STATEMENT

of

PROSPECTIVE IRRIGATION AND DOMESTIC WATER USERS

UNDER THE COLLBRAN PROJECT, COLORADO,

Presented By

James K. Groves, Grand Junction, Colorado

February 10, 1954

I am an attorney in general practice and I represent the City of Grand Junction, the Collbran Project Committee, the Plateau Valley Water Association, the Clifton Water District and the East Orchard Mesa Fire Protection District.

The Collbran Project was authorized on July 3, 1952 by Public Law 445, 82nd Congress, 2nd Session. The area involved is the north portion of Grand Mesa (a mountain of about 10,000 feet elevation), irrigated and prospectively irrigated lands in Plateau Valley (of an elevation of approximately 6,200 feet just to the north of Grand Mesa), and the Colorado River Valley of Mesa County, Colorado, embracing the City of Grand Junction, several towns, rather heavily populated sections in rural communities and 76,000 acres of land needing piped domestic and stock water (of an elevation of about 4,700 feet and lying west of Plateau Valley 30 to 60 miles). The present, estimated cost of the Project is
$17,089,000.00, allocated as follows:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Irrigation</td>
<td>$6,043,000.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Domestic Water</td>
<td>$3,603,000.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>$7,324,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish and Wildlife</td>
<td>$119,000.00</td>
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Total: $17,089,000.00

This statement has been authorized by the Colllbran Project Committee which is composed of representatives of the following:

a. Plateau Valley Water Association - an informal organization of all of the ranchers and stockmen in Plateau Valley, being approximately 300 in number and being the owners of the lands to be benefited by the irrigation phase of the Project.

b. The City of Grand Junction - having a population approximately of 18,000 and an estimated fringe area population of 8,000.

c. Clifton Water District - a suburban and farming area embracing 15 square miles and estimated population of 750, formally organized for the purpose of being a contracting entity under the Project.

d. East Orchard Mesa Fire Protection District - embracing a peach orchard and general farming area approximately of 2,000 acres, whose residents appear ready to organize a water district if the Project is constructed.

e. The residents of the remaining areas in the Colorado River Valley (except the town of Palisade) embracing several suburban areas, 62,000 acres and approximately 7,000 population.

The Project involves the following general features:

a. Construction of Vega Reservoir in Plateau Valley to impound 33,500 acre-feet of water, mostly
spring run-off flow, and a 29.2 mile canal leading therefrom, to provide additional irrigation water for 18,340 acres of land, irrigation water for 2,310 acres of land which now has no water, and replacement of decreed irrigation water to be taken high on the mountain for power and domestic purposes.

b. Construction of pipelines commencing at lakes and streams on or near the top of the mountain which lead through two hydro-electric plants and terminate four miles northeast of Grand Junction, Colorado, delivering 12.8 million gallons of water per day. The power plants have a total capacity of 7,500 kilowatts. This piped water will be available for domestic use in the Colorado River Valley, including livestock watering in the winter time, permitting livestock feeding for which the valley is ideally situated except for the absence of such water.

c. Possible piped domestic water for sections of Plateau Valley which now largely waters livestock from open ditches with resulting waste of water from open ditches with resulting waste of water in the winter time from icing conditions.

The Bureau of Reclamation has proposed that repayment of the cost of the project be as follows:

Irrigation Users - $1,200,000.00 without interest over a period of 50 years;

Domestic Users - $3,603,000.00 with interest at the prevailing rate, over a period of 50 years;

Power - $7,324,000.00 with interest at the rate of 3% over a period of 50 years, plus $4,343,000.00 of costs allocated to irrigation users over an additional period of 17 years;

Fish and Wildlife - $119,000.00 (non-reimbursable cost).

In addition, annual operations, maintenance, and replacement costs are estimated at $97,744.00 with tentative allocation
as follows:

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<th>Item</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>Domestic Water</td>
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<td>Power</td>
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<td></td>
<td>$39,700.00</td>
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In 1936 and 1937 various prospective irrigation users in Plateau Valley requested the Bureau of Reclamation to make studies of potential irrigation development of Plateau Valley. Studies were made between 1937 and December, 1944, at which time a field office draft of the Project was issued and the City of Grand Junction requested that the studies be extended to consideration of municipal water supplies. In March, 1945, certain residents of rural areas of the Colorado River Valley requested inclusion in studies of domestic water for these areas. In November, 1949, the Bureau issued a planning report on the present general plan of the Project and, commencing with that time, the land owners, residents and political subdivisions affected have held at least 200 meetings to consider and take action with reference to the Project and modifications thereof suggested from time to time by the Bureau. Following Congressional authorization of the Project on July 3, 1952, and in November, 1952, a definite plan report was approved by the Commissioner of Reclamation. Work by prospective users was then continued along the following lines:
a. Discussion and tentative approval of the definite plan report and modifications made subsequent to November, 1952.

b. The creation of a conservancy district under Colorado Statutes to embrace all areas of use involved in the Project, which district it is contemplated will be the principal contracting unit with the United States.

c. The commencement of general water adjudication proceedings to establish existing private water rights and enable the determination that there was sufficient additional water available to justify the Project.

d. An agreement or satisfactory decree of Court as to the appropriation-priority date of water to be used in the Project which would be such that existing rights of private water users would not be affected and the Project would be protected.

During the past four or five years construction prices have been increasing and each report of the Bureau showed greater costs of the Project, with the result that prospective users had to reconsider the Project in the light of proposed increases in the cost of both irrigation and domestic water to be furnished. As nearly as can be accomplished in its present status, the various users except the City of Grand Junction have indicated a continuing need and willingness to proceed with the Project under the last cost figures submitted. Petitions addressed to the District Court of the Seventh Judicial District of Colorado for the creation of the proposed conservancy district have been signed by approximately 2,600 land owners, being far more than those needed under the Statute. These petitions are now being processed for accuracy
of land descriptions, signatures and assessed valuations, and it is believed that they will be filed in court by April 1, 1954 and that the district will be created and ready to function as a legal entity sometime during the summer of 1954.

