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water projects in pipeline

ASPINALL EXPRESSES CONCERN THAT WATER PROJECTS IN PIPELINE WILL BE RENEVALED

From the Daily Sentinel Washington Bureau

Chairman
WASHINGTON-- Wayne N. Aspinall, D-Colo., of the House

Interior Committee has told the House Appropriations Public Works
Subcommittee if water projects in the pipeline are not soon started
"pretty soon it may be necessary to go all over them again."

He made his comment about the Fruitland Mesa and Savery Pot-Hook
west projects in central and northwestern Colorado and Southwestern Wyoming,
but it also applies to several other projects which have been subject
to budget freezes. They include the Animas-LaPlata project in Colorado
and New Mexico, Dallas Creek, San Miguel, Dolores, all in Western Colo-
rado and all authorized by the 1968 Colorado River Basin Act.

Aspinall expressed his concern about virtually all of these pro-
jects having their planning funding frozen for the 1971 fis-
cal year which ended on June 30. The planning money, $225,000, pro-
vided by Congress last year for the Animas-LaPlata project still
remains in budgetary reserve. No funding of any kind was provided for
the Savery-Pot Hock project even though it was authorized in 1965.

Congress has voted planning money as follows: Dolores, $160,000;
Dallas Creek, $150,000; San Miguel, $100,000.

The Senate voted $830,000 for the Fruitland Mesa project
for fiscal 1972, $600,000 more than the $200,000 allowed by the House.

And Utah has been successful in getting $200,000 in construction money
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on its recently-started Jensen unit of the Central Utah project. All
are Upper Colorado participating projects, with heavy emphasis on ir-
rigat ion and water supply. It has been tough to get them moving.

On this point Aspinall stated, "I consider without your willing-
ness to face up to the issues of adequate public works funding, one
can only imagine what the situation would be. We wouldn't have any at
all...I would suggest that the Fruitland Mesa project could stand an
$800,000 appropriation, the Savery-Pot Hook project a $500,000 appropria-
tion. These projects have been authorized for over six years now, and
they certainly need attention. Pretty soon it may be necessary to go
all over them again as far as study is concerned," he told the House
Public Works Appropriations Subcommittee.

It is well known that the Office of Management and Budget takes a
dim view of projects with significant irrigation benefits, even though
putting water to work is the only way that Western states can keep their
water under Western water rights doctrine. On this point, Deputy Di-
rector Caspar W. Weinberger of CMB recently told the House Public Works
Appropriations Subcommittee, "We have to be concerned (at CMB) when the
cost estimate of a total project has very sharply risen or when we are
advised by...the Bureau of Reclamation of changes in conditions and
other matters and other factors that lead to that. We also have to be
concerned with the benefit-cost ratio." When these factors occur, Wein-
berger stated, CMB reexamines a project and often recommends it, or
part of it, for deferral. CMB is in the process of re-examining sever-
al projects, it is understood here, undergirding Aspinall's concern.
John J. Rhodes, R-Ariz., a major factor and ranking Republican member of the House Public Works Appropriations Subcommittee, reiterated the point that Aspinall made. "I hope you will consider the pipeline" Rhodes told Weinberger. "The pipeline of water projects is going down in both the Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation, and this, I think, is likely to be counterproductive in the years to come." Weinberger said it may be going down in number of projects, but the amount of funding is not going down, and that's one of OMB's major problems as it looks ahead to "1973, 1974 and 1975."

Concern about mounting government spending in years ahead not only for water projects but also for other government programs, such as mandatory social security payments, veterans' pensions, and public assistance grants, has forced OMB to be cautious in allowing major new expenditures in years ahead. At the same time a seven per cent interest or discount rate is about to be imposed on unauthorised projects in the planning stage. It is certain if most of the Upper Basin projects noted above are held up for restudy or reauthorization, they would likely be shelved. So the two Appropriations Committees, notably the House Committee, are pushing very hard to get authorized water projects into the construction stage. It is evident that water projects must move ahead as they are authorized, it stated in its report on the 1972 public works funding bill, "If urgent water resources needs are to be met in an effective and expeditious manner."

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