of work and is not easily summarized in the final paragraph of a thesis—more will certainly need to be written about these historic developments; See “Interior Department Executes Water Rights Settlement Agreement with the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Indian Reservation,” *Office of the Secretary of the Interior*, September 17, 2021, accessed May 13, 2022, <https://www.doi.gov/pressreleases/interior-department-executes-water-rights-settlement-agreement-confederated-salish> ; full text of the compact available via CSKT at: <https://csktribes.org/index.php/water-rights/water-rights-compact>

Appendix: Images

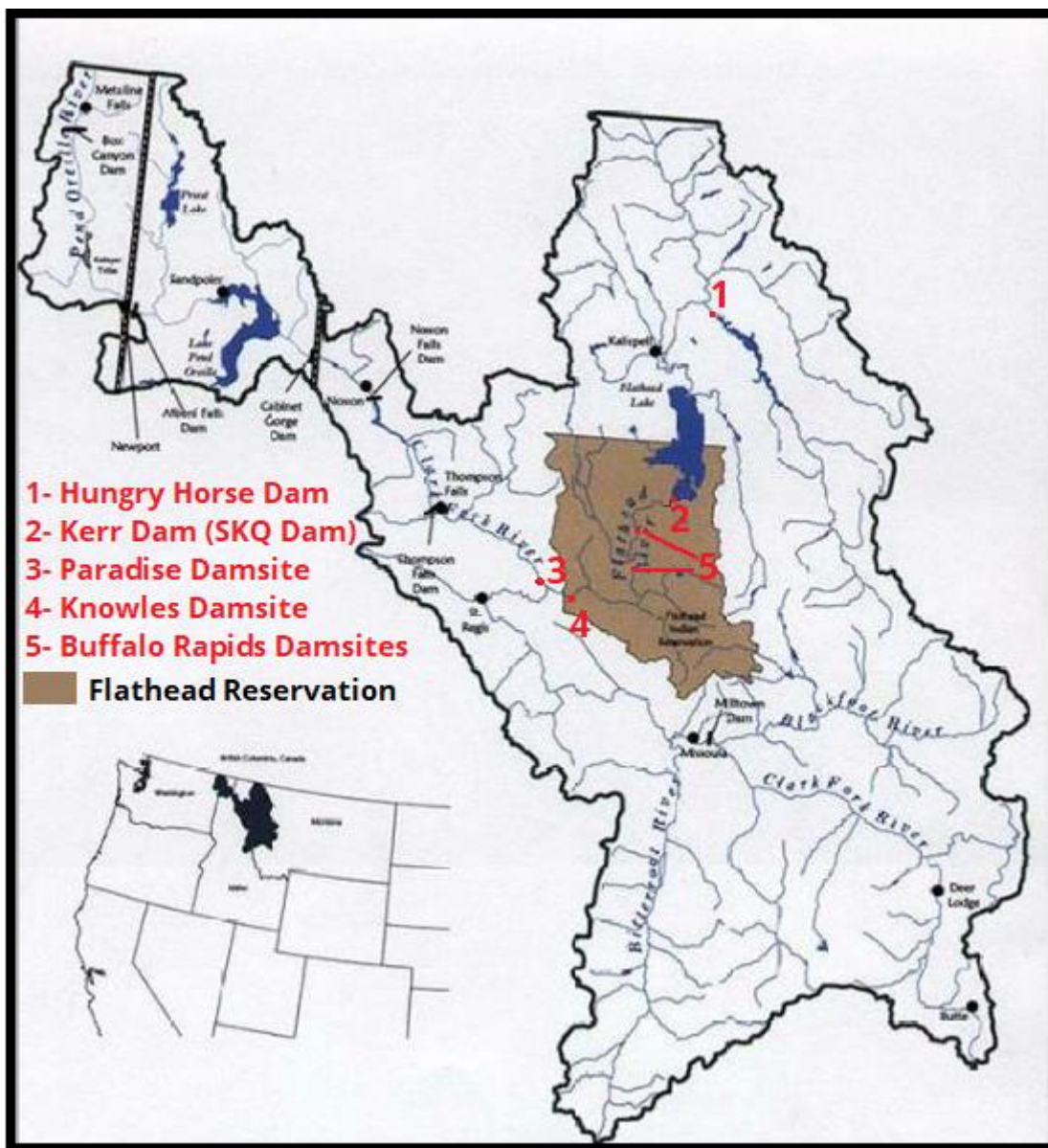


Figure 1.

Clark Fork Watershed. Original Image from The University of Montana Clark Fork Symposium, 2015. Edited by the Author.

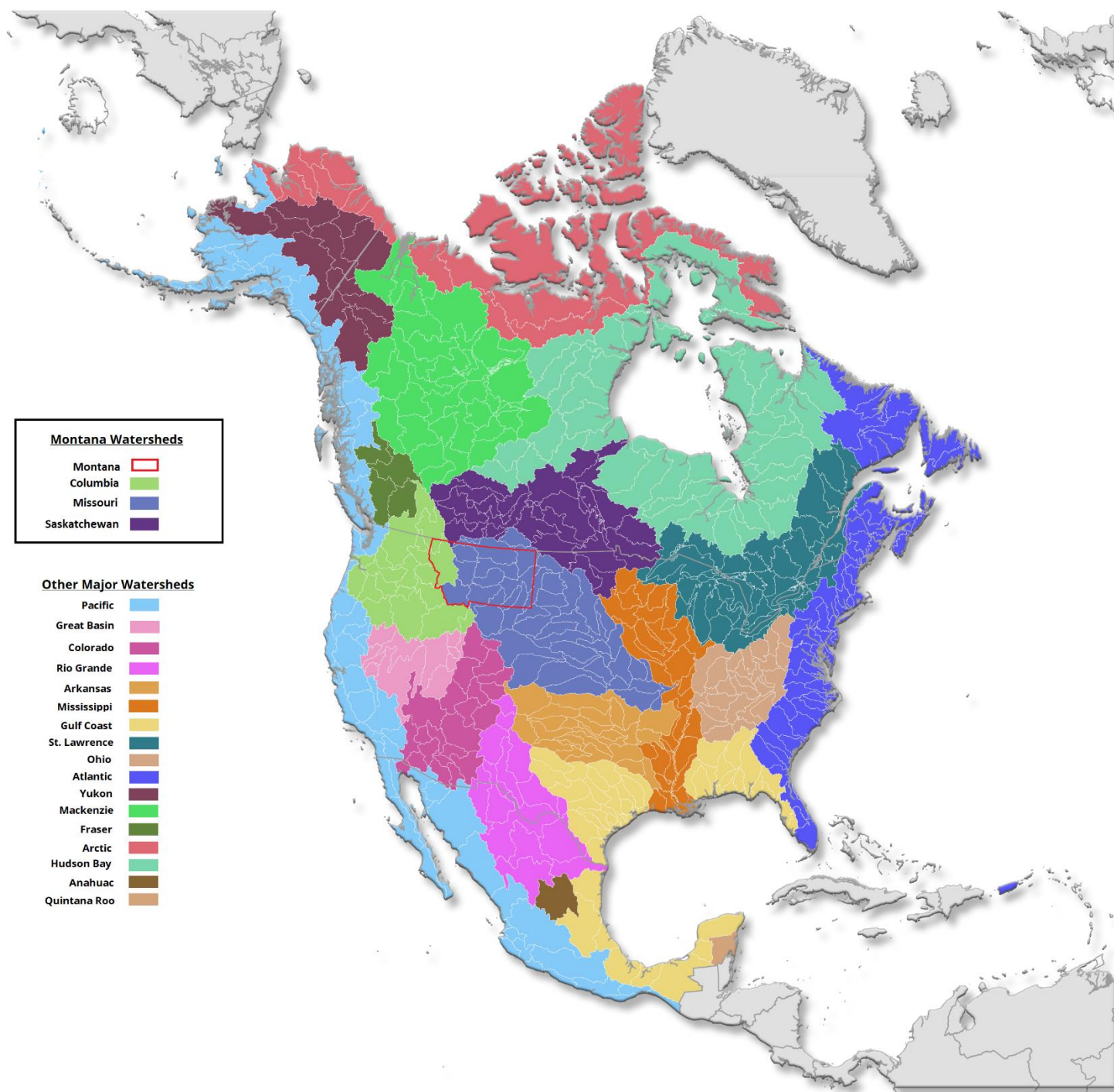


Figure 2.

