Reclamation Opens Office to Study Coal-Carrying Saline Pipeline

The Bureau of Reclamation's proposed aquatrain project, which would transport plastic containers of coal to the West Coast through a pipeline using unwanted saline water from the Upper Colorado River Basin, took a major step forward with the opening of its Denver project office, announced Reclamation's Upper Colorado Regional Director Clifford Barrett today.

Along with the opening of its Saline Water Transport and Use Office, the Upper Colorado Regional Office, headquartered in Salt Lake City, named Mike Clinton Acting Program Manager. Clinton has been Chief of the Colorado River Water Quality Office in Denver since 1979.

The Department of the Interior and W. R. Grace & Company have assumed the lead role for developing the innovative coal transport technology and formulating a consortium of private interests to finance the non-Federal share.

According to Clinton, the office has recently received an "expression of interest" from the San Diego Gas and Electric Company to utilize a portion of the coal at a power plant site near Blythe, Calif.

Aquatrain, as proposed by Grace, would consist of a 36-inch pipeline stretching from near Axial, Colo., to the California Coast, about 1,200 miles in distance. Up to 15 million tons of coal annually mined in Colorado and Utah could be packaged in capsules to supply the proposed pipeline. The plastic capsules, 30 inches by 15 feet in size, would carry between 3 and 4 tons of coal each.