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Award of a $777,777 Bureau of Reclamation contract for the clearing of approximately 15,600 acres of land along the border of New Mexico and Colorado, to be inundated by the waters of Navajo Reservoir, was announced by the Department of the Interior today.

The contract went to Universal Grading Company, Incorporated, of Albuquerque, New Mexico.

At the bid opening on May 18, the apparent low bid for this work under Bureau Specifications 400C-163 was the $237,000 offer of Edman &Company of 2070 Willow Lane, Denver, Colorado. However, after opening of the bids, but before award, the low bidder notified the Bureau's contracting officer that it had made a mistake in computation. The question was submitted to the Comptroller General and it was ruled that the Bureau could not permit a change in the bid after the time fixed for opening, Therefore, the Edman bid was disregarded in making the award to the New Mexico firm, second lowest of the nine bidders, said Assistant Commissioner N. B. Bennett.

The contract calls for clearance of 15,600 acres of reservoir land in San Juan and Rio Arriba Counties, New Mexico, and Archuleta County, Colorado. All trees, brush, stumps and other woody plants, all buildings, fences and other structures will be removed from approximately 9,800 acres behind Navajo Dam, from an elevation of 5,965 feet to an elevation of 6,085 feet. Selective removal and topping is permitted at lower elevations, according to the terms of the contract. Completion is required within 400 days.

Navajo Dam and Reservoir, a major storage unit of the five-State Colorado River Storage Project, is scheduled for completion in December 1962. Initial filling will begin early in 1962.

The 405-foot-high earth and rock fill dam, under construction on the San Juan River, approximately 39 miles east of Farmington, New Mexico, will be the second largest earth dam constructed by the Bureau. The 1,709,000 acre-foot Navajo Reservoir will store flows of the San Juan River for the 110,630-acre Navajo Indian Irrigation Project, now before the Congress for authorization. It will also provide important fish and wildlife, recreation, and flood control benefits.

Total estimated cost of the project, exclusive of recreational and fish and wildlife facilities, is $39,372,000.