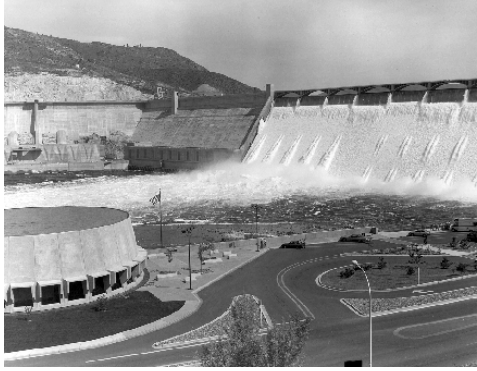




Grand Coulee Dam

The Columbia River Basin is the most hydroelectrically developed river system in the world. More than 400 dams - 11 run-of-the-river mainstem dams - generate more than 21 million kilowatts.



Grand Coulee Dam, 1981. *Image Courtesy of Bureau of Reclamation.*



Columbia Basin Canal under construction. *Image Courtesy of the Moses Lake, Washington Chamber of Commerce.*

The Northwest is destined to become the greatest power empire in the nation.

Harold Ickes, Secretary of the Interior, *Spokesman Review*, August 20, 1941.

Grand Coulee Dam in Washington State, at Columbia River mile marker 596.6, was completed in 1941. Built for hydroelectric power and irrigation, Grand Coulee provided jobs throughout the region and became a showcase of the government's Depression-era New Deal program. Promoted as “The Biggest Thing on Earth,” power from the massive dam fueled the Northwest's industrial boom in the 1940s and spawned the government's Columbia Basin Project (CBP) in the 1950s. Some in Congress thought that making so much power available in remote Washington State was “Socialistic dam foolishness” and opposed it. Indian people in the U.S. and Canada also opposed the dam, but others welcomed the federal programs that provided irrigation water and the cheap hydroelectric power critical to industrial development. Grand Coulee, the largest hydroelectric power producer in the U.S., did not include fish ladders. The dam created an 1,100 mile reservoir, Lake Roosevelt, and permanently halted upriver salmon spawning.

1934, Work begins on Grand Coulee Dam. People come from all over the nation to build the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) dam.

1941, World War II begins. Grand Coulee becomes an important source of power for the Northwest defense industry, including Boeing Airplane Company, and Hanford Engineering Works.

1952, Waters impounded by Grand Coulee reach the CBP, where the BOR provides irrigation water to family farms. By 1960, the project provides 500,000 acres of water for crops such as potatoes, beans, peas, corn and sugar beets. Agriculture stimulates the local economy, but the CBP is more costly and complicated than Grand Coulee.

1970s, Dreams of self-sufficiency conflict with the realities of modern agriculture and a few thousand farms and corporations operate where a hundred thousand were predicted. Federal subsidies to the CBP halts.



Center for Columbia River History, www.ccrh.org

Kettle Falls



A salmon returns to spawn beyond Kettle Falls. *Image courtesy of the Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture.*



Native Fishers at Kettle Falls, circa 1900. *Image courtesy of the Northwest Power and Conservation Council.*

We had awful good fishing on the Spokane River. . . everybody ate fish. You could go down to the river in the morning and catch eight to ten fish. People still fish a little. You used to be able to catch all you wanted. Now you can go out for eighteen hours and get one fish. Joe Brisboys, Spokane Elder, 30 August 1999

Kettle Falls, located in northeastern Washington State, rivaled Celilo Falls in importance as a Native fishery. Both series of falls, where thousands of Indians fished for thousands of years, have been covered by the “big” dams of the Columbia. Explorers of the nineteenth century frequently reported hundreds, if not more than a thousand fish caught daily in baskets fastened to rocks. The Catholic priest, Father Pierre-Jean DeSmet, traveled to Fort Vancouver from present-day Montana in 1845, and described the abundance of the fishery: “Seven or eight times a day these baskets were examined, and each time were found to contain about two hundred and fifty salmon. The Indians, meanwhile, were seen on every projecting rock, piercing the fish with the greatest dexterity.”

GRAND COULEE WORLD At the World's Greatest Fish-Industry Festival	At the World's Greatest Fish-Industry Festival
Where To Build A Town? Keller Must Decide Now	
Rising Dam Lake To Force Residents Away— Can't Agree On Site—New Road Needed	

Grand Coulee Dam brought a stable source of water to an arid region that settlers had struggled to farm since the early twentieth century. The dam not only altered the physical landscape and ended once prodigious salmon runs, but also changed the social landscape. Members of the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Indian Reservation fished at Kettle Falls until the late 1930s, when Grand Coulee covered the falls and destroyed fish runs.

Inundation of the lands along the river, not only altered Native American communities fundamentally, it also covered several towns built since the 1880s and displaced thousands of people.