Major Watersheds of North America. Created by the Author with imagery from United States Geological Survey.



Figure 3.

Columbia River Basin, produced by Wikimedia Commons user Knusser, April 7, 2008.
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Columbiarivermap.png>



Figure 4.

Missouri River Basin, produced by Wikimedia Commons user Shannon1, March 21, 2018.
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Missouri_River_basin_map.png

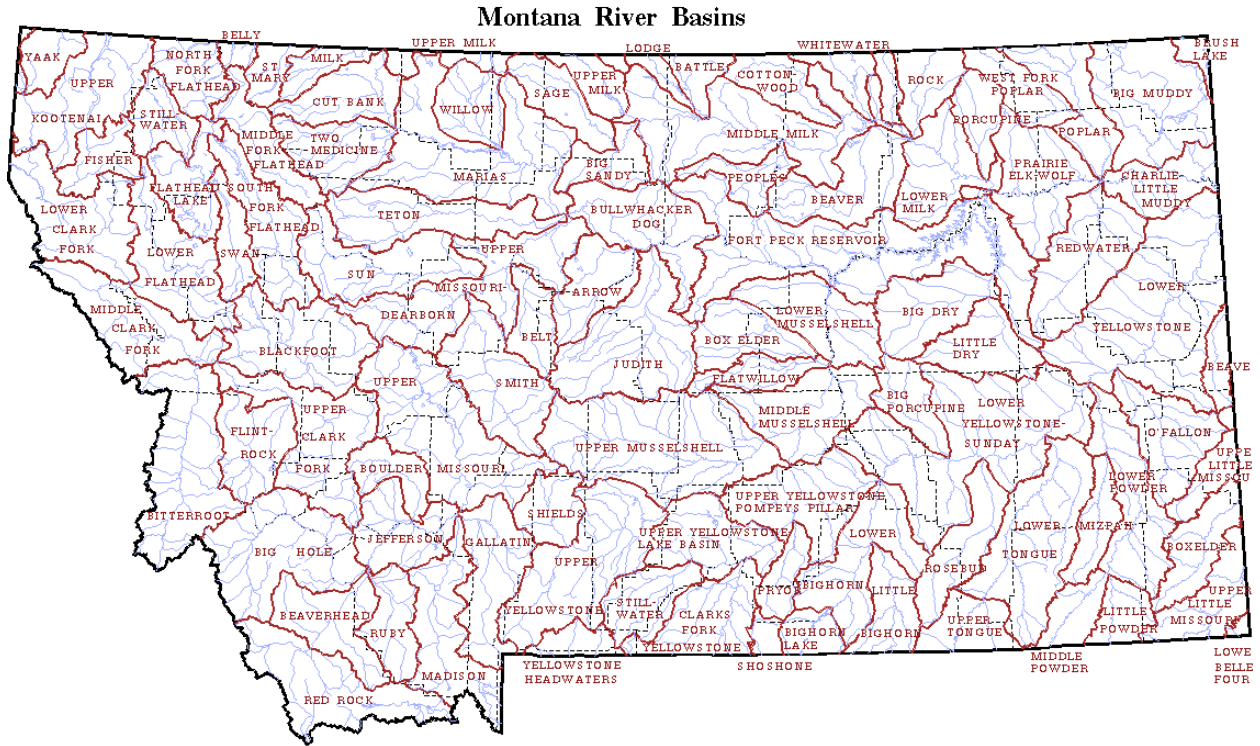


Figure 5.

Montana River Basin Subdivisions, produced by Bonneville Power Administration, 1991.
 Accessed through Montana State Library.

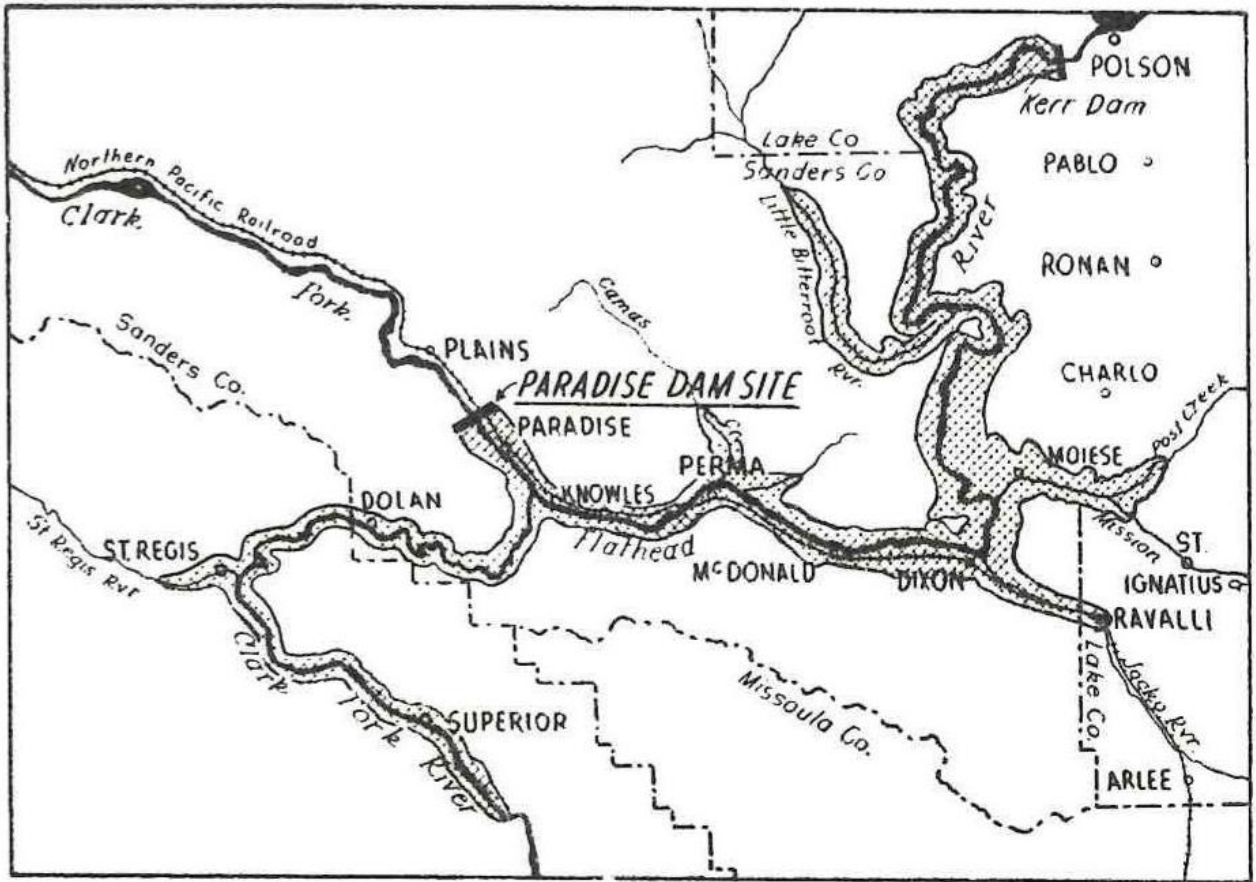


Figure 6.

The proposed Paradise Dam and Reservoir, as depicted by the UCDC. 1957. Winton Weydemeyer Papers, box 3, folder 3.

