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IRRIGATION AND ITS FUTURE IN RECLAMATION

From what I have seen firsthand, irrigation is alive and well in South Dakota. Even though irrigation is not now our number 1 priority it's good to see the fruits of this development in water short areas. In more than half the world, hunger is an ever-present condition of life; famine, a frequent threat. The United States still has ample food. However, with world population rising, food production needs to be continued at a high level accomplished by efficient development of agricultural land and water. One of the ways is, of course, through irrigation programs, which contribute to the goal of supplying high quality foods to nourish the Nation and the world.

Some experts have said that the day will come when we will need to draw upon the efficient production of available lands, bring retired cropland back into production where suitable, and use modern technology to increase our agricultural production
to meet both domestic and world food needs. While meeting high priority power and municipal and industrial water needs first, we also must be mindful of other project potentials such as irrigation.

The recently published report of the National Water Commission will have a substantial impact on our future water development.

Many of the report's 232 numbered recommendations are sound and widely accepted; others are proving to be highly controversial. Regardless of your personal opinion on the merits of the report, one item is self-evident: The Commission has poignantly concluded that substantial changes are needed in national water policy, and it has attempted to outline what such changes should be. Many of the Commission's recommendations would require Congressional and State legislation for adaption and implementation. The remainder depend on Executive approval and State and local cooperation.

This five-year study can have a major impact upon the organization, financing, evaluation, and management of water programs. In my opinion, the Commission properly assessed the mood of the Nation and the need for (1) improvements in institutions, (2) increased non-Federal cost-sharing, (3) strengthening of local and State units of Government, (4) improvement in resource management, (5) recognition of greater environmental concerns, and (6) need for improvements in existing water law. These enumerated needs reflect desirable trends and as such no
one can take exception. We may differ with the Commission as to the degree of change that is appropriate in these areas. We may disagree in several specific areas.

The Commission's recommendation for a strengthened independent Water Resources Council is not consistent with President Nixon's Executive Reorganization Proposal that envisions a Department of Energy and Natural Resources with the WRC a part of it.

The National Water Commission's proposal for recovery of all irrigation costs, including interest, from the direct beneficiaries of irrigation is controversial. The direct beneficiaries of irrigation are not the only beneficiaries and may not even be the principal ones. Therefore, they can ask why they should bear the full cost. Manufacturers, processors, service industries, professional people all gain from economic spinoff from irrigation as well as the other multiple functions of water projects. One appropriate method of sharing costs among all beneficiaries is through conservancy districts--or here in South Dakota, Conservancy Subdistricts--with ad valorem taxing authority.

Even with the sharing of costs through ad valorem taxation, the need for increased repayment from direct beneficiaries is appropriate in many cases. The legislative policy for repayment is set forth primarily in the 1939 Reclamation Project Act which was enacted toward the end of the country's greatest economic depression. The 1939 Act reflects conditions at that time. As our water resources become more scarce and therefore more
precious, this scarcity should be reflected in pricing policies. With increasing diligence, water must be managed to meet human needs in perpetuity.

The Administration intends to develop legislative proposals with respect to the Commission's recommendations on cost-sharing. Secretary Morton, as Chairman of the Water Resources Council, recently set in motion a special interagency task force, formed under the direction of Assistant Secretary Jack Horton, to develop policy proposals for greater cost-sharing. The task force conclusions are currently being considered in the Department.

The Commission's emphasis upon efficiency criteria for evaluation can be broadened to give greater recognition to social and environmental factors and regional and local goals. Environmental analysis needs greater precision. The Commission has made good proposals for improved management of existing water supplies. Further consideration needs to be given to the nature of Federal action programs which cannot be done at the State or local level.

The National Water Commission Report acknowledges that past water policies were adequate for needs and values when they were promulgated, and some updating is needed to keep in tune with the times. In other words, traditional programs—to be of enduring value—must be flexible and capable of serving evolutionary goals.
Flexibility of policies and programs is the planners greatest challenge. Recognizing this, concern has been raised as it appears that some of the National Water Commission's conclusions and proposals appear to be inflexible. They merely substitute new inflexibility for past inflexibility.

The Commission believes we should not necessarily plan for the worst possible contingency—that is, to use a "crisis scenario" of accumulated worst possible conditions occurring simultaneously. However, this creates a problem in carrying forward water resource development and management programs as it centers on uncertainty. With a declining birth rate, how should we evaluate the difference between the Census Bureau's high population projection of 300 million people in the United States for the year 2000 and its low projection of 250 million? The difference of 50 million people can profoundly affect future requirements for the use of water resources. Can we plan with enough flexibility to meet either condition? This is a big challenge.

The National Water Commission's report also could create a problem with respect to future requirements for food and fiber. It assumes that agricultural water shortage will not be a problem before the year 2000, that consumptive water use in agriculture will decrease, and that transfer of water from agriculture to other uses will not restrict food supplies or export possibilities. The Commission therefore concludes that there is no longer any need for federally-assisted agriculture water development.
This could be a dangerous assumption as the Nation's agricultural picture can change dramatically in a short time.

