

## FUTURE ROLES FOR THE CORPS OF ENGINEERS

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While I certainly appreciate Tom Bahr's kind invitation to address this year's conference, I must admit that talking to this distinguished group about the Corps' future roles in New Mexico, sort of puts me in the position of the seven foot cowboy who confronted the eight foot cowboy. The point is that it does not matter how big and tough the seven foot cowboy is, the eight foot cowboy is going to call the shots...and if I want to leave anything with you, it is the point that in my business the eight foot cowboy is you, or more precisely, the public we serve. I'm going to have more to say about that as we go along, but perhaps the best way to start is by looking at why we're here, and what we're doing right now.

For an organization that is over 200 years old, the Corps' public works presence in New Mexico is relatively recent, dating back to the mid-1930s with the construction of Conchas Dam on the Canadian River. In the past 45 years, a number of major multipurpose water projects in the state have been completed, the latest being Los Esteros Dam on the Pecos at Santa Fe, which, while operational for flood control for the past six months, began storing irrigation water just this past Monday. In addition, of course, are a whole host of completed local flood protection projects throughout

the state, with many new and urgently needed ones still on the drawing boards.

Our operating projects are, as I noted earlier, generally for multipurpose use, and that includes not only flood control, sediment retention and irrigation storage, but of equal importance to a large and growing segment of the public -- recreational use. In that regard, you need to know that we have well over a half-million people visit our Corps lakes each year, for the boating, swimming, and fishing opportunities so rare in the Southwest.

On the local protection side, as New Mexico's urban development gains momentum, we are continually asked to develop flood control projects for new or growing communities. While you all are aware of the long congressional approval process required for these efforts, you might be interested in knowing that given enough impetus and urgency, the system allows a more rapid response. For example, last year we were able to provide protection for a new junior high school in Santa Fe in less than two years from conception to completion -- a monumental achievement in the federal water projects business.

From the standpoint of flood protection there is, of course, the Corps' historic mission of emergency flood fighting and post-flood rehabilitation. And while my friends in Washington like to remind me that I'm located in the desert, in the two years I've been in Albuquerque, we've had one constant flood. Starting in 1978 with the Rio Grande at the Presidio of Texas, moving through that

winter's devastating floods in southwestern New Mexico (an effort in which we finally spent some \$15 million) and with the efforts required as a result of last year's record snow melts throughout the state -- frankly, I'm water-logged. Unfortunately, with this year's runoff forecasts, and associated problems like Bluewater Dam, it does not look like there will be much time for drying out.

To round out the water resource picture, you need to know that our current missions include a number of water quality tasks, ranging from our section 404 permit activities to our charter to act as construction consultants and inspectors for EPA's water treatment and sewage disposal grant programs.

So 1980 finds the Corps alive and well in the Southwest. What then of the future?

Certainly the Corps' current missions of flood control and protection efforts will continue in the next decade. With the increasing population and shifts in water usage throughout the State, I expect these will take on added importance. Unfortunately, while the clamor for local flood protection will dramatically increase, I see our ability to provide what is needed decreasing. The reason from my standpoint is, quite simply, public commitment.

While we are determined to help solve flooding problems, we are even more determined not to waste money on studies when the community does not take strong interest in its own problems. The community must be willing to stand up, give us a hand, and commit itself to carrying some of the financial burden. A burden, which I

might add can surely be expected to increase in the years to come, and may increase dramatically if new federal cost-sharing proposals come to fruition.

In addition to flood protection, I believe you can expect the Corps, as well as all southwestern federal water interests, to now become much more active in our long-standing, but previously passive, concerns for resource management. If successful, such initiatives may very well delay and perhaps even avoid the need for large new dams and reservoirs. Recently, the Chief of Engineers, General Morris, commented to the Water Resources Congress that, "This new emphasis on conservation may turn out to be one of the most significant features of water resources management and development in the decade ahead. I believe we are going to see the conservation ethic dominate public policy in the 80's as strongly as the environmental ethic dominated the 70's."

Since I believe conservation is not merely using less, but that it means making the most effective use of a very limited resource, I would suggest federal agencies are going to have to take a closer look at institutional and legal constraints, operation of existing facilities, more efficient hardware, and reuse of water.

Simply stated, from the federal perspective, in the next decade, all water agencies will need to demonstrate that even with the best possible stewardship there is still a remaining need for federal projects. This is of major concern since my operational options are

constrained by the states, Interstate Compact Commissions, other federal agencies, and water users.

While in New Mexico the state carries the principal burden in these areas, I assure you I do not view my role as passive. I am particularly anxious that the federal projects for which I am responsible are operated to the maximum public benefit. We simply cannot stand by and quietly tolerate a less-than-optimum use of water dictated by outdated operational charters. For example, politics aside, it makes no sense at all to have to store water in areas of high evaporation and loss, when low-loss storage is available higher in the watershed.

Because of this concern, I would expect a strong role in the 1980s for the Corps in support of those having state and local responsibility and accountability to southwestern water users and beneficiaries. To accomplish that, we intend to maintain and strengthen a sizeable water management expertise for our own work and to provide technical expertise to others. For example, we are currently studying reallocating a considerable portion of available storage at the Abiquiu flood control project to meet needs for storage, municipal and industrial, irrigation water and hydropower. And, I would note that the Corps' research and development community currently has a number of major conservation activities underway, particularly in the area of reservoir management. Finally, the future holds for the Corps a continuing and an ever-increasing charter for public involvement.

That role requires an understanding of what the public needs and wants (and they are not always the same), the development of a solution or action to meet those needs, and support for the local sponsors in explaining the action or project to their constituents who have to provide the dollars or property. The problem is, of course, identifying who the "public" is and what its real needs are.

As we all know, the complexity of problems, interests, and attitudes in today's society will not permit a simplistic approach to all public needs in water resource planning. Rather, complex "publics" require complex, yet flexible and adaptable solutions. Public involvement is a continuous, two-way process; but regardless of the problems' complexity, there is definitely and appropriately an increasing public demand to participate in decisions which deal with natural resource development.

You can, therefore, expect the Corps to continue to improve our public interaction and to strengthen our responsiveness to your valid water needs of the 1980s. Well, I've talked too long, and have only touched on a few of the Corps' future roles in New Mexico...flood protection, conservation, and hopefully, acting as honest broker in local and state resource-management responsibilities. Realistically, the public, its needs and wants, its support, and its satisfaction form the common thread of our concerns for the 1980s.

In the final analysis, I am still optimistic enough to believe that it is what you eight foot cowboys (and cowgirls) want of the Corps that will shape its role for the future. And, that's just the way it ought to be.