

**Reclamation and the Columbia:  
The forgotten story of irrigation development and dam siting**

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**Abstract:**

When federal planners made decisions on which Columbia River Basin dams to build and where, reclamationists were nearly always one of the two or three most important interest groups. They were represented in Northwest states by state associations, but the heavyweight was the National Reclamation Association, a group that had its origins in Oregon and Utah. The effort to get approval for reclamation projects in Oregon made every decision highly political. Elected officials, political wire-pullers, lobbyists, and federal bureaucrats found themselves in a scrum that lasted for three decades and shaped both the Columbia River dams and irrigation in the Northwest. It is a story best told through the people who fought the battles.