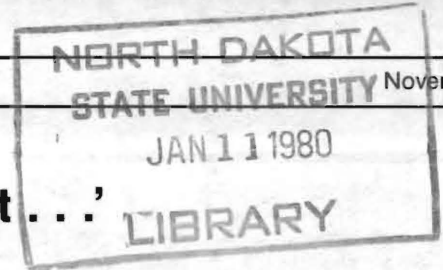


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# basin bulletin

Vol. 7, No. 2



November-December 1979

## Hearing results: 'Water available, but . . .'

(The following is reprinted from the Omaha World-Herald.)

Water supplies are adequate to support coal development in the northern Great Plains states, according to four federal and Missouri River Basin officials who testified at a congressional subcommittee hearing in November. While water supplies may be sufficient overall, witnesses cautioned there could be problems with specific development projects in specific areas.

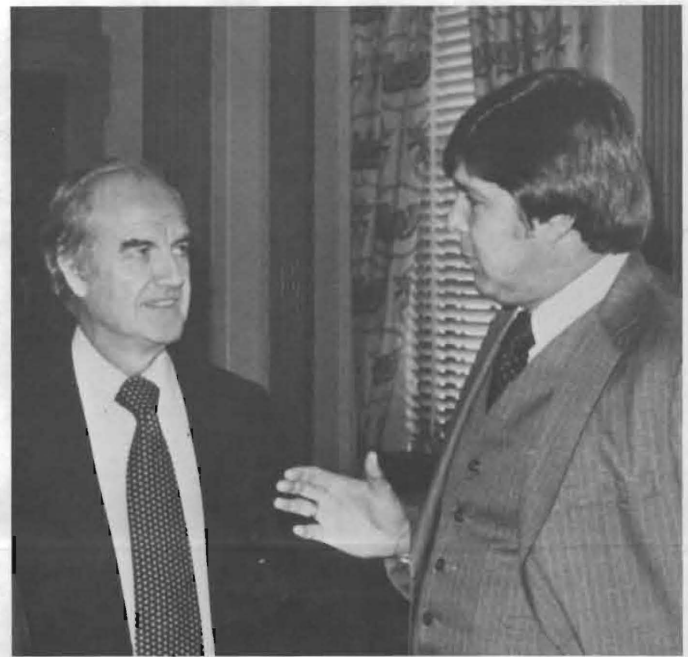
"I think it's a question of when do you want the water and where do you want it," MRBC Chairman Millard W. Hall said. He and other witnesses also cited potential problems surrounding environmental concerns and water transfers from one river basin to another. They appeared at a joint Congressional Economic Committee subcommittee hearing on the impact of an accelerated and largely coal-based synthetic fuels program on the water resources of northern Great Plains states.

Sen. George McGovern, D-S.D., subcommittee chairman, said there could be "an enormous battle somewhere down the pike" over competing demands for water. "All economic factors indicate that most, if not all, of the emerging synthetic fuels industry will be centered in the northern Great Plains, creating possible conflicts over the use of existing surface water," he said.

"A shortage of water in that area could threaten the nation's agricultural economy," McGovern said, adding that "it is absolutely imperative that our energy programs not be developed at the expense of our water resources."

Hall said three separate studies of water supplies and coal development in the upper Missouri River Basin in recent

(Continued, page 5.)



### Water the Issue, McGovern says

Sen. George McGovern, D-S.D. (left), speaks with MRBC Chairman Millard W. Hall following a congressional subcommittee hearing on water availability for synfuel development in the northern Great Plain states. McGovern asked witnesses to respond to two general questions: "Will the synfuel program that we are now promoting create conflicts with important nonenergy uses of water in the Northern Great Plains? And, if so, what public policies will be necessary to mitigate and eliminate these conflicts?"

~~REPRODUCED DOCUMENT~~

The Missouri River Basin Commission is a state-federal body charged with coordination, planning and communication for water and related land resources in the ten-state region drained by the Missouri River, in accordance with Public Law 89-80. Ten states, ten federal agencies, and two interstate water compacts are represented on the commission. They are Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wyoming; the U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Army, Commerce, Energy, HEW, HUD, Interior and Transportation, and the Environmental Protection and Federal Emergency Management Agencies; and Big Blue River Compact Administration and Yellowstone River Compact Commission. Canada is an observer.

