

Del Lago Dam - Narrative

The information contained on the following pages is intended to convey a brief description of the dam and site-related information, as well as a brief history of the diversion of water, beneficial use, and related events over the course of the last 130+/- years. Additional information of a more technical nature is also included.



Notice

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Agency Disclosure

William G. Arnold, Ltd. and William Arnold, Broker, are acting exclusively on behalf of the Owner/Seller as their Broker.

The "Del Lago dam site" (AKA, Pantano Dam) refers to a historic diversion dam on the Cienega Creek, east of Vail, Arizona, which supplied water to the former Rancho del Lago and now provides irrigation water for the Del Lago Golf Course.

- Location: The dam is located within the Pantano Wash/Cienega Creek, approximately 1.5 miles southeast of the Rancho del Lago master-planned community and the Del Lago Golf Course in Vail, Arizona. The site is upstream of Tucson, Arizona, and is within the Tucson Active Management Area.
- Function: It is a small, historic diversion dam, not a large reservoir-creating dam. Its purpose was to divert the creek's flow for irrigation.
- Description: The site is noted as a place where the dense riparian vegetation in the creek bed upstream of the dam stops due to the water diversion.
- The site is wholly surrounded by Pima County-owned land that is dedicated to habitat preservation and flood control uses.

Note that some of the information contained below may not be current because of the age of the original document(s) and changes that have occurred over time. The reference documents are all linked (click on the underlined title) for your ease of use.

History

See Facebook: [Vail Preservation Society is with Juanita Wagner. June 30, 2020](#)
Rancho del Lago – Timeline & Images

Excerpts from the Vail Preservation Society post:

1891 Carter Crane & John Fraker “Impound the Waters of the Cienega” for farming. Irrigation canals were built to water crops. Starting out with a mining water allotment, a canal 18” deep and 3’ wide, by the mid-1890s, they had built a dam that was enlarged over the years by them, and later, others. LaLoga and La Cienega Ranch are the names of Carter Crane’s Ranch.

“Messrs. Fraker and Crane, of Vail’s station, have probably the finest single ranch there is in Southern Arizona. They have 600 acres under fence with more than sufficient water to irrigate the whole tract. The water they developed by cutting into the Cienega... The harvest this year yielded 1,500 sacks of wheat and barley. ...over 100 tons of alfalfa and barley hay.

When these men first settled on their present homestead, they were regarded as visionary in their ideas so far as it affected their water supply, but they went to work themselves and by hard labor developed one of the finest bodies of permanent water there in the entire country. This place is well worth a visit.” Arizona Daily Star, 1897.

1901 C.O. Crane files for water rights for irrigation to be called Crane & Fraker’s Ditch.

1904 Engineering Report completed for the proposed Cienega Dam to facilitate development. The planners had big plans for Vail.

1911 Cienega surface and sub-surface diversion pipeline and dam built.

1920 Guy Monthan applies for surface water rights.

Technical information

Pima Association of Governments study of “Lower Cienega Basin Source Water Study” October, 2000

Description from the study:

The dam is located in T16S, R16E, Section 14, roughly 1.5 miles upstream from Colossal Cave Road. The dam effectively ends the perennial reach of the creek by diverting water for irrigation at the Vail Valley development to the northwest. The dam, constructed in 1911, is an at-grade concrete structure built directly on bedrock, creating a complete barrier to subsurface flow (Hill 1998). A United States Geological Survey stream gauge and a Pima County ALERT station are located on the north bank of the creek 60 feet upstream from the dam.

Pima County Flood Control District Final Report “SUMMARY AND EVALUATION OF CIENEGA CREEK SURFACE WATER AND GROUNDWATER MONITORING PROGRAM.” February, 1998

Background (from the Final Report)

Cienega Creek is an important water, recreation, and wildlife resource located southeast of Tucson, Arizona (Figure 1). The creek begins at an elevation of approximately 5700 feet in the Canelo Hills, northeast of Patagonia, Arizona, and continues roughly 40 to 50 miles to Pantano Wash, at an elevation of about 3100 feet, near the community of Vail, Arizona.

The stream is interrupted, with perennial reaches upstream and downstream of Interstate 10 separated by intermittent and ephemeral reaches. It is one of the few low-elevation streams in Pima County that exhibit significant perennial flow. Streamflow is diverted at a dam in Section 14 of Township 16 South, Range 16 East, roughly 1.5 miles upstream from Colossal Cave Road (Figure 2). The dam is referred to in this report as the Del Lago Dam, because the diverted water is used by the Del Lago Water Company for irrigation at the Vail Valley development to the northwest. Perennial streamflow in Cienega Creek ends at, or just downstream from, the dam.

In recognition of its value to the state of Arizona, the reach of Cienega Creek downstream from Interstate 10 to Del Lago Dam has been designated by the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) as a Unique Water, which means that it has been classified as an “outstanding state resource water” (R18-11-112). As a Unique Water, Cienega Creek qualifies for site-specific water

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (from the Final Report)

Cienega Creek is an important water, recreation, and wildlife resource located southeast of Tucson, Arizona, in the Santa Cruz River watershed. It is one of the few low-elevation streams in Pima County that exhibit significant perennial flow. Perennial reaches of Cienega Creek support native fish, and the surrounding riparian vegetation provides habitat for a diversity of wildlife. The reach of Cienega Creek between Interstate 10 and a diversion dam east of Vail, Arizona, is the focus of this study. This reach has been designated a Unique Water, which means that it has been classified as an “outstanding state resource water.” The Cienega Creek Natural Preserve, which is owned by Pima County Flood Control District (PCFCD), includes most of this part of Cienega Creek.