

Colorado River Municipal Water District Historical Timeline

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| December 1, 1945 | J. B. Thomas of Texas Electric Service Company (TESCO) initiates correspondence with Texas Board of Water Engineers member E.V. Spence regarding water supply for West Texas. |
| February 7, 1946 | Thomas sends Spence and engineer Simon W. Freese on a quest to “go crazy looking”, but find water in West Texas. |
| June 20, 1946 | At Thomas’ invitation, representatives of Odessa, Midland, Big Spring, Snyder and Colorado City meet at the Settles Hotel in Big Spring to hear Thomas and Freese lay out the water solution. They propose a reservoir on the Colorado River near Colorado City, and pipelines to the cities, with a staggering \$11 million pricetag. As a result, the five-city Colorado River Municipal Water Association is formed that day. |
| October 14, 1948 | Freese presents his final recommendation, for a new site 20 miles upstream that will produce better water. Snyder has already withdrawn, and now Colorado City opposing the relocation and looking to the possibility of TESCO building a dam and lake on Morgan Creek, leaves the Association. |
| February 22, 1949 | The Association is further shaken when Midland withdraws, but Odessa and Big Spring remain committed to proceed with the project. |
| March 11, 1949 | Two bills (one to create the Colorado River Municipal Water District contingent upon voter approval in the cities, and another to authorize it to contract with member cities) are introduced at the deadline, on the final submission day for the 1949 Texas Legislative Session. |
| May 31, 1949 | In the final moments of the last day of the session, both bills pass the Texas Legislature. Similar acts, which would pass the Legislature in subsequent years would not be as strong, and lacked provisions vital to the development of the District. |
| June 8, 1949 | Governor Beauford Jester signs the bills into law, 39 days before his untimely death. |
| June 9, 1949 | The CRMWA reorganizes with only two cities, and asks the two city councils to petition the state for simultaneous confirmation elections in July. |
| July 12, 1949 | Big Spring voters approve the proposed water district 522-31, and Odessa voters approve by margin of 365-16. Both city councils proceed with appointment of directors to represent them on the board. |
| August 15, 1949 | Big Spring Mayor George W. Dabney serves as honorary chairman for the first board meeting of the Colorado River Municipal Water District. R.T. Piner is elected as the first CRMWD president. |
| October 27, 1950 | The board passes resolutions to contract with bond attorneys, the engineering firm of Freese and Nichols and other steps necessary to amend and execute its permit for a reservoir on the Colorado River. They also authorize the purchase of water rights for a well field in Martin County, and call for elections in Big Spring and Odessa to ratify the city contracts, in effect, asking for voter ratification of the bond issues. |
| November 16, 1950 | Few, if any issues of this magnitude have ever been approved by such a margin. In Big Spring, the issue is ratified 941-1, and in Odessa, 1044-1. These votes, in effect, give the District authority and financial means to finance its massive mission. |
| December 8 1950 | Eugene Vierling Spence is asked to serve as CRMWD General Manager. |
| January 27, 1951 | An election is held in Snyder after a group of businessmen and officials successfully petition the District for annexation. Snyder voters approve membership 432-25, and approve the water contract with the District 401-24. |
| February 7, 1951 | Bids are taken on the dam and pipelines. |

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| March 3, 1951 | The Texas Board of Water Engineers issues an order creating the Martin County Underground Water Control District, an organization of individuals who wanted to stop or restrict CRMWD's development of the Martin County well field. This marks the beginning of a costly battle over rights to and regulation of the groundwater. |
| March 8, 1951 | E.V. Spence delivers the signed bonds to First National Bank of Fort Worth and receives the check for \$11,750,000. Within days, agreement is reached for purchase of the basin land. Heavy equipment is moved in and work begins. |
| April 29, 1951 | A large crowd of West Texans gather for groundbreaking ceremonies at the lake site. The crowd is amazed by details of the District's activities as it is simultaneously building a dam, lake, the Martin County well field, and pipelines to carry the water to member cities where rationing is imminent. |
