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Vol. 6, No. 3

January-February

## Omaha to be site of presidential water policy workshop

Omaha will be the site of a regional workshop on President Jimmy Carter's water policy reform Wednesday, March 21.

The meeting at the Ramada Inn Central will be one of four meetings nationwide to seek public comment on implementation of Carter's 13 water policy initiatives issued as presidential directives last June.

Millard W. Hall, chairman of the Missouri River Basin Commission and a presidential appointee, is making arrangements for the Omaha meeting at the request of Assistant Interior Secretary Guy R. Martin.

Martin recently released a progress report on the work and future plans of the 10 federal interagency task forces charged with implementing major aspects of the policy. He also reported on the initial work of an intergovernmental task force on the policy which includes state and local officials who along with top federal water policy makers have taken leadership with respect to water policy issues.

The Omaha workshop will consist of a series of panels which will discuss with interested citizens preliminary task force reports from 10 of the 19 task forces. These include Principles and Standards changes, independent

review of water resources project construction plans, nonstructural flood protection alternatives, and technical and agricultural assistance programs in water short areas.

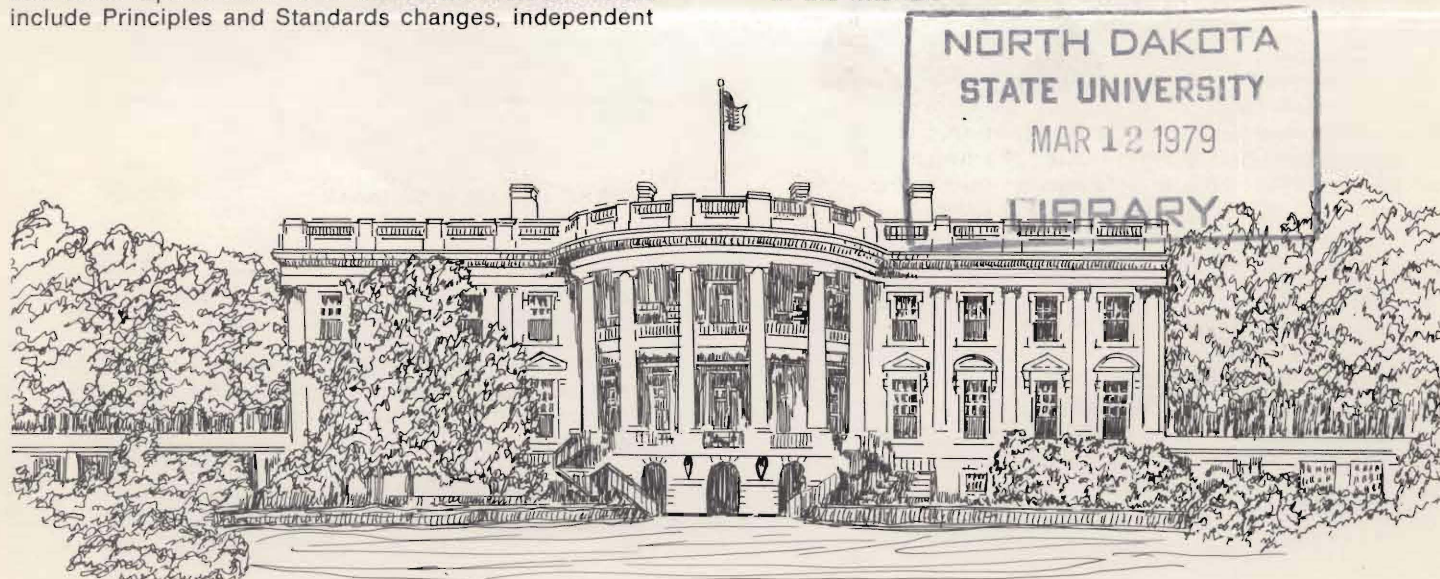
Discussion also will cover water conservation in federal facilities. Short briefings and discussions on water project cost-sharing and planning assistance legislation also will be held.

Chairman Hall said the workshop will provide opportunity for public dialogue and questions and answers in the panel discussions. He suggests, however, that written comments be submitted.

Task force reports which will be discussed at the workshop are available from the Missouri River Basin Commission, Suite 403, 10050 Regency Circle, Omaha, NE 68114.

