

mrbc



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MRBC forms committees, adopts information policy

The Missouri River Basin Commission (MRBC) formed committees on scarce resource management and power planning and adopted an information policy at its 14th regular quarterly meeting in Omaha Wednesday and Thursday, Nov. 5-6.

The Scarce Resource Management Committee was established to address the basinwide problems of management of scarce ground water and to develop realistic management guidelines, criteria and procedures. The interaction of ground water with surface water also will be considered by the committee.

Members of the committee will include designated representatives of Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska and Kansas as well as three federal agencies to be named by MRBC Chairman John W. Neuberger.

The Ad Hoc Committee on Power Planning was charged with preparing ground work for the commission in considering formation of a standing committee. The ad hoc committee consisting of federal and state members will report its recommendations to the commission at its February meeting.

Chairman Neuberger said prior to the 14th meeting that the need exists for a standing committee under MRBC to assess on a continuing basis the many complex and evolving aspects of power generation as they affect water and related land resources planning in the Missouri Basin.

The comprehensive, coordinated joint plan (CCJP) received definition at the 14th meeting. The suggested motion that was printed in the last Basin Bulletin was adopted after minor changes.

Simply put, the CCJP at any give time is the recommended plan adopted by MRBC which serves as a guide for the management of water and related land resources in the Missouri River Basin. It will evolve through a continuous and dynamic procedure to be referred to as the regional planning process.

In other business, MRBC formalized policy that permits commission staff to grant public access to commission records and other information. The commission moved to make those materials available to the fullest extent



Warren Patefield, Laurel, Neb., chairman of the Nebraska Natural Resources Commission addresses the noon luncheon prior to the start of the 14th quarterly MRBC meeting in Omaha.

possible in accordance with the Water Resources Planning Act and the Freedom of Information Act.

Sioux City, Iowa, was selected as the site of the 15th regular quarterly meeting Feb. 4-5.

Senate subcommittee begins 2nd series of oversight hearings

Sen. Frank Church's Subcommittee on Energy Research and Water Resources has begun its second series of oversight hearings on Public Law 89-80, the Water Resources Planning Act of 1965.

The first series resulted in legislation (P.L. 94-112) signed recently by President Ford that extended Title III, modified membership on the Water Resources Council and provided authorization for funding the national assessment and Level B plans.

Federal telephone users:

The MRBC FTS number has changed effective Dec. 1. The new number is 864-9351. Just dial our seven digit FTS number without an area code. The MRBC commercial number will remain (402) 397-5714.

"I consider passage of (P.L. 94-112), however, as merely a temporary bandage over the wound," Senator Church said Oct. 16 at the first hearing in the second series in Las Vegas. "We've got to do some surgery on the Water Resources Planning Act."

Senator Church said river basin commissions, states and other interested entities will have an opportunity to directly participate in providing the basis for possible major changes in P.L. 89-80.

Senate report favorable to RBC's

(The following is reprinted from the Omaha World-Herald of Friday, Oct. 31)

By the World-Herald Washington Bureau

Washington--Given "limited authority" and a "poor record of funding," regional river basin commissions created under the 1965 Water Resources Planning Act have performed fairly well, according to a Senate Interior Committee report.

The report suggests that the river basin commissions be given supervision over other natural resources like land use planning and regional water resources.

In addition, the staff report said, there should be more incentives for states to cooperate with regional planning.

The report singled out the Missouri River Basin Commission as one that has been trying to increase state involvement in decision-making.

But the ability of any of the regional commissions to "tackle hard issues" is limited by a requirement that commission members reach consensus on actions, the report said. *(See editor's note.)*

The river basin commissions were set up to coordinate water development plans in a region.

Since they have no independent management or operating authority, they pose little threat to established federal or state agencies, the staff report said.

That arrangement also means they lack any real control over what state and federal agencies do on water issues, the report said.

Most states have minimal interest or expertise in water resources planning, but have been willing to join a regional commission as a way to guard against federal actions which may threaten them and to oppose or defend interests of neighboring states, the study said.

River basin commissions also have served states, especially those with small water planning agencies of their own, with technical reports, information about federal activities and advocacy of states' interests before federal agencies, the study says.

Water resources plans coordinated by the river basin commissions reflect "far more than a collection of agency's pet projects or construction backlogs," and generally incorporate a more balanced view of resource development than agencies involved with specific water development projects, the study said.

Congress should give the commissions greater authority over federal grant programs in the river basins, the study said.

(Editor's note: MRBC Chairman John W. Neuberger has stated to the Senate Interior Committee that the consensus rule has not inhibited discussion of difficult issues in the Missouri River Basin.

Rather, the requirement that every reasonable endeavor be made to achieve consensus has actually encouraged discussion of difficult and tough issues because state members feel they have a good opportunity to express their views.

"At this stage in the short history of MRBC, I would be very concerned with the possibility of any proposed changes alternating this important philosophy of joint state-federal participation," Neuberger said.)

EDITORIAL

MRBC—A state-federal partnership?

By John W. Neuberger, Chairman

The Missouri River Basin Commission is a state-federal partnership, but it need not and should not be considered an equal partnership in all respects. Since the governors of the MRB states requested the President to form the MRBC, the primary purpose of MRBC should be to serve and assist its state members.

There are several forums available to federal agencies for coordinating and advancing their activities in this basin. These include federal regional councils, the U.S. Water Resources Council and the lead-agency approach to conducting water resources studies. But the only basinwide forum in the Missouri River Basin in which the states are represented in the deliberations and policy decisions is the Missouri River Basin Commission.

