United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

1. Name of Property

historic name Oak Creek Dam

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number N/A

city or town N/A

state Utah code UT county Garfield code 017

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally state locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Ronald G. Herdrich 8-4-99
Signature of certifying official Date

National Park Service
Federal agency

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting official Date

Utah State Historic Preservation Office
State agency
4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

X entered in the National Register

See continuation sheet.

_____ determined eligible for the National Register

See continuation sheet.

_____ determined not eligible for the National Register

_____ removed from the National Register

_____ other (explain): __________________

Signature of Keeper: __________________ Date of Action: 9/3/65

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

___ private

___ public-local

___ public-State

X public-Federal

Category of Property

___ building(s)

___ district

___ site

X structure

___ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing   Noncontributing

_____   _____ buildings

_____   _____ sites

1   _____ structures

1   _____ objects

1   _____ Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing

Capitol Reef National Park MPS

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

Cat: Agriculture/Subsistence   Sub: Dam

Current Functions

Cat: Agriculture/Subsistence   Sub: Dam

irrigation facility
7. Description
Architectural Classification
   No Style

Materials
   foundation: N/A
   roof: N/A
   walls: N/A
   other: Concrete, Stone

Narrative Description
   (See continuation sheet.)

8. Statement of Significance
Applicable National Register Criteria
   ___ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
   ___ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
   ___ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
   ___ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations - none apply
Areas of Significance: Agriculture
Period of Significance: 1914-1946
Significant Dates: 1914
Significant Person: N/A
Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Lanning, Jim (overseer)

Narrative Statement of Significance
   (See continuation sheet.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Capitol Reef N. P. Archives, Torrey, Utah
Bureau of Land Management Records, Salt Lake City, Utah
Durfy, Keith - telephone interview by Ben Brower, February 23, 1995

Previous documentation on file (NPS)
   ___ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
   ___ previously listed in the National Register
   ___ previously determined eligible by the National Register
   ___ designated a National Historic Landmark
   ___ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # ________
   ___ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # ________
OAK CREEK DAM

Primary Location of Additional Data
__ State Historic Preservation Office
__ Other State agency
X Federal agency
__ Local government
__ University
__ Other

Name of repository: Capitol Reef National Park Archives, Torrey, Utah

10. Geographical Data
Acreage of Property 2.0

UTM References

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Verbal Boundary Description
The boundary encompasses a 2 acre area in which the dam and associated spillway are located. This area corresponds with the UTM reference point noted above.

Boundary Justification
The boundary encompasses only the historic dam and reconstructed spillway.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Benjamin Brower, Historian
organization for: National Park Service, IMFA, CPSSO date 1995
street & number 12795 W. Alameda Parkway P.O. Box 25287 telephone (303) 499-7195
city or town Denver state CO zip code 80225-0287

Additional Documentation

Continuation Sheets - included.
Maps - see attached USGS map indicating the property's location.
Photographs - included.

Property Owner

name Capitol Reef National Park
street & number HC 70, Box 15 telephone (801) 425-3791
city or town Torrey state UT zip code 84795-9602

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.). Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet  

Description  
The Oak Creek Dam is located on Oak Creek within Garfield County in the south central portion of Capitol Reef National Park. The site is approximately 4 miles west of Sandy Ranch (located outside park boundaries). Oak Creek Dam is a curved concrete dam with an associated stone and concrete spillway. Water is diverted from the natural creek bed into the spillway. The east face of the dam is approximately 40 feet in height. The west face extends approximately 3 feet above the creek bed. Two half-round weep holes are located in the east face of the dam. The spillway consists of stone and concrete with metal control gates; it channels water into an irrigation ditch or through an overflow gate.

The present spillway was constructed circa 1965 to replace the original which had been rendered ineffective by excessive siltation. The replacement spillway differs from the original in that the original was made only of concrete. In spite of the replacement of the original spillway, the resource still maintains overall historic integrity and meets National Register criteria.

Statement of Significance  
The Oak Creek Dam has local significance under National Register Criterion A for its association with agriculture (cattle ranching) in the Capitol Reef area. The dam was an integral part of a larger irrigation system which provided vital and scarce water to a large scale ranching operation. It is the largest single structure associated with large-scale irrigation remaining in Capitol Reef National Park. The period of significance of the dam dates from its date of construction circa 1914 to 1946, the end of the historic period as defined by the National Register.

The dam's significance is associated with the historical context "Grazing in Capitol Reef National Park, 1880-1946" which is included in the cover form for the Capitol Reef National Park Multiple Property Submission.

Oak Creek Dam was constructed circa 1914 as part of the irrigation system for Sandy Ranch, a cattle and sheep ranch located just east of the present park boundaries. Jim Lanning oversaw construction of the dam. The dam diverted Oak Creek into a canal that carried the water to Sandy Ranch. The dam is one element of a system that includes Oak Creek Reservoir and Lower Browns Reservoir west of the present park boundaries. A new spillway was constructed of stone and concrete circa 1965 because siltation had rendered the original concrete spillway ineffective.

The dam was constructed at a time when drought and high livestock numbers had brought the overgrazing of western ranges to a crisis situation. It was built at, and represents, the apogee of a period of major rangeland degradation between 1900-1934. Prior to the 1934 Taylor Grazing Act which implemented stricter range control, huge herds of cattle and sheep competed for the scarce forage of the Waterpocket Fold area in under restricted grazing which resulted in major ecological damage. Furthermore, the dam was built on the eve of a commodity price increases caused by the outbreak of the First World War in Europe. This brief boom period collapsed soon after the end of hostilities in 1918. The ensuing inter-war era witnessed a massive worldwide collapse of agricultural prices that brought to
Statement of Significance (continued)

an end the general prosperity which farmers had enjoyed from the mid-nineteenth century. This economic plight, combined with environmental crisis, culminated in the calamity of the so-called dust bowl era of the 1930s.

The Oak Creek Dam is an excellent and well-preserved example of a structure which represents the efforts exerted by local ranchers and farmers to capture and control scarce water resources for subsistence and economic gain. In addition, it is a product of larger social, economic, and environmental trends which had great historical impact on rural society in the early 20th century.
1) Oak Creek Dam
2) Capitol Reef National Park, Torrey, Utah
3) Glenn Ceponis
4) November 1990
5) John Milner Associates
6) Dam and spillway, view to northeast
7) 1
1) Oak Creek Dam
2) Capitol Reef National Park, Torrey, Utah
3) Glenn Ceponis
4) November 1990
5) John Milner Associates
6) Spillway, View to Northeast
7) 2
1) Oak Creek Dam
2) Capitol Reef National Park, Torrey, Utah
3) Glenn Ceponis
4) November 1990
5) John Milner Associates
6) Detail of spillway, view to South
7) 3