| May 29, 1951 | Scurry Area Canyon Reef Operators Committee (SACROC) is the first group of many oil producers to request a water contract with CRMWD. The first delivery of water under the resulting contract is January 1, 1954. For years, revenues from the sale of fresh and brine water to oil and industrial customers have helped the District provide lower rates to its municipal customers. |
| March 19, 1952 | CRMWD signs its first contract to supply water to oil companies. Revenue from such sources will make it possible for the District to keep municipal water prices down. Only twice in 50 years, in spite of numerous droughts and rationing in much of the state, will the District be forced to curtail water deliveries to the oil producers. In over 50 years, CRMWD will never ration municipal customers. |
| May 8, 1952 | The District's first dam on the Colorado River is closed, as Big Spring, Odessa and Snyder face critical water shortages. |
| May 11, 1952 | Over his humble objections, the board and friends convince J.B. Thomas to allow CRMWD to name the new lake in his honor. At the May 11 th meeting, directors vote to name the new reservoir Lake J.B. Thomas, in honor of the man whose foresight and faith resulted in the conception and initiation of the entire District project. |
| June 6, 1952 | The first CRMWD water arrives from Martin County, trickling out of the pipeline at Odessa, with sustained flow the next day and a citywide celebration on June 10 th . |
| August 13, 1952 | Martin County water bubbled into Big Spring, where, by city ordinance, water rationing had officially begun in early July. |
| September 5, 1952 | Even the disapproval and legal objections of some Martin County residents who fear depletion of the aquifer cannot dim the spirits of Big Spring residents as they celebrate the arrival of life-sustaining water in a ceremony at Steer Stadium. |
| January 21, 1953 | After its initial success in court and sustaining of the judgement on its first appeal, the CRMWD loses to the MCUWCD before the Texas Supreme Court. The issue becomes moot, however, as opposition to CRMWD crumbles when Martin County residents become fearful of over-regulation and the issue subsides. CRMWD continues to pump the Martin County well field, ever careful to conserve the resource. |
| Late Spring, 1953 | Although the Lake J.B. Thomas dam has been closed, the lake is virtually dry. Snyder has completed its water treatment plant, but has no water to treat. A borrow area near the dam catches a few thousand acre-feet of water, and District employees, determined to get water to drought-parched Snyder, come up with an ingenious idea they call "pump-back". By raising a cofferdam around the intake and pumping water from the borrow area to the pool around the intake, they are able to submerge the pumps and begin moving water to Snyder. This means of wringing water from a virtually dry lake will be used again and again as West Texas faces recurring drought cycles. |
| July 2, 1953 | The pump-back is successful, and the first lake water finally reaches Snyder. |

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| July 9, 1953 | Snyder celebrates the arrival of water. After just more than two years of frantic work, all three District member cities are taking water, and, they have have not had to ration water since that time. |
| August 8, 1956 | CRMWD files its first presentation to study the possibility of a second dam on the Colorado River, this one in southern Mitchell County. |
| June 11, 1959 | CRMWD files for a permit to impound its second lake, this one in Mitchell County. |
| December 6, 1960 | Board members learn that gypsum deposits under the proposed reservoir site (which could cause the reservoir to fail) would necessitate moving the lake. Water quality is also questioned at the original site |
| Fall, 1963 | The District begins to experiment with recharging the Martin County Well Field when surface water is plentiful, protecting it from evaporation and recovering the water from wells further down the gradient when it is needed. |
| July 17, 1964 | CRMWD submits an amended application to construct the reservoir near Robert Lee. |
| December, 1964 | The CRMWD permit is opposed by the Lower Colorado River Authority and Mitchell County residents in its hearing before the Texas Water Commission. General Manager Spence is subjected to hours of questioning and becomes ill. |
| April 4, 1965 | General Manager E.V. Spence, who had devoted 14 years to the District and most of his professional career to water development in the state of Texas, dies. |
| April 22, 1965 | Owen H. Ivie is chosen to succeed Spence as general manager. |
| September 1, 1965 | Long negotiations culminate with an agreement to release stored water dependent on the level of the Highland Lakes, and a \$400,000 payment to the Lower Colorado River Authority to end the LCRA opposition to the Robert Lee permit. The Texas Water Commission issues the permit the same day. |