The principal benefactors of MRBC planning and coordination should be the states, the region and the nation, in that order. MRBC is an equal partnership in terms of decision-making, the federal members are greater than equal in funding participation, but the states are and should be greater-than-equal partners in terms of management and benefits.

State water plan underway in Missouri

Missouri's first long-range comprehensive state water plan since 1939 will be developed by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

Marvin Nodiff, whose Division of Planning and Policy Development in DNR coordinates water resources planning activities in Missouri, said state and Title III water planning grant money from the federal government will help finance the project. It will be phased over a three-year period starting next June with publication of a general description of Missouri's water resources.

Luther Skelton, Ph.D., head of DNR's resource planning, designed the plan and will direct its completion, Nodiff said.

The second phase of the plan will be an in-depth analysis of such problems as flooding and assuring sufficient amounts of quality water for people, industry, agriculture, energy, navigation and recreation, followed by recommendations.

3-county vote rejects Nebraska's Mid-State District

The Mid-State Reclamation District in central Nebraska was defeated Nov. 4 in a special election involving voters in three counties.

As authorized by Congress, the multi-million dollar Mid-State Project calls for expanding irrigation, controlling floods, stabilizing ground water, developing recreation areas and conserving soil and wildlife in Buffalo, Hall and Merrick Counties.

Since construction never began, Nebraska law required that voters be asked if they wanted to continue the district and its taxing authorities for another 15 years.

The Platte River Basin Level B Study, sponsored by the Missouri River Basin Commission, considered the water needs and problems of the region and recommended continuing planning for the Mid-State Project to answer questions concerning ground water levels and environmental considerations.

Congress will have the final decision on the fate of the federal project which has been in the works since the Mid-State district was formed 27 years ago.

Program review, other MRBC publications available

The first combined federal and state program review in the Missouri River Basin is available for public distribution on a limited basis.

The report is titled "Missouri River Basin State and Federal Water and Related Land Resources Programs -- Fiscal Years 1976-1980."

It presents a description of the various state and federal water and related land resources planning, development and management activities both present and planned within the Missouri River Basin, and indicates field estimate funding required for each activity listed for five fiscal years.

The report is intended to serve as a guide to better enable the basin states, federal agencies and MRBC chairman to coordinate water and related land resources planning and construction



activities within the Missouri River Basin.

More than 800 planning, research and construction programs were identified by MRBC state and federal member agencies as well as by several local and special purpose organizations.

The funding for these programs exceeds \$282 million in fiscal year 1976, including the four-month transition period. This figure does not include the Environmental Protection Agency's grants for construction of water treatment facilities and other agencies' programs which were not supplied or could not be separated by fiscal year.

Other MRBC reports available include "Water and Related Land Resources Problems in the Missouri River Basin," a technical memorandum prepared by the commission as regional sponsor for the U.S. Water Resources Council's 1975 National Assessment.

The 1975 MRBC annual report is at the printer and will be available by the first of the year. The 1976 MRBC coordination directory is being assembled for distribution in January.

EPA answers questions on 208 planning

A transcript will soon be available of the round-table discussion held at the 14th quarterly MRBC meeting regarding implementation of Section 208 of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1972.

Section 208 authorizes integrated planning and management to achieve and maintain water quality.

James Agee, San Francisco, western states coordinator for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and regional EPA representatives answered questions raised by commission members and state water quality control agency representatives.



Agee

Issues covered included the scope of 208 regulations, definition of planning areas, identification of priorities, methods of coordination, the role of river basin commissions, problems of non-point pollution and administration of funding.

Edited transcripts will be mailed to all who attended the Omaha meeting. Additional copies will be available for those who request them.

Old West Commission offers energy research information

The Old West Regional Commission and the U.S. Forest Service are cooperating on a program to develop a computerized information system of ongoing energy research in Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wyoming. Objectives of the Energy Research Information System (ERIS) are to provide an inventory of ongoing research in the region and to act as a channel for communication among those in the energy community.

The first quarterly report of ERIS is now available for distribution. It contains abstracts of some 300 energy-related research projects, including reclamation, water use and socio-economic impacts of energy development.

A computer search service is offered as a complement to the quarterly report. It is designed to provide information when specific questions cannot be answered by the report.

For further information on the quarterly report or the search service, contact: Beth Givens or Cathy Boyd, Old West Regional Commission, Fratt Bldg. 306A, Billings, Mont. Telephone: (406) 245-6711, ext. 6665 or FTS (406) 585-6665.

Colonel Mumma named Army MRBC member

Col. Harry F. Mumma has been named the Missouri River Basin Commission member representing the Department of the Army.

Colonel Mumma was named Oct. 1 to the top position in the Army Corps of Engineers' Missouri River Division succeeding Brig. Gen. Philip T. Boerger, who retired.

As head of the Missouri River Division, Colonel Mumma is responsible for the corps' water resources programs in the 529-thousand square-mile Missouri River Basin. His military construction responsibility covers nine states of the Missouri Basin (all except Montana) plus Michigan, Indiana, Illinois and Wisconsin.



Colonel Mumma

Army also named Col. C.H. Charles as an alternate member in addition to Gus J. Karabatsos, who presently serves as alternate.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has named Myron G. Eckberg of Denver as an MRBC alternate.

Charles Huyett of Kansas City will continue to serve as HUD alternate in addition to Eckberg.



Missouri River Basin Commission
Suite 403, 10050 Regency Circle
Omaha, Nebraska 68114

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