BLUE MESA DAM AND POWERPLANT CONSTRUCTION NOW COMPLETE

With the placing of the second of Blue Mesa's two 30,000 kilowatt generators "on the line", construction of the Bureau of Reclamation's Blue Mesa Dam and Powerplant on the Gunnison River in western Colorado is now substantially complete, the Department of the Interior said today.

The 60,000-kilowatt powerplant at the toe of the 342-foot high dam is the last feature of the project to be finished. Plans call for remote operation and control of the powerplant from the Power Operations Center of the Colorado River Storage Project in Montrose, Colorado.

Blue Mesa Dam and Powerplant is a major feature of the Curecanti Unit, one of the four main storage units of the Colorado River Storage Project. The dam itself was completed in December 1965. It is a wedge of 3,080,000 cubic yards of earth and rock, 1,600 feet wide at its base and gently sloping to a narrow crest width of 30 feet. Colorado Highway 92, the Black Mesa Highway, crosses the crest of the dam.

Blue Mesa Reservoir's 940,000 acre-foot capacity provides storage for surplus flows of the Gunnison River at an elevation of about 7,520 feet high in the mountains. When filled to capacity, the reservoir will be the largest lake in Colorado with a surface area of 9,200 acres. Since storage began in December 1965, many thousands of boaters and fishermen have discovered the recreation pleasures of the new reservoir. Blue Mesa Reservoir now contains 401,200 acre-feet of water and extends approximately 19 miles upstream from the dam. The Curecanti Recreation Area, which includes the new lake, is administered by the National Park Service.

Other features of the Curecanti Unit are Morrow Point Dam and Powerplant and Crystal Dam and Powerplant, all on the Gunnison River. Morrow Point Dam, a thin-arch concrete structure 12 river miles downstream from Blue Mesa Dam, has been topped out. The underground Morrow Point Powerplant, however, will not be ready to generate power until about 1970. Crystal Dam, the farthest downstream of the three dams, has not been started.