Dr. Millard W. Hall, chairman; Vern Fahy, North Dakota, vice chairman

MRBC Basin Bulletin is published bimonthly and circulated to 4,500 subscribers. Address changes may be sent to the Missouri River Basin Commission, Suite 403, 10050 Regency Circle, Omaha, Neb. 68114. Elaine Larkin, editor; Lois Thomas, graphic artist.

## Upper Mo study nears end

A series of eight public meetings held throughout Montana in December signaled the final stage of the MRBC Upper Missouri Level B Study. The meetings were held to generate public review and comment on a preliminary recommended plan for the study area (see figure) before that plan becomes part of a final report.

A major conflict over values related to water use emerged during the course of the study, according to MRBC Chairman Millard W. Hall. "There are those individuals and organizations who are very concerned with maintaining adequate water quality and quantity for fish and wildlife, recreation, esthetic enjoyment, and hydroelectric power

generation," he said. "And there are others whose economic interests depend on streamflow diversions for other purposes, primarily irrigation. The plan acknowledges this conflict."

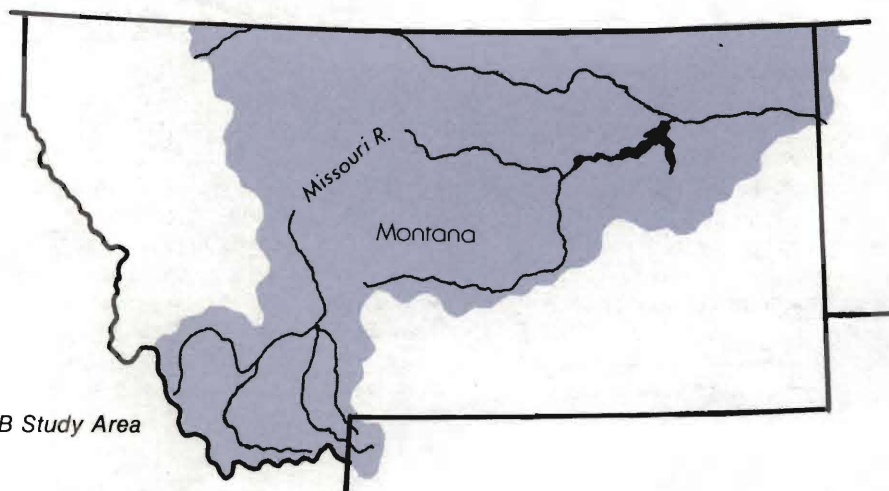
The preliminary plan addresses such other issues as the need to preserve agricultural land and wildlife habitat and the necessity for measures to control streambank erosion. Plan elements discussed at the Montana meeting include proposals for additional hydropower facilities at the existing Fort Peck and Canyon Ferry dams, a proposed dam and power generating facility near Fort Benton, and additional irrigation on the lower Marias and Milk Rivers.

The study was begun in 1978 and has involved participation from both government and the private sector. Federal and state agency participants and local citizens provided assistance to the study team in developing the plan. Typical of level B studies, MRBC members and alternates served on a management group which planned study activities and formulated the recommended plan.

Public participation was sought early in the study process by formation of four citizen advisory committees whose members live within the study area. The citizen committees identified local water and land resource problems, reviewed technical information, and reviewed preliminary resource management plans.

Among study activities which led to formulation of the preliminary plan, study staff made an inventory of the basin's existing water and related land resources. In addition, demands placed upon those resources were examined, and present and anticipated problems and opportunities were identified.

Once the plan has been revised to reflect public comments generated by the December meetings, it will be incorporated into a study report. Commission action on the report is expected at the 32nd quarterly meeting in May 1980. Following Commission action, the report will be forwarded to governors of the 10 basin states for a 90-day review period in accordance with title II of the Water Resources Planning Act of 1965 (P.L. 89-80).



Upper Missouri Level B Study Area

## Commissioners named

Two MRBC members have named new representatives to serve as MRBC commissioners. Several others have named alternates.

Francine Neubauer, recently named executive director of the Kansas Water Resources Board, represents Kansas. Neubauer is a native of Brussels, Belgium, and has been an American citizen since 1951. She has served the Kansas Water Resources Board for 14 years, first as secretary to the executive director in 1965, and for 12 years as an administrative assistant.



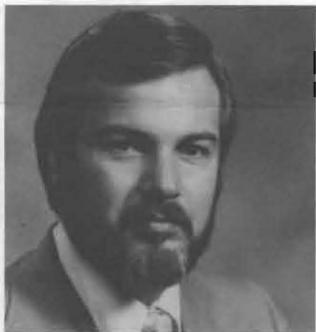
*Neubauer*



*Bergfalk*

James R. Bergfalk, region VII director of intergovernmental and congressional affairs, represents the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW). Bergfalk has been with HEW since 1978, and served previously as deputy director of the Missouri Department of Social Services.