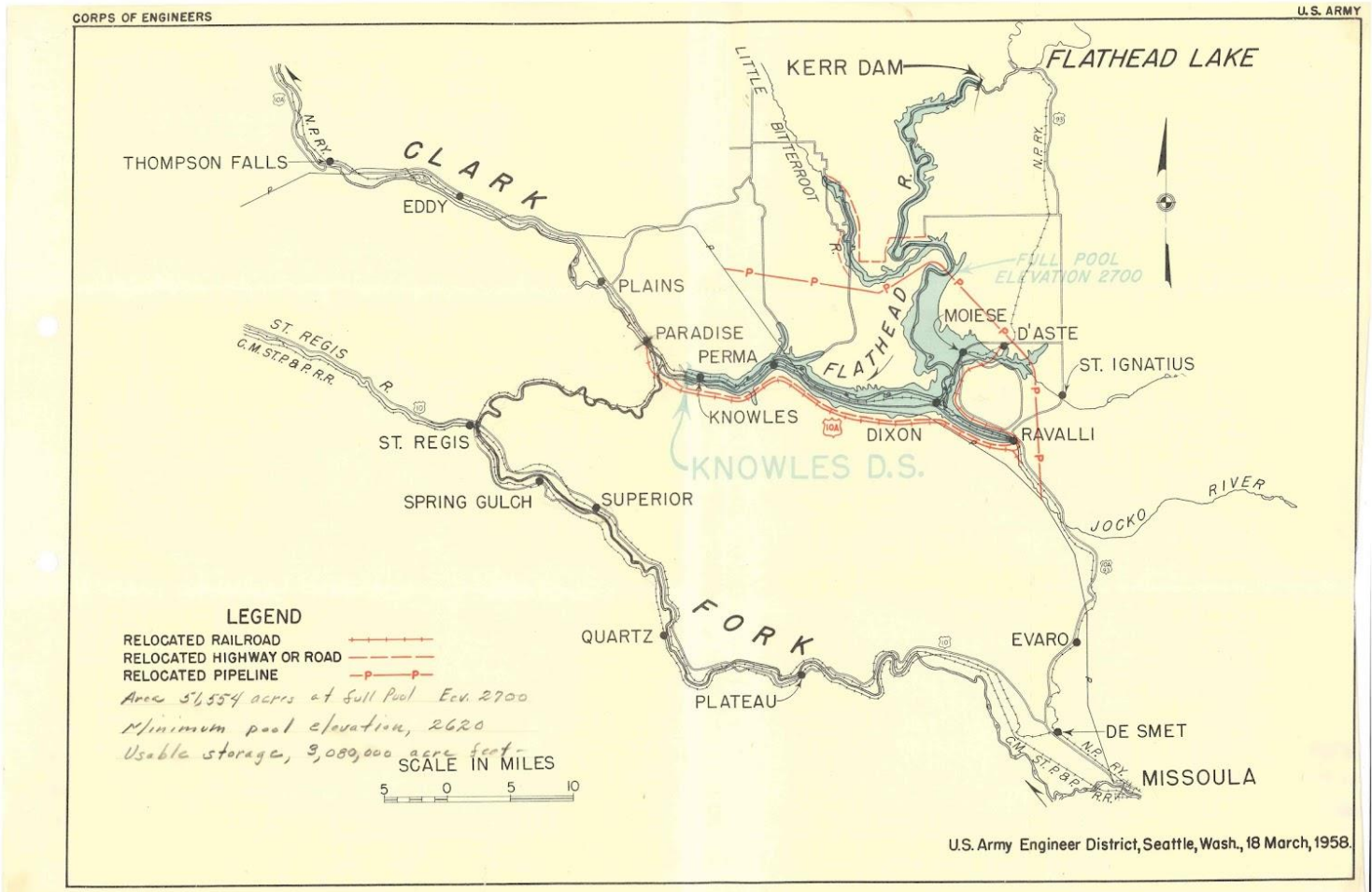


Figure 7.
 The proposed Knowles Reservoir, 1958. Montana Fisheries Division Records. Box 2, Folder 36,
 Montana Historical Society Archives, Helena, MT.

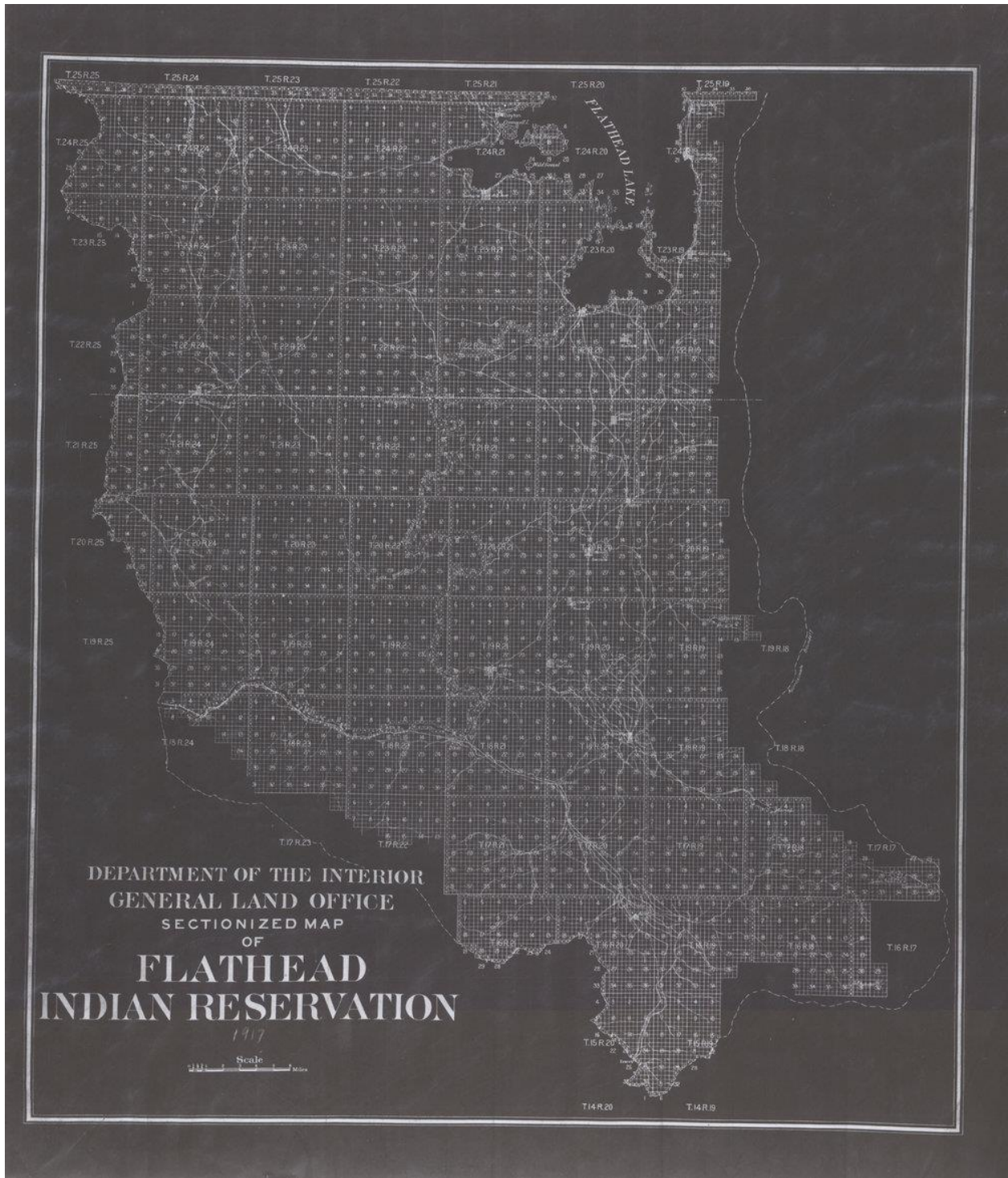


Figure 8.