| September, 1966 | CRMWD issues \$30 million in bonds intended to finance the dam, lake and extensive diversion works to control chloride problems in the drainage area of the lake. Another \$4.5 million in bond issued will prove necessary to complete the project. |
| April 10, 1969 | The board of directors votes to name the new reservoir in honor of its first general manager, E.V. Spence. |
| June 4, 1969 | The E.V. Spence Reservoir is dedicated. |
| January 27, 1970 | Pump-back is revisited for the second of many times as drought keeps the new reservoir from filling and Lake J.B. Thomas sinks dangerously low. The first stage of a three-stage pump-back begins at the E.V. Spence Reservoir, where water is far below the intake. A three-stage pump-back will also be implemented at Lake Thomas before rains and drought relief bring in the summer of 1971. For the first time, the District is forced to cut back deliveries to oil companies to protect municipal supplies. |
| April 10, 1970 | Midland comes on line as a CRMWD municipal customer. |
| June, 1970 | CRMWD announces it will accept bids to drill brine wells in the Santa Rosa Formation to supply brackish water (instead of lake water needed for municipal supplies) to be used for oil repressuring operations. |
| October, 1970 | The CRMWD board authorizes the general manager to begin a weather modification program in the spring of 1971. At the end of the 20 th century, it would be the longest continuously operating weather modification program in the United States.. |
| December 9, 1970 | \$6.75 million in bonds is authorized for development of 17 wells and 45 miles of pipeline to bring much needed Ward County well field water on line. Dubbed the "Five Months' Miracle", the field and pipeline are completed May 24, 1971. |
| September 1, 1971 | Oil companies are restored to 100% of their needs, and pump-backs are halted when rain and welcome runoff replenishes both District lakes. |
| July 14, 1974 | Directors celebrate the retirement of the \$11.7 million first bond issue with a bond burning. |

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| Summer, 1976 | The long-range planning committee is re-activated to study the need for, and possible location of the District's third reservoir on the Colorado. |
| July 1, 1977 | Drought.....again. The District begins the longest pump-back in its history, lasting more than three years at Lake Thomas. Working in mud-bogged lake bottoms, clearing brush and vegetation from lake basins and the Colorado River channel and breaking ice around the shallow intake pools were a few of the weather-related problems faced by District employees. For the second time, District finances are squeezed by reduced water sales to oil companies, but the problem is compounded by additional operational costs from rising electric rates and increased usage of electricity for the pump-back. It is the last time in the century that CRMWD cannot meet oil and industrial water demands, but it will not be the last pump-back. |
| October 11, 1977 | The board votes to apply for a permit to build a dam near the community of Stacy, and representatives fly to Austin to file the application with the Texas Department of Water Resources. Simon Freese and the Freese and Nichols engineering firm will design the proposed dam, as with both earlier District dams, and their input will be vital to the permit process as well as the dam design. |
| February, 1978 | The Stacy application is accepted for placement on the Texas Water Commission docket, but due to opposition and delays, hearings do not begin until July 11 th . Several downstream groups oppose the permit, led by the powerful Lower Colorado River Authority, holder of the permits for the Highland Lakes near Austin. |
| July 11, 1978 | General Manager Owen Ivie is first witness in the TWC hearing that will break all records for longevity (50 days of testimony), number of exhibits (over 200) and cost. |
| April 10, 1979 | The TWC approves Permit 3866, for construction of a dam near Stacy. But, CRMWD has won only the first battle in what will be an eight-year struggle to obtain the state permit for the much-needed reservoir. |
| July 26, 1979 | After its request for a rehearing is denied by the TWC, the LCRA files appeals to the 53 rd District Court in Austin. Negotiations between the CRMWD and LCRA continue in an attempt to reach an out-of-court settlement. |
| January 31, 1980 | Judge Herman Jones hears arguments on the appeal and upholds the TWC ruling on February 5. LCRA appeals his decision, and out-of-court negotiations continue. |