The appointment of commissioners Dr. Charles F. Metzger, Department of Energy, and Roland (R. J.) Bruning, Department of the Interior (both pictured here), and Francis X. Tobin, Federal Emergency Management Agency, were announced in the last issue of the Basin Bulletin.



*Metzger*



*Bruning*

The following have recently been named alternates: Colorado—J. William McDonald, director of the Colorado Water Conservation Board; Department of Commerce—Herman F. Mondschein, regional hydrologist, and Dr. Lee W. Larson, hydrologist; Energy—Lawrence F. Coffill, regional engineer, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, and Robert McPhail, administrator, Western Area Power

Administration; Environmental Protection Agency—David Standley, region VIII Water Division director, and Dr. Allan S. Abramson, region VII water division director; Minnesota—Robert W. Arnold, director of federal/state basin commission planning, and Steven Pedersen, Water Planning Board; and Yellowstone River Compact Commission—Gary Fritz, administrator, Montana Water Resources Division.

## WCPAP offers preventive medicine for boom town ills

"The West is dotted with ghost towns—leftovers of the 'gold rush' era and the days of railroad line camps and stagecoach stopovers," said MRBC Chairman Millard W. Hall. "If we are not careful, synfuel and non-nuclear energy development here in the basin could have the same 'boom now, bust later' impact on communities near energy development sites."

The Western Coal Planning Assistance Project (WCPAP) being conducted by MRBC under contract with the U.S. Geological Survey Resource and Land Investigations (RALI) Program is intended to help state and local planners address and plan for potential negative impacts of sudden, energy-related growth. The two-part project began in 1978, and the first phase has now been completed.

As announced in the September/October Basin Bulletin, a four-volume reference set recommending planning strategies and cataloging facts necessary to analysis has been published. The reference documents resulted from common needs expressed by planners in primary coal development areas of Montana, Wyoming and North Dakota.

"MRBC became involved in this project because of its interest in how this basin develops, in addition to its primary concern with the ramifications of water use in energy development," Hall said. "If appropriately used, the reference system can provide information and suggest ways to lessen the impacts and avoid pitfalls of sudden community growth."

Phase II of the project, now underway, provides for training in the use of the reference system for planners throughout the basin. Four workshops will be held in June and July in Montana, North Dakota, Wyoming or Colorado, and one of the lower basin states (dates to be announced).

Before those workshops can take place, however, MRBC staff will meet with natural resources officials in all 10 basin states to brief them on the reference system, explain MRBC objectives of the training sessions, determine additional state needs for the sessions, and obtain the names of persons interested in participating in the workshops.

The complete four-volume reference system has been distributed to planners throughout the Missouri River Basin. Additional copies will be furnished to those attending the training sessions, with a limited number also available on request from MRBC. Further information about the project may be found in the "Phase I Final Report" and the "Workshop Report," also available from MRBC on request.

## MRBC planning leader moves to PNRBC

MRBC Director of Comprehensive Planning William B. (Bill) Hutchinson resigned in December to become director of planning and technical services for the Pacific Northwest River Basins Commission (PNRBC). Hutchinson said in an interview that he expects to maintain a close working relationship with MRBC staff, and hopes to increase cooperative efforts between the two river basin commissions.

"There are distinct advantages in developing close working relationships between river basin commissions, especially regarding states involved in more than one regional entity," Hutchinson said. "I think it is incumbent on the regional organizations to work together to ensure that state involvement in both organizations is meaningful and compatible."



Hutchinson

Several Missouri River Basin states are involved in more than one river basin commission. Montana and Wyoming participate in both MRBC and PNRBC. Hutchinson noted MRBC state members have occasionally commented that two adjacent river basin commissions were "handling the same things differently, especially with regard to priorities."

Hutchinson will be responsible for regional planning, priorities and associated coordination activities in the PNRBC post. He will also oversee the \$6 million Columbia River Estuary Study now underway in Washington and Oregon. In addition, PNRBC is just starting to develop a section 13a assessment of water for non-nuclear energy development in the five-state Pacific Northwest region.

Of his service on the MRBC staff, Hutchinson said, "The Commission members have, in my opinion, shown a very great willingness to cooperate with the planning process. This is important; it makes staff work a lot easier than it otherwise could be."