Sectionized map of the Flathead Indian Reservation, divided into individual allotments, 1917. Mapping Montana and the West Collection, Montana Memory Project.

A Common Sense Fertile Valley-Saving, Flood Control Plan . . .

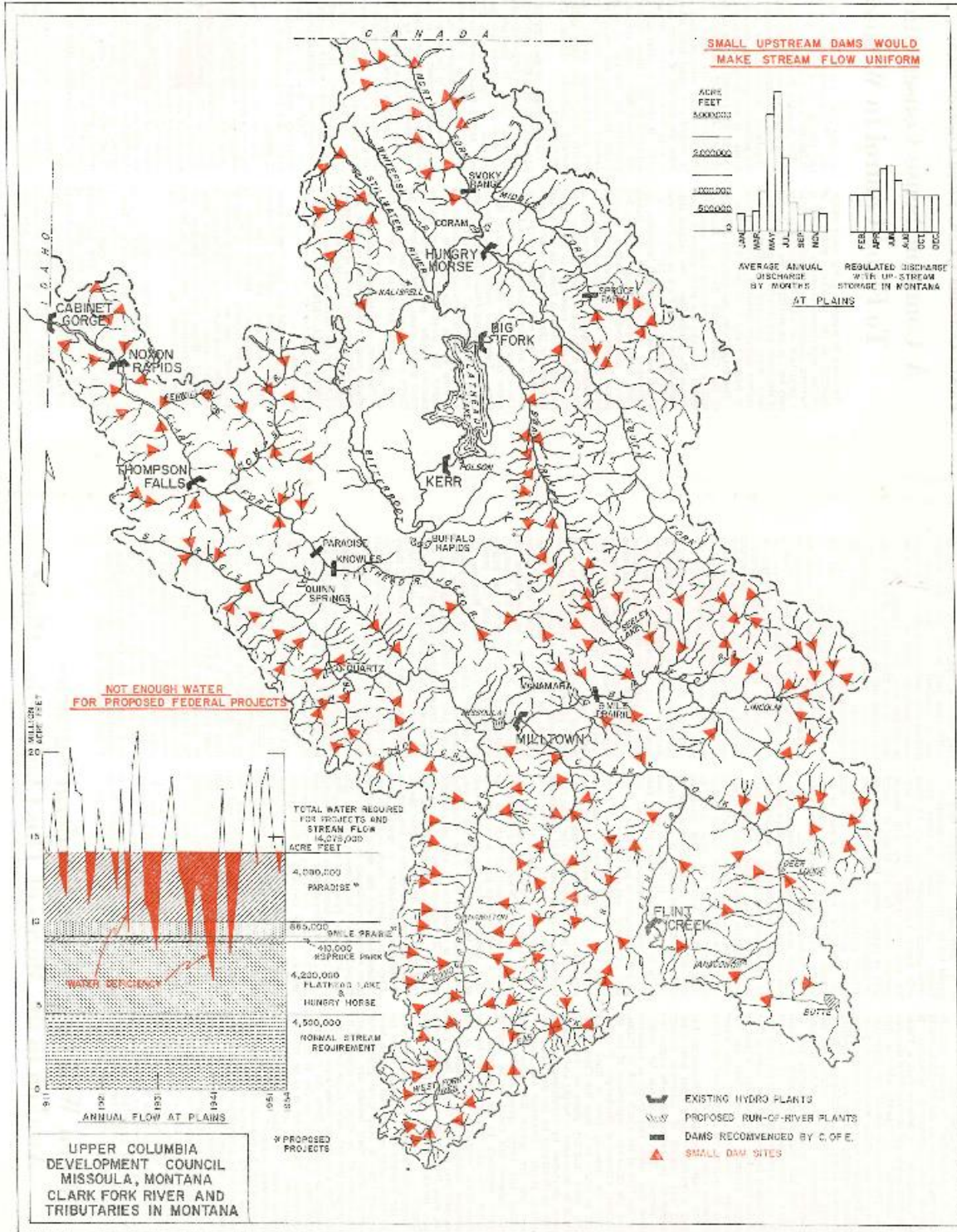
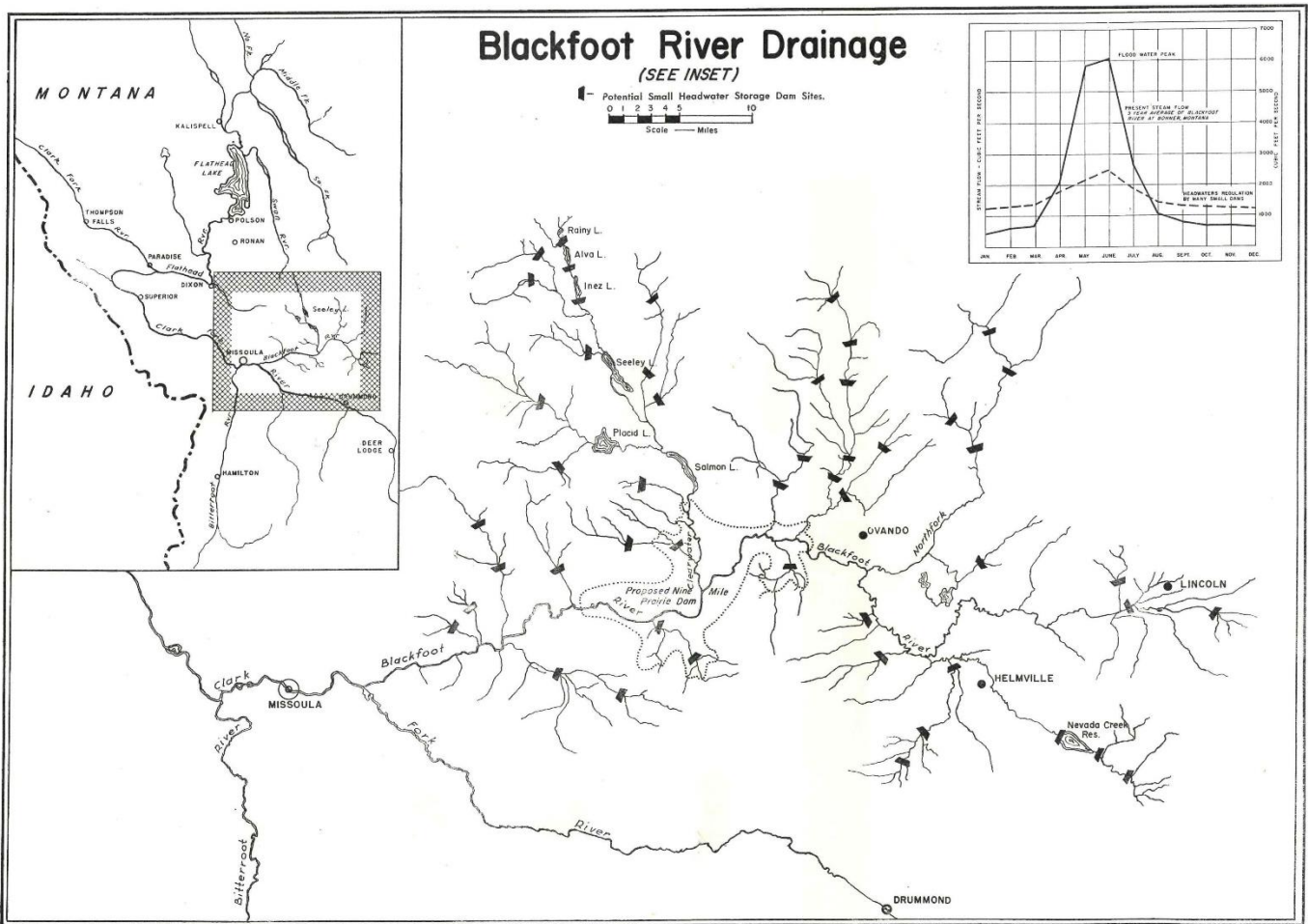


Figure 9. UCDC Common Sense Flood Control Plan, map of the Clark Fork Basin. Each orange triangle represents a proposed small dam. 1957. Winton Weydemeyer Papers, box 3, folder 3.