 Everywhere we turn we find production pushing the limits of capacity. Agricultural markets are reflecting this condition. World demand for food and fiber is strong and likely to remain so. For instance, foreign markets are calling for as many soybeans as can be grown. Moreover, other Nations which demand our raw foodstuffs have developed a competitive advantage in manufactured goods and in sources of energy. Our agricultural economic power may be needed to finance increasing imports of manufactured goods.

 The Bureau of Reclamation in these times has retained an attitude of flexibility. A redirection in the planning programs of the Bureau has been evident for some time. Highest priority is being given to (1) meeting the near-term needs of people and (2) improved management of existing water supplies. A few years ago, the irrigation function made up as much as two-thirds of the envisioned construction costs of projects being investigated. However, in fiscal year 1974, Reclamation's new planning starts will be for projects where approximately 80 percent of the costs of implementation would be related to municipal and industrial water supply.

 Meeting the Nation's energy requirements, enhancement of environmental quality, and assisting in Indian self-determination in development of their land and water resources are also receiving high priority. Until we can fully assess the new trends
of demand for food and fiber, investigations featuring the irrigation of new lands for near- and mid-term requirements have a relatively low priority, but that priority could change because we do not live in a static society. In selected areas, irrigation may be an extremely important element in attaining regional development.

Consistent with these priorities, the Northern Great Plains, an area which consists of large segments of Montana, Wyoming, North Dakota, and South Dakota, has been the focus of increasing attention because the area is a potential source of vast amounts of relatively low-sulfur coal. Interest in the development of the Northern Great Plains coal resources stems primarily from the continuing growth of the national energy consumption and increasing emphasis on improved urban air quality. The possibility of large-scale development of the coal reserves has, at the same time, heightened regional concern for effective land use and resource planning, including such issues as environmental quality, mined-area restoration, competition for scarce water resources, development of other mineral resources, and potential effects on the people and economies of the Northern Great Plains states.

Creating a responsive planning organization has been of high priority. Centrally located staffs have been strengthened by the addition of specialists in new fields such as environmental analysis, operations research, and social science. In
the future, we plan to work more closely with other Federal and State agencies of varied backgrounds for limited duration that will be created to deal with specific problems. We are available to provide special technical services to States. State study teams, composed of Federal and State members from many different agencies which were established during our Western U.S. Water Plan Study, have proved to be an effective planning device.

Meaningful public involvement at early stages in plan formulation is a key element in our planning procedures for the future. Instead of presenting plans for public reaction, we hope to involve people with different, sometimes conflicting objectives directly in the planning process. This should not only speed the planning process by avoiding costly delays in the review process, but result in better plans.

The Reclamation program is advancing on many fronts. New challenges continually arise requiring innovative responses, but we believe that they can be met successfully by intelligent and diligent effort. Many of the significant recommendations of the National Water Commission have been foreseen and are in various stages of implementation by Federal water agencies. We face the future with confidence that National and regional water problems can be solved, and we welcome positive guidance on policies to be followed.

Of obvious concern to Reclamation's program is the $6.2 billion backlog of authorized but unconstructed Reclamation projects.
The options available to bring this backlog to manageable proportions without a significant increase in annual construction funding include the following: (1) elimination of backlog projects or features of projects that, in light of current priorities, are unlikely ever to be constructed, (2) reformulation of projects to reduce costs and meet updated priorities where possible, (3) turn to the state and local interests for financial assistance in project funding either by non-Federal construction of projects or by contributions toward construction from whatever sources are available, and (4) postpone construction of project features through staging until such time as they can be accommodated under national budgetary constraints.

The key to future water resource development lies with established future policy. The extent to which policy changes become revolutionary or merely evolutionary will depend on the support that we who are interested can generate. We need each other's help and cooperation in this regard.

Now, let us look to the Bureau's program in South Dakota; and, of course, our major program in South Dakota is the Oahe Unit. The Oahe Unit is a multipurpose project. The Oahe Unit is being developed for irrigation, municipal-industrial water supplies, conservation and development of fish and wildlife resources, recreation, water quality control, and flood control.
As all of you are aware, the 190,000-acre initial stage of Oahe Unit was authorized by Congress and approved by the President in August of 1968. Since authorization of the project, Congress has enacted the National Environmental Policy Act which requires preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement. In compliance with that Act, we have prepared a draft statement, held public hearings, and prepared a final statement. The statement for the Initial Stage of Oahe Unit was filed with the Council on Environmental Quality on August 4, 1972.

All prerequisites for construction have been met and now 5 years after authorization, we have reached the point where all of you who have worked so diligently for this project are about to see the physical evidence of construction.

