

The Theodore Roosevelt Administration Newlands Act Reclamation Act of 1902

Rep. Francis G. Newlands of Nevada was the prime moving force behind an effort to extend federal assistance to farmers and ranchers who worked the arid lands of the West. Under a measure passed in 1902, a self-perpetuating funding system was established:

The federal government would plan, construct and manage irrigation projects for the purpose of reclaiming marginal lands. Money for these projects would be generated by the sale of public lands.

The on-going expenses of the projects would be supported by fees paid by farmers and ranchers using the water.

This measure, along with subsequent legislation, brought thousands of new acres under cultivation and placed the federal government front and center in the water distribution question in the West.