Cover Photo — Mud flat on Hungry Horse reservoir, typical of the unsightly conditions caused by heavy drawdown behind such big dams as Paradise.

PIIONEERPRINT—ROMAN

Figure 10. UCDC Common Sense Flood Control Plan map of the Blackfoot River Drainage with proposed small dams. 1957. Winton Weydemeyer Papers, box 3, folder 3.

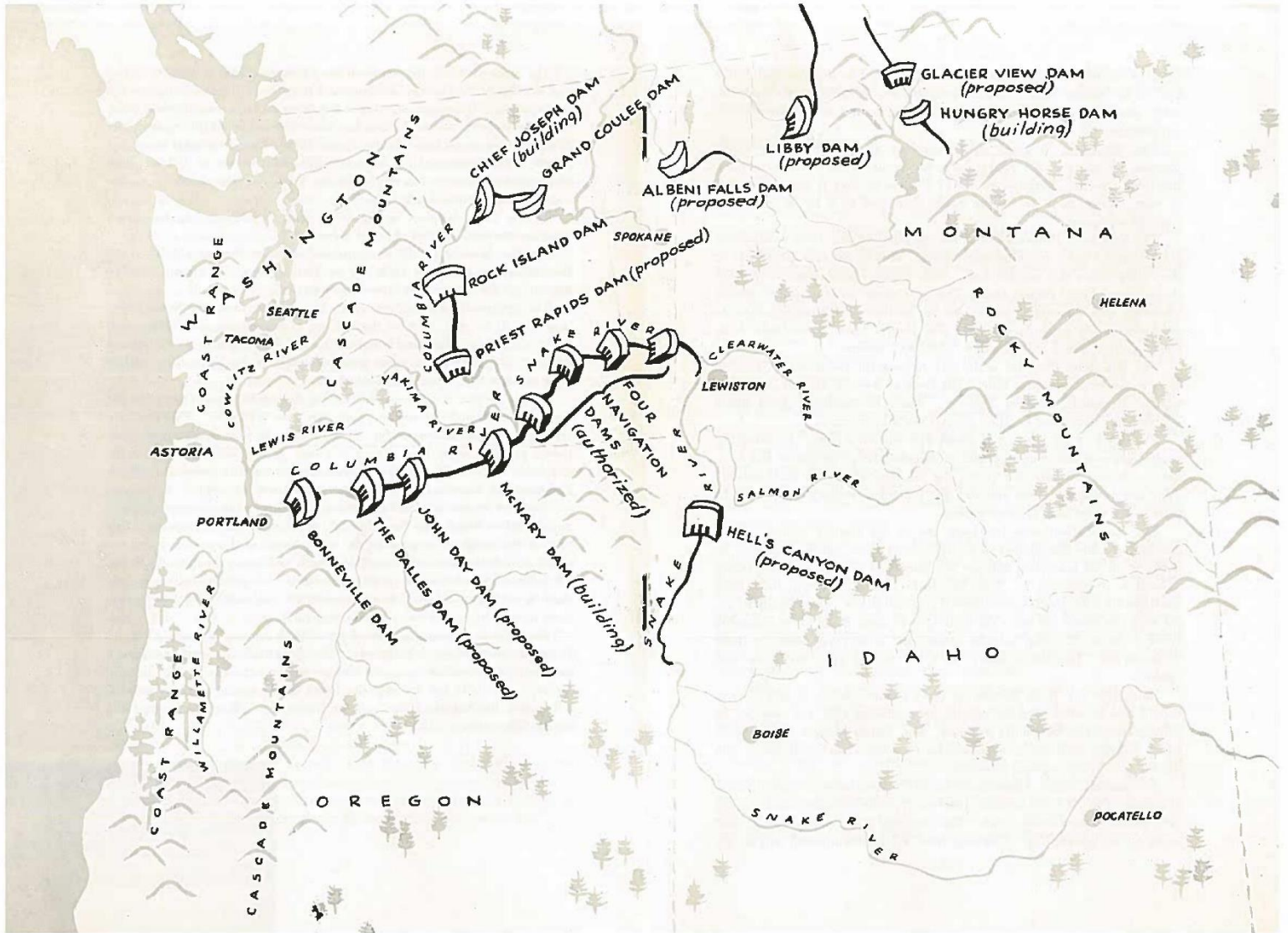


Figure 11. Map of proposed and existing CVA Dams from *Magnificent Columbia*. 1949. Mike Mansfield Papers, series 14, box 12, folder 10.

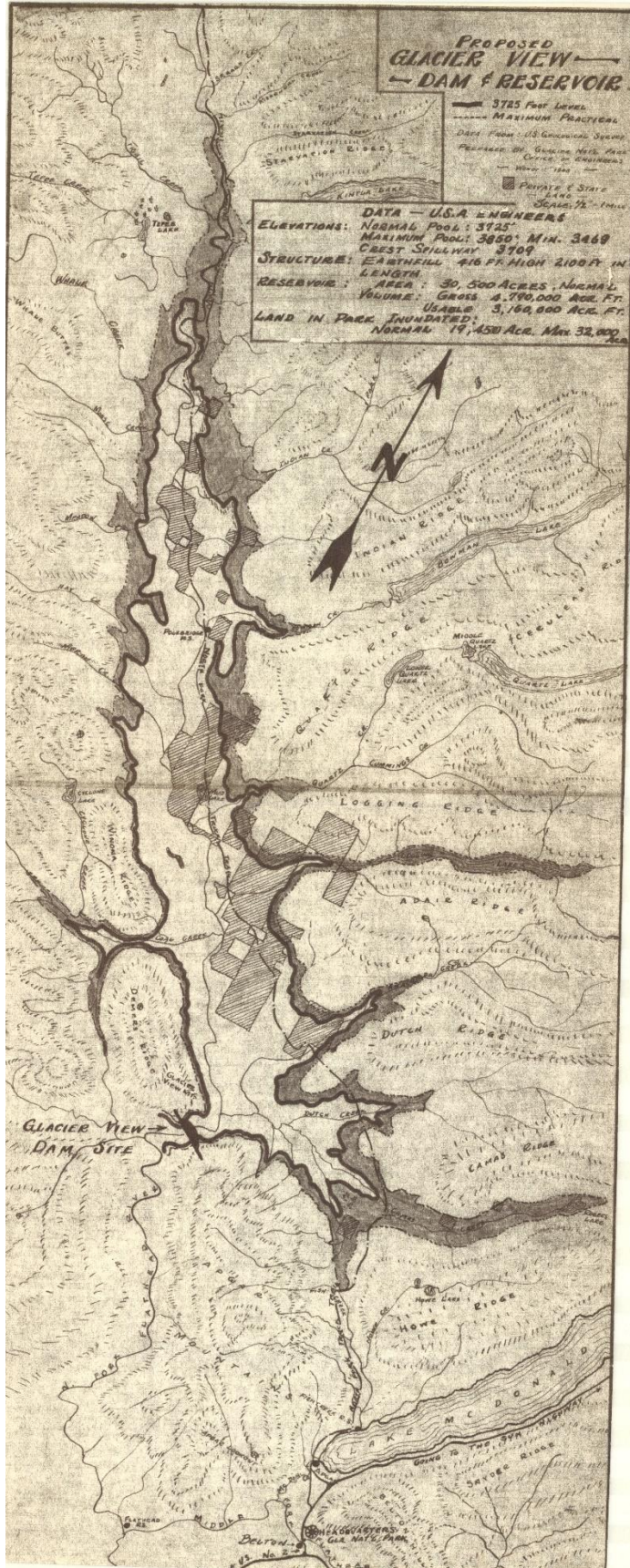


Figure 12. Footprint of proposed Glacier View Reservoir, 1948. Mike Mansfield Papers, series 17, box 223, folder 2.

