Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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The Department of the Interior announced today that the Bureau of Reclamation will undertake the planning and construction of the $135 million Navajo Indian Irrigation Project in New Mexico, which will then be operated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Congressional legislation authorizing the project was signed by President Kennedy on June 13, 1962.

All appropriation requests for the project will be made by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the funds will be transferred to Reclamation to cover planning and construction costs. No funds have yet been appropriated to start construction.

When completed, the Navajo Indian Irrigation Project will provide facilities for delivering water to approximately 110,000 acres of Navajo Indian lands in two large areas on an elevated plain in San Juan County, New Mexico, south of the San Juan River. The facilities will include canals, laterals, tunnels, siphons, and pumping plants. Federal legislation also authorizes capacity for municipal and industrial water supplies in the proposed Navajo Canal.

Water for the project will be diverted at an average annual rate of 508,000 acre-feet from the San Juan River at the Bureau of Reclamation's Navajo Dam Reservoir, about 40 miles upstream from Farmington, N. Mex., and some 150 miles distant from the project lands.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs has estimated that some 14 years will be required to complete the planning and construction of facilities for the project, although delivery of water to the first of the project lands could be accomplished within five years after construction begins.

Construction of the Navajo Indian Irrigation Project can be expected to generate about 7,000 man-years of on-site work and to require an equivalent of more than 12,000 man-years of work in other areas throughout the country in providing the necessary services, materials, and equipment. An additional stimulus to the economy, roughly the equivalent of another 27,000 man-years of employment, will result from increased demand by on- and off-site workers for such items as clothing, food, furniture, gasoline, and other consumer goods.

Reclamation will be responsible for the development of a firm complete project plan acceptable to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and for all construction activities, utilizing the special knowledge and capabilities of Indian Affairs in the preparation of a project plan and for preconstruction and construction