

Cost-Benefit Analysis

Dams and other water resource projects fall into the category of **civil works**. Civil works, includes, dams, levees, improvements to harbors, military bases, government facilities and defense industries. Since every member of congress wants the federal government to fund such projects in his/her district back home, there is intense competition and political maneuvering in the process. All this is called **pork barrel politics**, and is best summarized by the term **back scratching** or "You vote for my pet project and I'll vote for yours." To eliminate some of the politics from the funding process, each project is now subjected to a **cost-benefit analysis**. This lists the economic benefits on one side and the economic costs on the other side. If the long-term benefits out weigh the near-term economic costs, then the project might be funded.

Benefits

1. Flood mitigation
2. Enhanced navigation and commerce
3. Better water supply
4. Hydro-electric (if feasible)
5. Improved recreation (important benefit for projects near cities)

Costs

1. Construction (moving dirt, engineering, legal, land acquisition, environmental impact statements)
2. Destroy prime farm land
3. Destroy wildlife habitat
4. Displace people
5. Destroy or disrupt transportation arteries (highways, Interstates, railroads)

In spite of all the dams that have been built in the U.S., damages from flooding continue to increase. Over the last 20 years, less emphasis has been put on building dams and other structures, and more emphasis put on **land-use controls**. So, most cities and towns have **zoning ordinances**, so you can not build on a flood plain. Usually this is defined as the **100 year** flood plain; a place that will be under water once in a hundred years.