Other regional water policy workshops are scheduled in Sacramento, Calif., March 7; Salt Lake City, Utah, March 9; and Boston, Mass., March 28.

The workshops are being planned by the Water Policy Implementation Coordination Group in the Department of the Interior.



## Governors' conference, MRBC to meet in Kansas City

The Missouri River Basin Governors' Conference will meet in conjunction with the 28th regular meeting of the Missouri River Basin Commission April 30-May 2 at the Crown Center Hotel in Kansas City, Mo.

Arrangements for the meeting were announced by Fred A. Lafser Jr., director of the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, Thursday, Feb. 8, at the basin commission's 27th regular meeting in Denver. (Lafser is Missouri's new member on the commission. Bob Dunkeson will remain as alternate member.)

Missouri Gov. Joseph Teasdale will host the governors' conference.

President Jimmy Carter's proposed federal water policy is expected to be one subject of discussion at the conference.



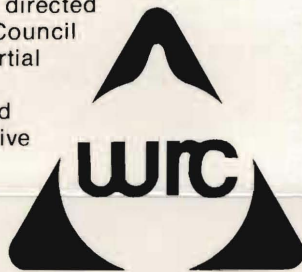
Lafser

## WRC directed to review water projects

President Jimmy Carter has directed the U.S. Water Resources Council (WRC) to complete an impartial technical review of all new federal and federally assisted water projects under Executive Order 12113 signed on January 4.

Agency proposals to seek authorization or appropriations for new water development will still require from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) the traditional advice as to the projects' relationship to the President's program, but the WRC will evaluate a project's technical soundness and compliance with required planning procedures.

The review will be established for the fiscal year 1981 budget cycle. Agencies will begin submitting project reports to WRC April 1. Within 60 days of receiving a project report, the council chairman is to report the results of the impartial technical review to the agency head identifying areas of noncompliance and necessary steps to assure conformance.



President Carter detailed four areas where compliance must be assured — the council's Principles and Standards for Planning Water and Related Land Resources; the council's new planning manual for the Principles and Standards; relevant federal laws and regulations; and the goal of wide public participation and adequate consideration of public views.

"The technical review will serve the interests of both the Congress and the Administration. Well planned, economically sound, and environmentally sensitive projects will reach implementation sooner," said Dr. Leo M. Eisel, director of the U.S. Water Resources Council.

"A project which has met all economic and environmental requirements in the planning stage will not suffer the costly delays we see now. We know that the whole area of water projects has been a frustrating one. The independent review unit assures a thorough and speedy review which will smooth the way for needed water projects," Eisel said.

The President's Executive Order confirms his early water policy initiatives and directs the Council to maintain current Principles and Standards, to develop a planning manual for use in calculating project benefits and costs and to establish procedures for the Federal agencies to use in preparing comprehensive regional or river basin plans.

Noting that the President expects speedy organization of the independent review unit, Dr. Eisel indicated that proposed rules, regulations and procedures necessary to implement the unit were to be published in the Federal Register by mid-February. Final rules are to be established by August. Plans to hire staff for the independent review unit within the council staff are underway.

"We have, are developing, and will continually monitor and improve the rules guiding Federal water planning. The independent water project review function will assure that rules are applied equally and equitably to all proposed projects," Eisel said.

## MRBC to meet in Canada

The Missouri River Basin Commission will hold its 29th regular meeting in Calgary, Alta., July 31 through Aug. 2.

MRBC Chairman Millard W. Hall said the meeting was arranged at the invitation of the Canadian government, which has an observer on the commission.

## Coal planning assistance project extended

The Western Coal Planning Assistance Project was extended by action of the Missouri River Basin Commission at its 27th quarterly meeting Feb. 7 in Denver.

The commission action reaffirmed a contract signed in September with the Resource and Land Investigations (RALI) Program of the Interior Department's Geological Survey to fund the second phase of the project begun in 1977.

The first phase of the project developed a reference system for resource planners and decisionmakers forced to deal with coal development in the Yellowstone River Basin and adjacent coal areas of Montana, Wyoming and North Dakota.

The reference system consisted of four documents — a fact book, a source book, a coal/energy forecasts document and a methodologies document. The reference system is designed for use by planners and decisionmakers in dealing with coal mining and related impacts.

A report also has been prepared which describes and ranks high-priority problems in the project area and assists in using the reference system.