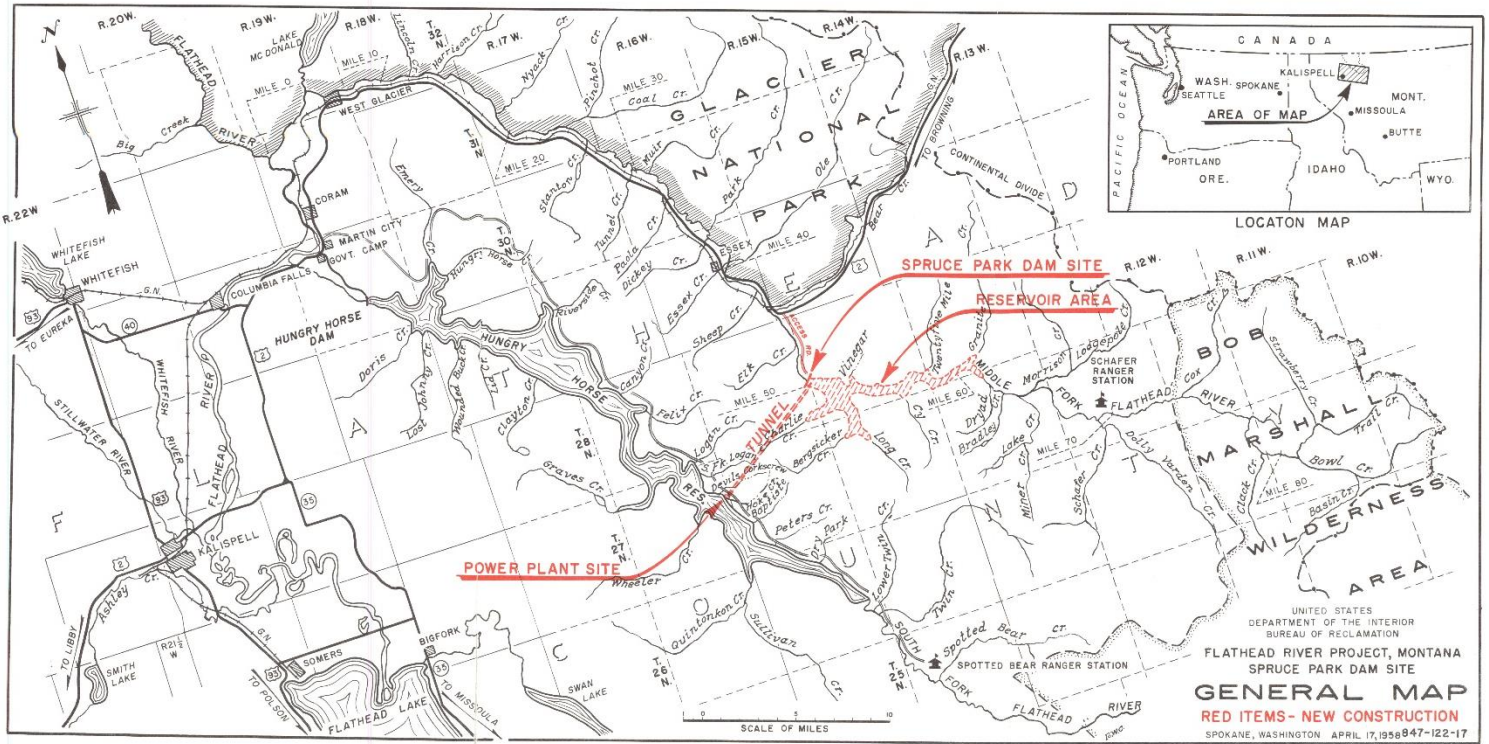


Figure 13.

Spruce Park Dam Proposal, 1958. Mike Mansfield Papers, series 17, box 223, folder 5.



Figure 14. Chief Koostahtah standing at the Place of Falling Water, future site of Kerr Dam. 1922. Paul Fugelberg Photograph Collection, Montana Memory Project.



Figure 15.
Kerr Dam Groundbreaking, 1932. Morton J. Elrod Photograph Collection,
Mansfield Library Archives, University of Montana.



Figure 16.

Aerial photograph of Kerr Dam, Flathead River, Montana, looking upriver. 1947. University of Montana Mansfield Library.



Figure 17.

Mike Mansfield speaking at Hungry Horse Dam dedication. 1952. Mike Mansfield Papers, series 37, 98-809.



Figure 18.

Hungry Horse Dam Dedication, 1952. L to R: H. Truman, C. H. Spencer, M. Mansfield. Mike Mansfield Papers, University of Montana, series 37.



Figure 19.

Loggers eating lunch in the Flathead National Forest, 1943. Low pay and inconsistent hours for men like these was what Mansfield hoped to solve with the Columbia Falls Aluminum plant, image from Anaconda Forest Products Company Records, University of Montana.

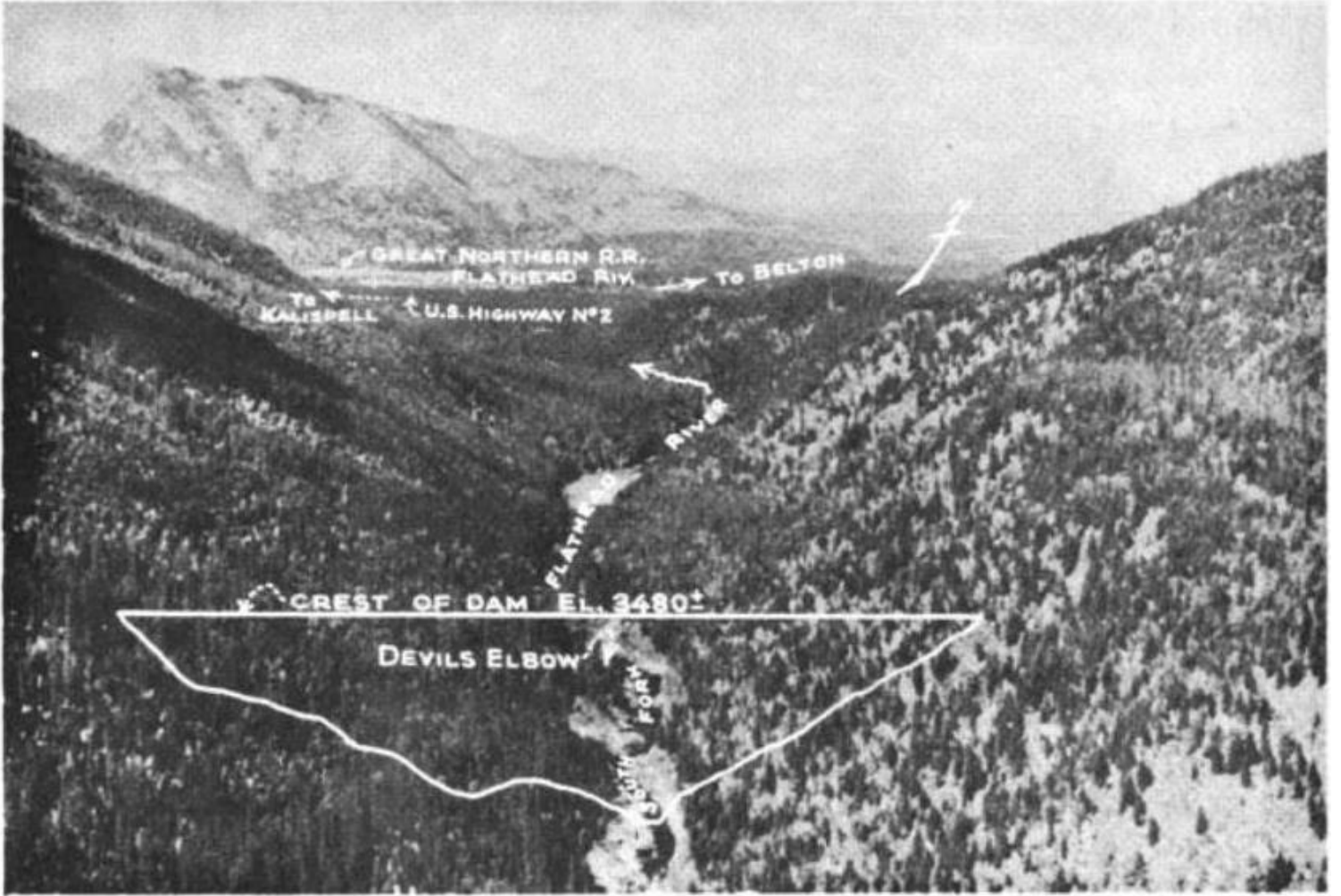


Figure 20.

