Interior Calls for Meetings with States and Congress on Colorado River Operations

Secretary of the Interior James Watt and Commissioner of Reclamation Robert
BROADBENT have asked Congress and the Governors of the seven Colorado River Basin
States to review the longstanding operating systems for management of the river's
reservoirs and to consider plans for the coming year.

In letters to the Governors and to the chairmen of two key Congressional com-
mittees, Watt and Broadbent noted that the Colorado is at its highest level in a
half-century and that necessary releases of water from the huge reservoirs at
Lakes Mead and Powell have led to flooding downstream. Further increases in the
rate of water releases are not expected barring unforeseen weather changes, but
high flow levels will continue through the year.

Watt, who recently toured the areas below Lake Mead, wrote on July 12 to
Senator James A. McClure, chairman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources
Committee, and Congressman Morris K. Udall, chairman of the House Interior and
Insular Affairs Committee, suggesting that the Bureau of Reclamation could provide
detailed reports to both committees on the Colorado River flooding situation at
their convenience.

His letter noted that the water releases have conformed with law and with the
operating criteria developed in consultation with the seven Basin States—Colorado,
Wyoming, Utah, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, and California. "A Congressional re-
view of the operating criteria will provide an opportunity to examine the require-
ments of 'The Law of the River' and the multi-purpose objectives of the Bureau of
Reclamation's reservoirs in meeting the obligations to the seven Basin States and
Mexico," Watt wrote.

Broadbent, whose letter to the Governors went out July 8, said the current
situation "raises new questions" which should be addressed by the States involved.
He asked the Governors or their representatives to meet with him to discuss oper-
ations on the river this year and review plans for the coming year.

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"Clearly, we will need to discuss such areas as flood control releases, power releases, and multiple-use operating criteria for the reservoirs," Broadbent wrote. "We need to plan the uses of the river now to provide all the citizens of the Basin the greatest advantages possible during the coming year." Other involved Federal agencies also will be invited to attend the meeting, to be held "within the next several months," he said.