

Desert transformed into coal-fired plant

It's 45 minutes to the nearest hospital at Hermiston, so the medical trailer is well stocked.

When the area around the construction trailers was gravelled Rose pleaded for them to spare a small patch of greenery outside her trailer.

They did so since she will be on the job until 1980. She has worked for Bechtel four years, previously at the Trojan nuclear plant near Rainier, OR.

Poverty Ridge is also a far cry from the lush, rolling hills of Pennsylvania, where John Kunkel spent the last several years working on a generating plant.

A Bechtel employee for 19 years, Kunkel is fascinated by the variety of desert plant and wildlife and protective of it, too.

"We discourage anyone from leaving the road to take off through the 'tundra', he said. "In the spring this stuff is pretty delicate."

He's keeping an eye out along the excavations for a small juniper for his yard in Hermiston, but is convinced all the young trees were burned off in the brushfire, since only older, heartier junipers remain in the area.

An old well and a knurled juniper tree are all that define Poverty Ridge. "It looks like poverty," Kunkel smiled, but to the west huge graders and dozers are carving the sparseness into a level area for the plant.

Below the ridge in Six-Mile Canyon, the saddle dam, the divider dike and the west dam are beginning to take shape.

Work on the dams is to form a 1,500-acre cooling reservoir. The water is overflow or "makeup" water from the Sintag irrigation farm to the west, transported through a 60-inch pipe.

The divider dam's function is to separate the makeup water from warm water that exits in the power plant boiler.

The west dam will be the highest at 120 feet. "It's not as simple as just pushing up dirt," Kunkel said. There are nine zones to an earthfill dam, he explained, ranging from the most impervious at the core to the outside layer of riprap, an "armor of rock over the compacted dirt" that resists erosion.

The rest of the construction schedule still to be let for bids calls for the start of steel erection for boiler in the fall of 1976, the start of erection of boiler pressure parts for the spring of 1978 and the start of erection of the turbine generator the summer of 1978.

The first hydro test of the plant's boiler will be made in late 1979 or early 1980. The facility is expected to be on line by the summer of 1980.



A couple Kiewit rigs turn bleak landscape into energy producing coal-fire plant.

Peter Kiewit Sons' Co. is on schedule in the first phase to transform the bleak landscape southwest of Boardman into Portland General Electric's coal-fired generating plant.

John Kunkel, construction coordinator for the Bechtel Power Corp. of San Francisco, which will oversee the work until construction is completed in 1980, said work is proceeding smoothly on the site preparation and the three earthfill dams needed for the formation of Carty Reservoir.

Carty Reservoir is a stretch of sagebrush that will eventually be a 1,500-acre body of water supplied from the Columbia River.

Peter Kiewit Sons' contract deals with the movement of over five million cubic yards of earth, rock, coyotes, sagebrush and jackrabbits during the initial site grading, access road building and earthfill dam construction.

It is the first of a multitude of contracts to be let in the construction of the 500-million dollar plant.

Over 300 are working at the site now, Kunkel said, with a peak force of 800 projected before construction is completed.

Kunkel said PGE anticipates that within 60 days a contract will be awarded which includes the construction of a railroad embankment for a spur line to run 13 miles from the Union Pacific main line to the plant site.

Because the site is so remote Bechtel supplies the workers with Rose Ebert, project nurse.

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