Bureau of Reclamation Photo showing Hungry Horse Dam site, 1945; image from George Sundborg, *Economic Basis For Power Markets in Flathead County, Montana*, 4.



Figure 21.

Westbound locomotives of the Northern Pacific Railroad at Paradise, Montana. May, 1949. The canyon in which Paradise Dam would have been built can be seen in the center right of the photo. A.E. Bennett photo. Used with permission from american-rails.com

Read for Yourself

WHAT CVA MEANS

(Full text of S. 1645 reproduced from
the original with marginal comments)



"Sorry, gentlemen, but the directors say you don't know what's good for you!"

Figure 22.

Anti-CVA pamphlet, 1950. Mike Mansfield Papers, series 14, box 12, folder 10.

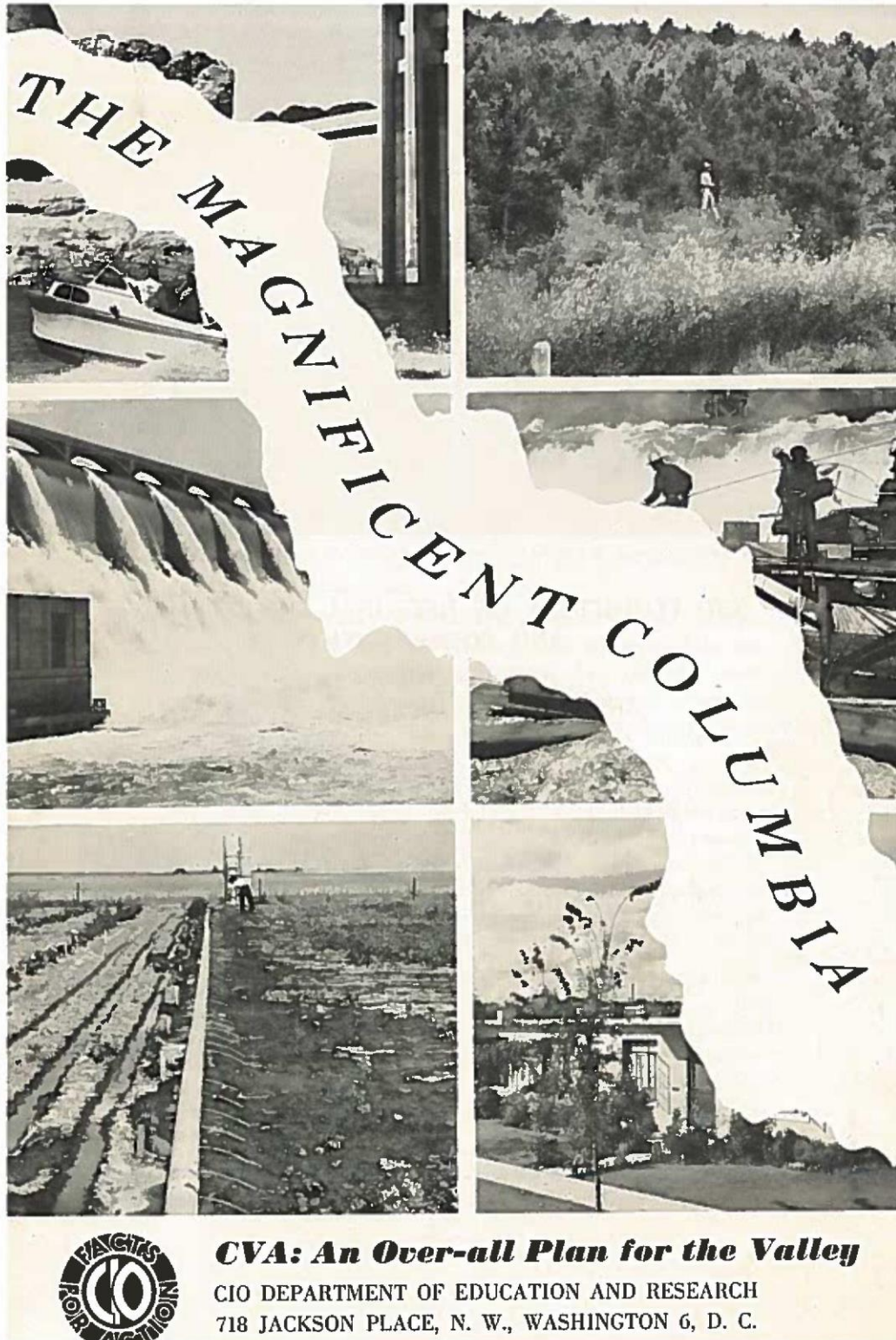
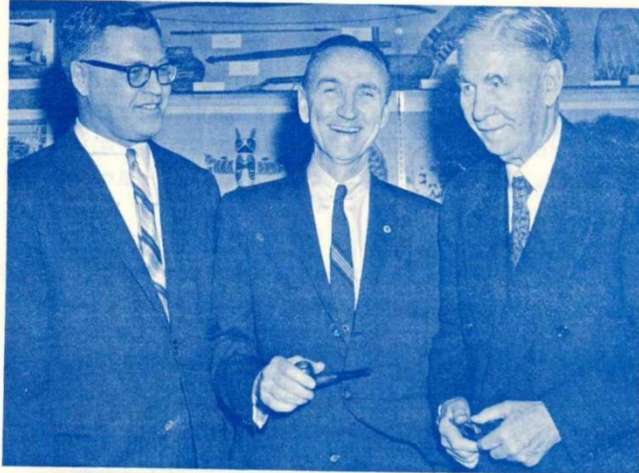


Figure 23.

Magnificent Columbia pamphlet, 1949. Mike Mansfield Papers, series 14, box 12, folder 10.



The 3-Ms, l. to r. Metcalf, Mansfield and Murray, chatted in front of the Interior Committee display of Indian artifacts prior to testifying for the Paradise-Knowles bill.

Figure 24.

Montana Congressmen chat ahead of a hearing, March 31, 1960.

Winton Weydemeyer Papers, box 1, folder 1.