| March 31, 1980 | While the state permit battle continues, the first U.S. Army Corps of Engineers hearing is conducted in Coleman for CRMWD's "404 Permit", a new federal requirement under legislation passed since construction of the E.V. Spence Reservoir. Numerous federal and state agencies are involved as land and wildlife mitigation, preservation of sites of cultural (Indian) and historical significance and a little-known water snake pose costly barriers to construction of the reservoir. |
| November 19, 1980 | The 3 rd Court of Civil Appeals in Austin hears the state permit appeal, as CRMWD continues to attempt negotiations with LCRA. |
| June 30, 1982 | In a 3-2 decision, the 3 rd Court of Appeals upholds the lower court, but on October 1, the LCRA appeals again, this time to the Texas Supreme Court. Negotiations fail, and CRMWD soon begins to consider involving itself in water permit adjudication hearings in hopes of furthering its position that unused water is being wasted into the Gulf of Mexico. |
| September 7, 1983 | The State Supreme Court agrees to hear the case on two of the alleged "points of error". It will be more than a year before the court rules on the arguments. |
| May, 1984 | Negotiations with state and federal agencies concerning the 404 permit continue, and estimates are growing as to the final cost. It is already more than \$6 million. |

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| November 14, 1984 | Directors are in New York City to close the \$8,275,000 bond issue to purchase additional groundwater reserves and fund construction of the Beals Creek water quality enhancement project when they receive word that the Texas Supreme Court has ruled against the District in the Stacy matter. As a result of post-opinion briefs, the Supreme Court decides, on January 9, 1985, to remand the matter to the Texas Water Commission for rehearing. Negotiations continue in what has become a highly visible battle, with state legislators and the governor applying pressure on LCRA and CRMWD to settle the matter. Unknown to the CRMWD, the Corps of Engineers pulls the 404 permit from consideration based on the November 14 Supreme Court ruling. |
| February 26, 1985 | Following final negotiations at 5 p.m. the day before, the CRMWD board approves a settlement with the LCRA, and officials fly to Austin for a joint announcement of the accord. With LCRA out of the picture, the remaining opposition is minimal. |
| April 23, 1985 | Although a few delays have occurred, the state permit for the dam and reservoir near Stacy is finally approved in the re-hearing, and the permit is issued May 14, 1985 once the period for appeals has passed. CRMWD General Manager has to fight to get the Corps of Engineers to reinstate the District's application for a 404 permit with its former priority, and even so, no one knows how much longer the process will take. Meanwhile, Midland, Abilene and San Angelo have each asked for 15,000 acre-feet of the reservoir, meaning the District will only have to finance 50.38% of the project. |
| February, 1986 | After frustrating delays, CRMWD petitions for a public hearing on the Concho water snake, one of the 404 permit obstacles. The hearing is held in Ballinger on April 3. The snake has become a national issue. Senators and Congressmen have begun pressuring the Corps to grant the permit, as environmental groups gather in opposition. (Later studies will show the snake population to be significantly larger than early estimates on which most of the opposition was based.) |
| May, 1986 | Too much rain? Natural Dam Lake, filled to never-seen heights by heavy, isolated rainfall, threatens to break the dam and inundate Big Spring with water from one of the saltiest lakes in the world. As boils appear on the back of the dam, CRMWD steps in to reinforce the dam and build a temporary spillway to release enough water to preserve the dam. The releases prevent a major breach, but flood Jones Valley, a small area on the northwest side of Big Spring. A year is spent attempting cooperation between the city and county to fully resolve the problem. Resumption of unseasonable rains in May 1987, breach the spillway and again flood Jones Valley. Without the promised assistance from the city or county, CRMWD directors vote to step in and spend \$2.2 million reinforcing Natural Dam and building a more adequate spillway. The salty water, which had to be released to prevent catastrophic failure of the Dam, flows downstream to the E.V. Spence Reservoir, causing serious water quality problems there for the rest of the century, as drought in the 1990s will slow the reservoir's recovery. |
| March, 1987 | After years of opposition, red tape, and at a final cost of over \$10 million, the CRMWD learns that, following a 30-day waiting period, it is finally about to receive the elusive 404 permit to construct the reservoir at Stacy. The permit is dated April 8, 1987. |