A general water adjudication was commenced on February 2, 1952, and testimony has been presented in it almost weekly since that time, with the result that practically all testimony of users has been presented except that to be offered by the United States in support of its claim for this Project. It is understood that the Department of Justice has delayed presentation of testimony as to this claim until a conclusion has been reached by it and the Bureau of Reclamation as to the Project water appropriation-priority date and that an attempt is being made to arrive at a date which will protect existing users and the Project. As soon as the Government presents its testimony, the Court will be in position to enter a decree in the proceedings.

As a result of the uranium mining and milling industry, industrial development and other factors, the City of Grand Junction must add to its existing water supply and, therefore, it has been intensely interested in the Collbran Project. As a matter of fact, the City will have to supplement its supply of water, perhaps on a temporary basis, until such time as it obtains water from the Project. By May, 1953,
the City Council of Grand Junction became reasonably satisfied that the irrigation users and other domestic water users under the Project would perform their full share under the Project and that the largest, immediate problem in connection with the Project was whether Grand Junction should and would fulfill its obligations in the matter. It would seem that in order to assure full repayment of costs the City of Grand Junction should take and assume approximately two-thirds of the domestic water produced and of the domestic water share of costs. In addition and simultaneously, the City will have to construct a reservoir at the terminus of the Project pipeline and considerable transportation facilities therefrom, and possibly filtration facilities. Until this time the City Council had regarded, and still regards, the Collbran Project as the solution to the City's water problems, but this conclusion has been based upon its past water studies which, while very expensive, are still incomplete. The City Council has urged Grand Junction citizens to cooperate in the creation of the conservancy district now pending, in which the entire City is included, because the Collbran Project held forth real promise and, to go much further with it, there must be a legally organized entity to unite the many factors in the Project and to negotiate and contract with the United States. However, quite properly, this City Council concluded that its existing studies must be completed.
for two principal reasons: (1) that the citizenry could be assured that the Colbriam Project would produce additional water required at a cost which is not more than that resulting from the development of any other water sources (the City derives its present water from the south end of Grand Mesa and, presumably, by storage of flood waters there at costs still unknown, could make available needed water for it but not for other areas); and (2) in fairness both to the United States and the other users under the Project, the City should not advocate the expenditure of any further substantial amounts of government and local funds in connection with the Project until it could assure everyone that it was ready to contract for this water and meet its obligations in respect thereto.

Consequently, in May, 1953 it employed Clifford Jex, one of the recognized water engineering authorities in western Colorado, to complete its studies and to advise the City as to the comparative advantages and disadvantages of the Colbriam Project and other sources of water. Mr. Jex accepted this position early in June, 1953 and commenced his investigations. By October, 1953 substantial issues arose between users on the Eastern and Western Slopes of the Continental Divide concerning certain features and prospective additions to the Colorado River Storage Project, which is now being considered by the Congress. Engineers with quali-
fications and background of experience on the Western Slope with respect to this particular type of water work are indeed in scarce quantity. In October, 1953 certain agencies of the Western Slope of Colorado called Grand Junction's attention to their pressing need for Mr. Jex' services in connection with these Colorado River Storage Project matters and presented an urgent request that the City release him to them. The City did so upon the express condition that prior to the summer of 1954 Mr. Jex would return to the City's employ for sufficient time to complete his research and studies and present a full report to the City. It is anticipated that he will so return within a month or two and that his report will be submitted by the end of summer, 1954, shortly after which it is contemplated the City Council of the City of Grand Junction will determine and state whether it is ready to participate in this Project or that it cannot do so.

The need of our land for the Project water is as great today as at the time the Project was authorized 19 months ago. The need for domestic water of the Project is more acute and pressing than it was then. The users of all phases of the Project, except the City of Grand Junction for the reasons above mentioned, have a greater support and desire for the Project than at any previous time (testimony before
appropriate committees prior to authorization will disclose ample support and desire at that time). All power produced by the Project can be sold for sufficient and prevailing prices. It would seem to be a situation that, ordinarily, would justify an appropriation to permit the Bureau of Reclamation to prepare its final plans and specifications and perform other preliminary work in the Project.

Frankly, while we may be in error, we suspect that if you were asked to do so, you would recommend the appropriation of funds for use by the Bureau in the coming fiscal year to prepare plans and specifications and to perform other preliminary work. However, our ranchers, stockmen and residents, while wanting this water almost desperately, nevertheless have perhaps a unique principle that, until we can assure you that we can do our full part in the construction and the use of this Project, we cannot in good conscience ask the expenditure of further government money with a possibility, even though quite remote, that the Project would not come into being and the money would be wasted.

It is anticipated that the coming year will be a full one for us in this connection with completion of organization of our conservancy district, completion of the water adjudication proceedings, creation of several sub-districts within the conservancy district, determination by the City of Grand Junction as to its position, and negotiations of many
contracts among ourselves and with the United States. We have every expectation that we will be in position to return to you a year from now and with an honest gleam in our eye say, "We are ready to go ahead with this Project - it is feasible - it should be constructed - and we will repay the cost." We are most hopeful that you will then give our request favorable consideration. Since our own consciences will not permit us to guess at results, we merely state to you now that we want and need this Project badly; our experience with the Grand Valley Water Users Association, the Orchard Mesa Irrigation District and the United States in connection with the Grand Valley Reclamation Project constructed over forty years ago, have been sound and good and prove to us that there can be economy and real welfare in projects carefully planned and constructed; and when we place our house in order we will be knocking at your door.