Our present plan is to issue specifications for the Oahe Pumping Plant in January 1974. We will probably award the contract in time for the successful bidder to start construction next spring. The structure will be located on the east side and adjacent to the existing Oahe Powerplant.

We are presently obtaining field data for preparation of specifications for construction of Pierre Canal and Blunt Dam, which will be the next features for which contracts will be awarded.

In addition, we have initiated a more detailed study of alternatives for handling return flows in the James River.
through the project area. During the public hearing on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement held in Aberdeen last fall, this particular part of the plan for Oahe Unit received by far the most comments, both favorable and unfavorable. We are confident that a plan for handling project return flows in the James River can be devised that will assist landowners with their flooding problems, and yet not be damaging to the environment. A supplemental environmental impact statement on the James River will be prepared upon completion of our study on alternatives for handling return flows. There will be ample opportunity for public comments before a plan is selected for handling return flows in the river.

The authorized Initial State of the Oahe Unit includes provision for municipal water supply for cities and towns within the area if they so desire. In the feasibility study, we estimated it would be to the financial advantage of 17 municipalities to obtain their water from the Oahe Unit system. However, provision was made only for canalside delivery of the water. Under a law passed in October 1972, Congress authorized the Bureau to make feasibility studies of the conveyance and storage systems that would be required for municipalities wishing to consider use of water from the Oahe Unit. Water could be provided only during the period when the unit system is in operation and unless the town were close to one of the regulating reservoirs, it would have to provide enough storage
for the winter months. To date, the towns of Redfield, Miller, Cresbard, Onida, and Aberdeen have requested feasibility studies. The choice as to whether or not any town wishes to use Oahe water is up to each municipality. We plan to start on these feasibility studies this fiscal year.

We have three appraisal studies presently underway in South Dakota at this time. Reports on two of these, the Eastern South Dakota Basins and the Western Dakota Basins, will be completed this fiscal year.

The Eastern South Dakota Basin area includes the 44 counties east of the Missouri River in South Dakota. This study will evaluate land and water resources, determine needs, and identify various diversion schemes to utilize water resources for possible development of irrigation, municipal and industrial water supplies, fish and wildlife, and recreation in the area. The field work and most of the evaluation of findings have been completed.

The Western Dakota Basin area includes that portion of both North Dakota and South Dakota west of the Missouri River. The objective of this appraisal is to identify and evaluate development potential and water needs of numerous resources such as coal, minerals, timber, municipalities, industry, and recreation. Consideration will be given to utilizing a multipurpose pipeline to convey water from Lake Sakakawea south along the headwaters drainage area and
extending to the Black Hills. An alternative will consider conveying water westward from Lake Oahe.

We are nearing completion of an appraisal of the Castlewood-Estelline area. There are about 40,000 acres of arable land in this area. However, it is doubtful that an adequate water supply is available from either ground or surface sources, to provide a full irrigation water supply for that much land. About 1,000 acres are being irrigated in that area at this time. Studies, to date, would indicate this is an area more suitable for private or state development than for Federal development.

We are presently making a feasibility study for providing supplemental water to Sioux Falls. Water would be stored in a reservoir created by a dam on Slip Up Creek about 3 miles northeast of the city. Floodflows of the Big Sioux River would be pumped into the reservoir and released from the reservoir at a later time as needed. The reservoir also would provide substantial recreational and fish and wildlife conservation benefits for the area.

The newly-formed Lake Andes-Wagner Irrigation District was successful in obtaining a write-in appropriation to have the Bureau restudy the Wagner Unit, and to include additional lands that were within their Irrigation District. As this is a low priority irrigation project the work has been curtailed, and a concluding report on it will be prepared this
year. Progress to date on the study indicates the Wagner Unit would probably have only marginal feasibility. The recently approved "Principles and Standards for Planning Water and Related Land Resources" will make it even more difficult to show the Wagner Unit as a viable project. However, I am well aware that local interest in this project remains very high, and there are many regional reasons for its development.

The Pollock-Herreid Unit, although a multipurpose project, is essentially a single-purpose new irrigated lands type development with about 98 percent of project costs allocated to irrigation. Other project proposes include fish and wildlife and M&I water for the towns of Pollock and Herreid. We completed a report on this Unit in 1968, which was revised and updated in 1971. At that time the Unit had a benefit-cost ratio of 1.4 to 1 using direct benefits only, and 2.0 to 1 using total benefits. The unit has not been reanalyzed using the new principles and standards. There are a number of projects in the same general category as the Pollock-Herreid Unit. We expect to make a decision in the near future on recommendations for further consideration of this type project.

Reclamation is on the move in the State, and we are confident that completion of the Cabe Unit will have a significant impact on the prosperity and lives of the
people of South Dakota. We believe that the Federal-State-local partnership that has brought us this far will see us through to completion. And we believe that the Reclamation projects that built the West will continue to play an important role in the stability of this Nation and others as well.