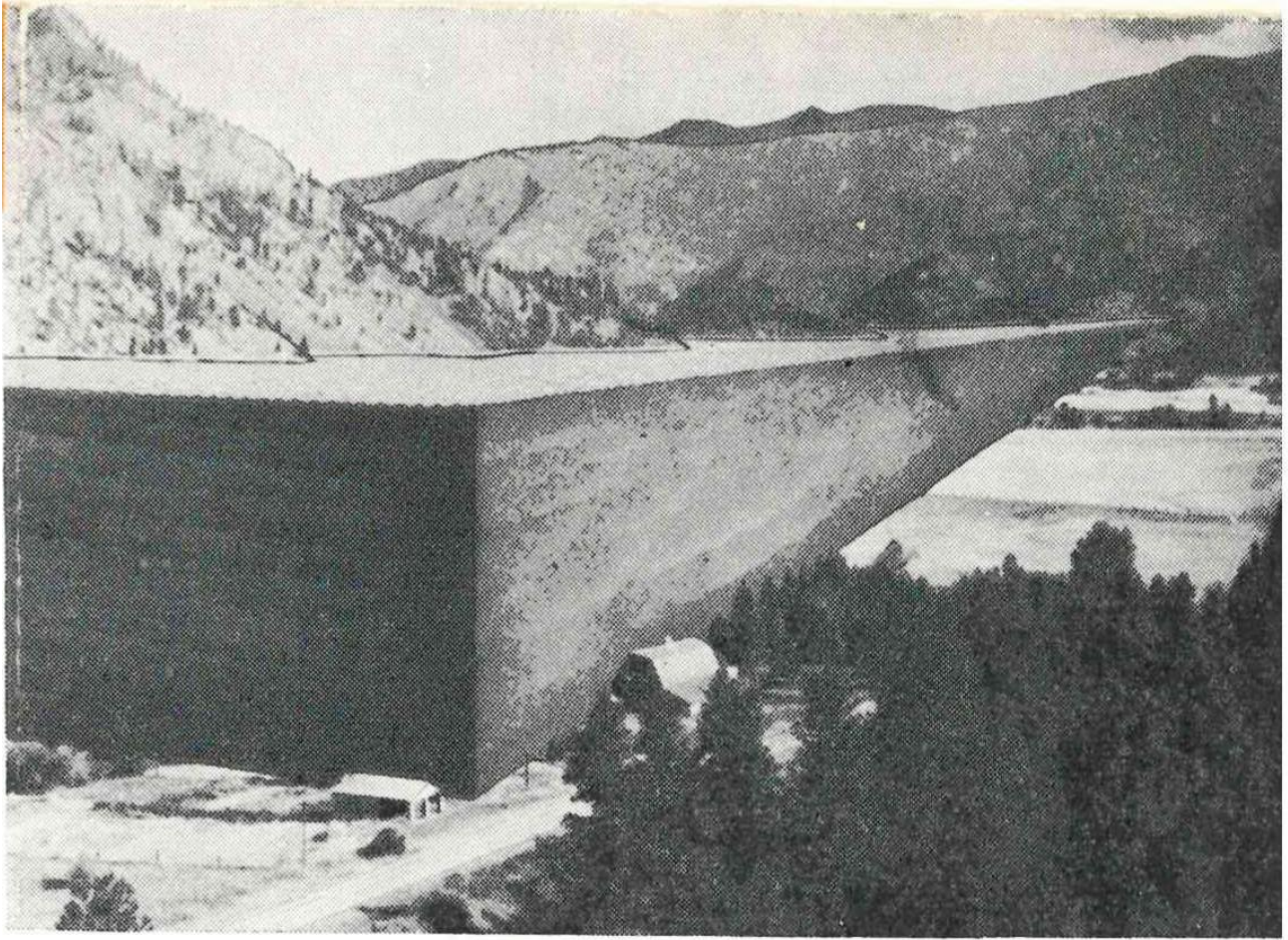


Figure 25.

Artist's depiction of the potential water column above Paradise, UCDC. 1957. Winton Weydemeyer Papers, box 3, folder 3.

What Paradise Dam Would Do . . .

FLOOD 66,132 ACRES OF LAND



DROWN 53 MILES OF RAILWAY

DESTROY 118 MILES OF ROAD



DISPLACE 3,500 PEOPLE

CAUSE ANNUAL TAX LOSS OF \$700,000
TO THREE COUNTIES



FLOOD ONE-THIRD OF NATIONAL BISON RANGE

OBLITERATE LUMBER AND
SAWMILL OPERATIONS



VIOLATE TREATY RIGHTS OF 4,500 INDIANS

SUBSTITUTE ROUGH FISH FOR
EXCELLENT FISHING AND HUNTING



ROB MONTANA TO BENEFIT
DOWNSTREAM STATES

and . . . COST THE TAXPAYERS OF
THE U. S. OVER ONE-HALF BILLION DOLLARS

Figure 26.

UCDC pamphlet, 1957. Winton Weydemeyer Papers, box 3, folder 3.

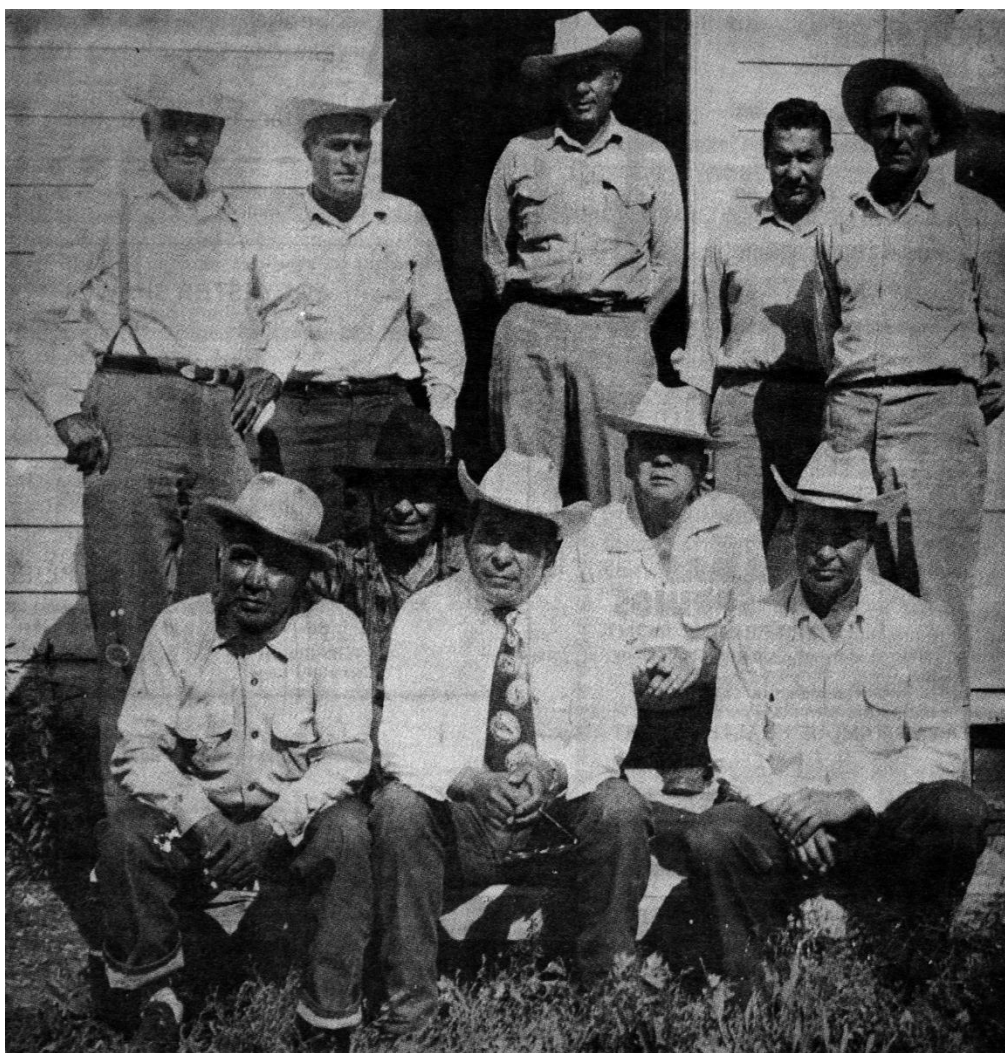


Figure 27.

Members of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes at the Arlee Community Center. Jerome Hewankorn and Walter Morigeau are the first two from the left in the front row. 1978. *Char-Koosta* 8, no. 13, November 1978.



Figure 28.

A view of McDonald Peak in what in 1982 became the Mission Mountains Tribal Wilderness.
1949. Rollin H. McKay Photographs, University of Montana.



Figure 29

The Flathead River at Knowles, Photo by the author, March 2022.

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