| March 6, 1987 | In anticipation of receipt of the 404 permit, CRMWD opens bids for construction of the dam. Low-bidder Brown & Root receives the contract for the dam and basin construction based on a bid of just under \$32 million, as well as the contract to build the intake station at a cost of almost \$3.2 million. |
| May 16, 1987 | Torrential rain around Ballinger forces the scheduled Stacy groundbreaking ceremonies from the actual site to the Ballinger High School campus. |

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| December 7, 1989 | The board of directors vote to name the new reservoir in honor of General Manager Owen H. Ivie, whose dogged persistence played a key role in the project. They vote to name the dam for Simon W. Freese, the man whose engineering skills and personal dedication were integral to the permit acquisition and design of all three District dams. |
| March 15, 1990 | All phases of the massive construction project are finally complete, the culmination of over 12 years of work. |
| May 19, 1990 | Formal dedication ceremonies are held for the S.W. Freese Dam and O.H. Ivie Reservoir. It fills much sooner than expected, in early June, 1992. |
| August 6, 1991 | Although the intake station had been built "in the dry" before the dam was closed, a massive pipeline construction project of unprecedented scale will have to be built to move the water west to Midland, San Angelo and the District, where it will be needed. The District sells \$115 million in revenue bonds and begins right-of-way purchases. |
| April 16, 1992 | The bid for actual pipeline construction is awarded to John D. Stephens. A central control station is added to the plans, and the District will issue \$9 million more in bonds, bringing the total to \$124 million for construction of the pipeline, pump stations, storage facilities, electric substations and transmission lines as well as right-of-way, engineering and interest. |
| August 20, 1992 | With final preparation complete, the first joint of pipe is laid. Stephens had designed and contracted for construction of two massive trenchers that, barring solid rock, could chew out a trench eight feet wide and almost twelve feet deep in a single pass. The pipeline will be 60 inches in diameter for the 47.9 miles from the reservoir to San Angelo, and 53 inches in diameter for the remaining 109 miles. Solid rock does slow progress temporarily, but Stephens leap-frogs the trenchers and as much as 4300 feet (about 8/10 of a mile) of pipe in a single day. |
| September 27, 1994 | Spectators watch as the final joint, number 29,543, is set in place during completion ceremonies at the construction site of the terminal storage facility between Midland and Odessa. Stephens has made good on his promises of both time and finances, even though his bid was \$6 million less than his nearest competitor. Amazingly, the largest single pipeline contract in both cost and distance ever signed in the state has been completed with a project overrun of only 0.14 of 1 percent. |
| March 10, 1995 | Water security into the 21 st century is celebrated at a ceremony dedicating the completed Ivie Transmission System. The pipeline has the <u>daily</u> capacity to move 90 million gallons to San Angelo, and of that, 65 million gallons on to Midland-Odessa, a distance of 157 miles with a 1400-foot vertical lift. |
| September 30, 1995 | Owen H. Ivie, employee of the District since 1953 and general manager since 1965, retires. |
| October 1, 1995 | John W. Grant becomes the District's third general manager in the midst of a drought, which began in 1992 and will last beyond the end of the decade. As for the last 45 years, the District perseveres through pump-backs and searches for every potential source of water to serve a region whose population continues to grow. |
| February 14, 1996 | The John L. Taylor Central Control Center is dedicated in honor of the former board member who served as director for 31 years, and president from 1983-1995. |
| April 22, 1996 | With little rainfall or runoff since the fall of 1992, water levels sink at Lake J.B. Thomas, and District employees begin the first in a series of pump-backs that will be necessary through the decade. Limited rainfall replenishes the lake sufficiently to stop this round of pump-backs on June 11, 1997. |

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| April 1, 1998 | An agreement is signed with the Lower Colorado River Authority terminating water releases spelled out in the 1965 permit for the Spence Reservoir, and the 1985 permit that paved the way for construction of the O.H. Ivie Reservoir. |
