RECLAMATION AWARDS CONTRACT FOR CONSTRUCTION OF BLUE MESA DAM AND POWERPLANT, COLORADO

Award of a $13,706,230 Bureau of Reclamation contract for construction of Blue Mesa Dam and Powerplant in western Colorado, major features of the Curecanti Unit of the Colorado River Storage Project, was announced today by the Department of the Interior.

Curecanti is the fourth authorized storage unit embracing a vast program to store and regulate the flows of the Upper Colorado River for widespread beneficial use.

Over three hundred people attended the opening of seven bids for the prime construction contract at Gunnison, Colorado. Low bidder, and recipient of the contract award, is Tecon Corporation, Dallas, Texas. This firm, under the name of Texas Construction Company, previously constructed Kirwin and Webster Dams in Kansas for the Bureau of Reclamation.

Second low bidder, under Bureau of Reclamation Specification No. DC-5735, was Vinnell Corporation, Alhambra, California, with an offer of $13,839,827. Third low was a bid of $14,899,153 submitted by Merritt-Chapman and Scott Corporation, New York, New York.

Blue Mesa Dam will be constructed on the Gunnison River about 25 miles west of the town of Gunnison. The earthfill structure, containing 3 million cubic yards of material, will rise approximately 340 feet above the stream bed to an elevation of 7,528 feet and will have a crest length of 800 feet. The dam will form a reservoir extending 19 miles upstream, with a capacity of 915,000 acre-feet. Blue Mesa Powerplant, to be constructed at the toe of the dam, will have two hydraulic-driven generating units with a combined capacity of 60,000 kilowatts.
Other work to be performed under the contract includes construction of a concrete spillway consisting of gate structure and tunnel, and concrete outlet works consisting of intake structure, tunnel, and stilling basin. Because of the high altitude and severity of the winters, an air system will be installed to prevent the formation of ice around the gate structures. Blue Mesa Dam is scheduled for completion in June 1966, with initial storage in November 1965.

Authorization of the Curecanti Unit also includes Morrow Point Dam and Powerplant, downstream from Blue Mesa Dam. The contract for construction of Morrow Point Dam and Powerplant will be awarded in 1963. Together, the two powerplants will have a combined capacity of 100,000 kilowatts.

The Curecanti Unit is one of four major storage units of the five-State Colorado River Storage Project. Water storage provided by the Curecanti Unit and the three other key structures of the Colorado River Storage Project—Glen Canyon Dam in northern Arizona, Flaming Gorge Dam in northeastern Utah, and Navajo Dam in New Mexico—will permit the four Upper Basin States to develop projects to serve irrigation and municipal and industrial needs on "participating projects" on tributary streams, and still meet downstream water delivery commitments.

The billion-dollar Colorado project also will provide impressive collateral benefits, including water recreation, fish and wildlife propagation, hydropower production, and sedimentation control in a semi-arid area larger than New England.