A draft environmental impact statement on the administration of the acreage limitation provisions of Reclamation law has been filed with the Environmental Protection Agency, Commissioner R. Keith Higginson of Water and Power Resources Service announced today.

The draft statement briefly describes the legislative history of the Reclamation Act of 1902 which established a policy of Federal assistance, through irrigation development, so that new farming and homemaking opportunities could be provided on land in the arid West.

Present administrative practices and three alternative methods of administering the law have been examined for their consequences on agricultural areas sustained by this program and their comparative effectiveness in achieving the law's expressed social purposes. Two options that would allow individual districts to pay the full cost of the federally developed water in exchange for program deregulation have also been examined.

The draft statement is available for review and comment by all local, State and Federal agencies and other interested individuals and groups. The formal review period closes on March 16, 1981.

Public hearings at locations throughout the affected 17 Western States are being planned. Subsequent announcements will be made once dates and locations for these hearings have been finalized.

Commissioner Higginson said comments received both by letter and at the public hearings will be responded to in the final statement. Written comments should be addressed to:

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Individual copies of the draft statement may be obtained from any of the following offices:

Director, Office of Environmental Affairs
Room 7622
Water and Power Resources Service
18th and E Streets, NW.
Washington, D.C. 20240 (202) 343-4991

(more)