A second phase of the project which the commission approved will address the results and recommendations developed during the initial phase of the project. Phase one results will be tested and evaluated, planners and decisionmakers will be trained in the effective use of the tools developed, and results of both phases of the project will be transferred to other parts of the Missouri River Basin and the nation as appropriate.

Jerry Zimmerman is MRBC staff coordinator for the project. Art Greenberg is the project manager located in Billings, Mont.

## Colorado leery of water policy

Proposed federal water policy in the areas of conservation, federal water rights and cost-sharing could present problems for Colorado, Harris D. Sherman, executive director of the Colorado Department of Natural Resources, told a Missouri River Basin Commission luncheon in Denver Wednesday, Feb. 7.



*Sherman*

The President's proposed conservation policy, for example, Sherman said, "fails to recognize that storage of water is the principal means of water conservation in Colorado and other western states where spring runoff produces a high percentage of the total runoff."

He said Colorado does not oppose the principle by which the federal government has reserved water rights on federal lands. But, he said, Colorado "wants to see them quantified, limited to the authorized purposes for which they were intended . . . and integrated into the state system for management of water rights, based on priority of appropriation."

Sherman said the President's proposed policy requiring that states provide a share of the cost of federal water projects may be a move in the right direction. But, he said, "before accepting the President's proposal, we here in Colorado must be assured that any cost-sharing arrangements do not endanger our agricultural economy, which is, to a great extent, dependent upon irrigation."



### **Banks explains High Plains-Ogallala study**

*Harvey Banks, head of the water division, Camp, Dresser & McKee, explains the \$6 million High Plains-Ogallala Aquifer Study he is directing under contract with the Commerce Department's Economic Development Administration.*

*One aspect of the study is an investigation of a means of stimulating the economy of the water-short high plains of Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Colorado, Nebraska and Kansas by diverting water from other river systems including the Missouri.*

*The impacts on Missouri River Basin states resulting from potential Missouri River diversions have not yet been assessed, Banks told the Missouri River Basin Commission Feb. 8 in Denver.*

## MRBC completes water assessment of coal areas

Water amounts don't appear to be limiting factors in coal development in the Upper Missouri River Basin.

That's the summary of a study recently completed by the Missouri River Basin Commission titled "Water Availability Assessment for Coal Technology Requirements."

The study was conducted under contract with the U.S. Water Resources Council as part of a nationwide effort authorized under section 13(a) of the federal Nonnuclear Research and Development Act of 1974 (P.L. 93-577).

The MRBC assessment concluded that from the standpoint of coal and water availability, it appeared that projected levels of energy development could be accommodated within the assessment area. Distribution of water rather than quantity would be the primary problem.

New storage, interbasin transfers, changes in present water use, or ground water development would probably be required to assure a water supply at desired locations.

Environmental and socioeconomic impacts of energy coal technology development were also assessed. Effects upon surface water quality due to runoff from coal mines or coal stockpiles would generally amount to increases in total dissolved solids concentration of less

than 1.0 mg/l except in some northeast Wyoming and North Dakota streams where increases of up to 41.0 mg/l were projected by the year 2000. Conversion process wastewater would not be discharged into streams.

Water supply alternatives analyzed in Montana and Wyoming included: 1) water from the nearest suitable source; 2) water from the Bighorn River; and 3) water from the Yellowstone River. Of the three, alternative 1 appears to be the cheapest, but it would have the greatest adverse impact on fish habitat as well as requiring changes in existing use. Appreciable fishery resource impacts from alternatives 2 or 3 would be confined to the Bighorn River.

In North Dakota, the use of water from Lake Sakakawea was analyzed. The primary water availability problem there is related to distribution rather than quantity.

Socioeconomic impacts of energy technology development would be greatest in North Dakota. Projected tax revenues from mining and processing appear to be adequate for dealing with additional social costs once the plants are operating, although some difficulty might be encountered during the construction phase before most tax revenue would be generated.

Don Ohnstad of the MRBC staff directed the assessment study.

*MRBC Basin Bulletin is published bimonthly by the Missouri River Basin Commission, charged with coordination, planning and communication in the area of water and related land resources in accordance with P.L. 89-80. Address changes may be sent to the Missouri River Basin Commission, Suite 403, 10050 Regency Circle, Omaha, NE 68114.*



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