UDALL HAILS BILL TO AUTHORIZE LARGEST HYDRO POWERPLANT IN WORLD AT GRAND COULEE DAM IN WASHINGTON

Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall today hailed the signing of a bill by President Johnson authorizing the construction of a third powerhouse at Grand Coulee Dam on the Columbia River in Washington that would again make the world famous dam the largest producer of hydroelectric power in the world. The third powerhouse would increase the capacity of the dam to 5.6 million kilowatts.

"This is a very timely project and a completely logical next development of the resources of the Columbia River," Secretary Udall said. "The Third Powerplant at Grand Coulee will take full advantage of the improved streamflows that will result from the construction of upriver dams to be built under the treaty with Canada for joint development of the Columbia River, and will make efficient use of the Pacific Northwest-Pacific Southwest Intertie."

"Economically the Grand Coulee Third Powerplant is a gold mine," Secretary Udall said. "Annual revenues from the sale of power will exceed by nearly $4 million a year the annual sums required to repay, with interest, the capital investment as well as all operating costs. These revenues will enable the Columbia Basin Account, authorized in this legislation, to help finance other beneficial water resource developments throughout the states of the Columbia River Basin. Here we have a hydroelectric project that benefits everyone and harms nobody. President Johnson has assured me that he will ask Congress for construction funds immediately."
Commissioner of Reclamation Floyd E. Dominy said that installation of the Third Powerplant at Grand Coulee Dam will make the most effective use of the hydroelectric potential of the site to meet the growing power requirements of the Pacific Northwest. "The long range situation on hydropower potential and requirements in the Northwest has changed dramatically with the ratification of the Columbia River Treaty and the start of construction on the Pacific Northwest-Pacific Southwest Intertie," Commissioner Dominy said. "Creation of 15.5 million acre-feet of storage in Canada and construction of Libby Dam in the United States will substantially increase the usable streamflow available at Grand Coulee. Concurrently, the intertie transmission system will create a ready market for excess capacity and seasonal energy from the Pacific Northwest. Installation of a large additional amount of generating capacity at Grand Coulee Dam is clearly the way to take full economic advantage of these two events."

The legislation signed into law by President Johnson authorizes construction of a 3.6-million kilowatt capacity powerplant. The authorizing legislation is flexible and permits the Bureau of Reclamation—the construction agency for the Third Powerplant—to explore the possibility of installing generating units larger than 300,000 kilowatts capacity each if the Bureau determines that larger units can be built and operated economically.

The Third Powerplant will be on the east bank of the Columbia River. A forebay dam is to be constructed as a right angle extension to the present Grand Coulee Dam built onto the downstream side of the dam's right abutment. Present planning calls for the installation of the first generating units by 1973, with the remaining to be installed over the next ten years.

The addition of 3.6-million kilowatts to Grand Coulee's present installed capacity of about 2 million kilowatts would make this the largest hydroelectric powerplant now in operation anywhere in the world, although it is not expected to hold this distinction at the time of its completion, as the U.S.S.R. has under construction a 6-million kilowatt hydropower complex at Krasnoyarsk and a 6.4-million kilowatt installation at Sayansk.

Grand Coulee held the honor of being the world's largest producer of hydroelectric power once before, when it was first completed in 1941, but lost first place to the Volga-V. I. Lenin plant in 1955. Conceivably, Grand Coulee could regain top honors for a third time by increasing the capacity or the number—or both—of the generating units to be installed in the Third Powerplant, since the total hydroelectric potential of the site is estimated at about 8.6-million kilowatts. This would require further legislation if and when full utilization of the site was determined to be financially justified.
The estimated construction cost of the Third Powerplant and its appurtenant facilities is $390,000,000. This includes the forebay dam and the powerplant, a 500,000-kilovolt switchyard, and a tour center. The benefit-cost ratio is estimated to be more than 3 to 1.

The 500-kilovolt lines coming out of the Third Powerplant switchyard will interconnect with BPA's new 500-kilovolt backbone grid now under construction. Power will flow over this grid to the Puget Sound area, to central Washington, and to John Day Dam from which point it will supply the needs of the Portland-Willamette Valley area or will be fed into the Pacific Northwest-Pacific Southwest Intertie as loads require.