| April 24, 1998 | The old coffer dam in Lake J.B. Thomas is rebuilt around the Snyder intake as lake levels drop due to continued drought. Pump-back will continue until June 14, 1999. |
| June 15, 1998 | CRMWD petitions the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department (TPWD) to remove the Concho water snake from their lists of "threatened species". Most experts agree the original population viability model, when analyzed using the more complete data from over 10 years of study, would provide ample reason for delisting the snake. |
| November 13, 1998 | In past decades, with the high chlorides in the E.V. Spence Reservoir, Lake J.B. Thomas was the only real source for blending water to bring municipal water quality to acceptable levels. Now, thanks to the addition of the Ivie transmission system, CRMWD has new ways to meet water challenges. Pump-back takes on a whole new meaning for the District as water can now be pumped between the system reservoirs. The District begins pumping water from the O.H. Ivie Reservoir to Lake Thomas to keep the eastern end of the District supplied. This arrangement will continue until March 5, 1999. |
| November 13, 1998 | Based on the April agreement with the LCRA, the Texas Natural Resources Conservation Commission passes unopposed revisions to the 1965 permit for the E.V. Spence and the 1985 permit for the O.H. Ivie Reservoirs. Water releases, triggered by levels in the Highland Lakes, were required as part of the original reservoir permits. Those releases were terminated in the 1998 revised permits, so vital surface water that originates in West Texas can now be retained, instead of being released down the river channel. |
| March 6, 1999 | As part of the plan to boost Lake Thomas levels above the intake with blended water for consistent quality throughout the system, CRMWD operators begin pumping water from the E.V. Spence Reservoir to Lake Thomas. This continues until May 2, 1999. |
| June 14, 1999 | Early June rains bring much needed relief on several fronts. Lake Thomas gains 17 feet in elevation, and once more, the Snyder intake is submerged without pumping water over the cofferdam from low areas of the lake. |
| January 1, 2000 | As the District enters the 21 st century, it has more than 600 miles of pipeline, 23 pump stations and four well fields in operation across 15 counties of West Texas. The District's service area includes all or part of 34 counties, and efforts continue to maintain and expand the massive system that provides necessary water to a dry region. |
| March 2, 2000 | With levels at the E.V. Spence Reservoir dropping, the District has prepared for another pump-back operation there, the first since 1970. As the intake pumps begin to draw air, pump-back begins. |
| March 24, 2000 | Only 3 weeks after the Spence pump-back began, it is no longer necessary. The reservoir catches over 50,000 acre feet of water and rises about 12 feet from rainfall received over a 7-day period. |
| August 2, 1999 | In spite of the support of most field experts and herpetologists, the USFWS denies the CRMWD petition stating "insufficient data". They later request and receive from Congress an appropriation of \$300,000 to develop a new population viability model. |
| August 31, 2000 | TPWD, in an uncontested ruling, removes the Concho water snake from the state threatened species list. The action will become final in September upon publication in the Texas Register. |

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| October 9, 2002 | With water supplies dwindling from drought condition, Board approves \$2.7 million project to increase the Ward County Well Field production capacity to 28 mgd and delivery capacity to 24 mgd. District is able to complete the project for \$1.7 million. |
| Summer/Fall 2004 | U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service agrees to temporary emergency drought provisions and then, in December, issues new biological opinion for the Concho water snake that permits U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to permanently reduce required releases for the snake from Spence and Ivie Reservoirs. Congress appropriates \$247,000 for studies that could lead the way to delisting the snake. |
| October 1, 2004 | Above average rainfall during FY 2004 yielded about a one-year supply of water but CRMWD begins FY 2005 (year 13 of the drought) with supplies at critical levels. |
| September 30, 2005 | Uncharacteristic rains in November 2004 and February 2005 were followed by additional summer rains. CRMWD closes FY 2005 with supplies almost double those of a year earlier yet still only 36.5% of capacity. Time will tell if the rains and inflows continue to restore reservoirs to a sufficient level to declare the drought ended from a hydrological standpoint. |
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