"And secondly," he added, "I think that our (MRBC) planning staff is very good. And I hope that I find both these characteristics at Pacific Northwest." The Pacific Northwest River Basin Commission has headquarters in Vancouver, Wash.

Hutchinson joined the MRBC staff in 1974 as a planner involved in the National Water Assessment. He had been in charge of comprehensive planning efforts since 1977, overseeing the regional plan update, the priorities process, and the James River Basin subregional analysis.

Staff Director Carroll M. Hamon noted, "Hutchinson has contributed greatly to advancement of Commission programs

during his five years on the Commission staff, and particularly to the Commission's comprehensive planning effort in the last two years."

No immediate plans for a replacement for Hutchinson have been announced, although Hamon said comprehensive planning staff will assume additional responsibilities for an interim period while personnel alternatives are being considered.

## Regional plan tops Denver agenda

The 31st quarterly meeting of the Missouri River Basin Commission will be held Feb. 6-7 at the Marina Hotel, Denver, Colo. Commission approval of the regional plan update is the principal business item on the agenda. In addition, a representative of the Rio Blanco Oil Shale Company will lead a discussion of Western Colorado oil shale programs. And the executive director of the Western Governors Policy Office (Westpo) will address the luncheon session.

The regional plan update is the result of nearly a year of work by the Commission planning committee and state and federal officials participating on subbasin planning teams in each of eight subbasins. Subbasins are principal tributary subregions of the Missouri River Basin: the Upper Missouri, Yellowstone, Western Dakotas, Eastern Dakotas, Platte-Niobrara, Kansas, Middle Missouri and Lower Missouri.

In addition to providing current information on conditions and directions for water resources planning in the eight subbasins, the update represents "significant improvements" over the first regional plan published in 1977, according to MRBC Chairman Millard W. Hall.

"This update identifies each state's objectives in 14 functional areas of water resources planning, and integrates these objectives into a basinwide perspective, for the first time," Hall said. "Another of its strengths is a clear identification of problems and opportunities throughout the basin."

"And finally, the update process was approached from a subbasin level, involving representatives of state and federal agencies located in each of the subbasins examined," he stated. "This contributed a significantly deeper understanding of the characteristics, problems and opportunities in each locale."

Following commission approval in February, the plan will be forwarded to the basin's Governors and federal departments for an official 90-day review.

Western Governors Policy Office Executive Director Phillip Burgess will address the commission luncheon. Burgess will discuss the concerns which prompted Western governors to form Westpo. The organization, formed in 1979, is an alliance of the governors of Rocky Mountain states united to promote a regional perspective in negotiations with the federal government over energy development plans.

## Western boasts oil conserved

Since 1972, the Western Area Power Administration (Western), Golden, Colo., has conserved almost 39 million barrels of oil through what company officials call an "oil conservation program." Western is a federal power marketing administration which markets and transmits electric power and energy from 47 federal hydroelectric dams and one thermal plant in 15 Midwestern and Western states.

"Oil conservation using hydropower is not a new concept," according to Western Administrator Robert L. McPhail. "But the thrust of the program has greatly evolved from one of pure need in the state of Iowa to a specific, more complex and conscious effort to conserve oil throughout Western's area of responsibility," he added.

Western's program began as an effort to supplement power supplies in Iowa during the winter of 1972-73. At that time, according to Western officials, little oil was available on the oil market because of distribution problems and also because coal-fired power generating plants were converting to oil to meet antipollution requirements. The situation was particularly crucial in Iowa.

To solve the problem, officials decided to use Western's surplus hydro capability to supply "peaking power" to Iowa utilities, allowing them to displace their oil-fired generating facilities during certain time periods. "Peaking power" is the capacity needed to handle power consumption in excess of coal-fired plant capability during maximum use hours.

The practice has since been extended to most states served by Western. In upper reaches of the Missouri River Basin, according to Western officials, many utilities use oil-fired generation to produce peaking power for the top increment of their loads during on peak hours—an 8- to 10-hour period—of heavy load days. Western counts as "oil conserved" the oil that would have been used had the utilities not purchased hydro-generated power for peak period use. Western replaces the energy marketed to other utilities by purchasing off peak thermal or nuclear energy purchased, or if available, with surplus hydro energy.

Western stepped up summer oil conservation efforts in Colorado and Wyoming in 1979. Formal arrangements for oil conservation sales have been completed with Public Service Company of Colorado, Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association, Thornton, Colo., and Black Hills Power and Light, Rapid City, S.D. Black Hills Power and Light officials said the program and agreement saved approximately 1.5 million gallons of middle distillate oil which would have been used without the program and the agreement, for the period June 15 through Sept. 15, 1979.

## Energy hearing (continued)

years "provide adequate information at this time. Further, there is an adequate supply of water to meet traditional demands in the region, as well as the new demands associated with the proposed level of coal development until at least the year 2000," he said.

But ensuring that the water is available "at the appropriate time and place" is likely to require changes in interstate compact agreements and state laws and regulations, as well as additional spending on water planning and management, witnesses said.

Guy R. Martin, Department of the Interior assistant secretary for land and water, said the Water and Power Resources Service (formerly the Bureau of Reclamation) and Army Corps of Engineers have agreed that one million acre-feet of water in main stem Missouri River reservoirs could be made available for industrial use in the Missouri Basin.

"This water was intended for future irrigation uses," he said, "but was considered surplus to that use for a period of 50 years. In addition, there are about three million acre-feet of uncommitted flows in the Missouri River that could be made available for industrial development."

Martin said Interior does not believe that water availability "will be the limiting constraint on coal development in the northern Great Plains. There are other very important environmental and socioeconomic considerations."

Ruth Clusen, Department of Energy assistant secretary for environment, said it appears from a Missouri Basin study that coal development can be accommodated "to the year 2000 without any major impact on other water uses." But there is the question, she said, of whether conflicts will be created by "certain institutional issues."

Among these issues is the transporting of water from one area to another and sometimes from one river basin to another, she said. "While interbasin transfer of water is approved by some," Clusen added, "it is strongly opposed by others." She noted that two major studies of available water supplies deal largely with surface water and do not call for use of underground water supplies for coal development. "Ground water is, however, an alternative means of water for increased Western energy production that was cited in both reports," she said.

Hall noted during a question period that most Western states, including Nebraska, have laws prohibiting the sale of surface water rights. But in many states, he said, such laws do not apply to underground water.

John McCormack of the Environmental Policy Fund, Washington, D.C., cautioned that parts of the northern Great Plains could become "national sacrifice areas" through the effects of coal development. For one thing, he said, competing demand for water could drive water prices up to the point that farmers would be priced out of the market.

## Basin notes

The MRBC Priorities Report for FY 1981 and FY 1982 is now available. It lists project elements of the comprehensive plan that have been endorsed for federal funding or federal agency leadership during the next two fiscal years. Write or call MRBC for copies . . . Navigation tonnage on the Missouri River exceeded 1978 records by about 9 percent when the season closed in mid-December, according to the Missouri River Division, Army Corps of Engineers . . . The Soil Conservation Society of America (SCSA) has announced a conference, "Remote Sensing for Resource Management," to be held Oct. 28-30 at the Radisson Muehlebach Hotel in Kansas City, Mo. . . . Dr. James S. Burton has been named to the staff of Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Land and Water Resources Guy R. Martin. Burton will provide research assistance on a wide variety of water resource issues including water for energy development . . . A \$500,000 Land and Water Conservation Fund grant has been awarded to the State of Colorado to acquire rights to the conservation pool at the Bonny State Recreation Area. The state will match the federal grant for a total recreation investment of \$1 million . . . MRBC calendar: The 32nd quarterly MRBC meeting will be a joint session with the Arkansas-White-Red Basins Inter-Agency Committee, May 5-7 at the Holiday Inn Towers, Kansas City, Kans. The 33rd quarterly MRBC meeting will be held in conjunction with the 5th annual basin governors' conference, July 9-10 at the Kirkwood Motor Inn, Bismarck, N.D.

## 'Clean water' aids now available

A new audiovisual program highlighting recreation and open space opportunities at wastewater treatment sites is now being loaned, free, by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service (HCRS) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Entitled "Clean Water Recreation, a How-to Slideshow," the 15-minute slide/tape presentation focuses on meeting provisions of the Clean Water Act of 1977.

Three new brochures describing aspects of the clean water recreation program are also available from HCRS. They are "Recreation Benefits from Clean Water" about legal requirements; "What About Clean Water Recreation?, No. 1" on meeting the requirements of section 208 of the act; and "What About Clean Water Recreation?, No. 2" on planning for consistency with section 201 of the act.

For copies of the brochures or to borrow the slideshow, write Water Resources Division, HCRS, 440 G Street NW, Room 312, Washington, D.C. 20243. The slideshow is also available from any HCRS or EPA regional office.



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