

DEVELOPMENT OF NEW MEXICO'S WATER RESOURCES PROBLEM

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For one who is as directly concerned with the development of our State's overall economy as I am, participation in this annual water conference is a very real privilege.

I am particularly impressed by the scope of the program which has been arranged by this conference. I believe it is essential for us here in New Mexico and the Southwest to consider our water problems in their broadest aspects and in all their varied phases.

As I view it, New Mexico's water resources problem is to achieve the fullest possible development, conservation and control of our available water. We must develop our water resources at a pace which will meet the needs of a rapidly expanding economy and population, and we must do so within the limits of the interstate agreements by which we are bound. Also of course, we must operate within the bounds of economic feasibility.

The theme of this conference, "Water and Water Law," is one which relates to the basic structure of our State's economy. It is essential that we develop economic criteria which will enable us to give effective direction to whatever modification of our water laws may be found necessary.

I personally feel we can take a great deal of assurance from the amount of water research that is being carried out at our various institutions, and through various divisions of our government.

Water problems are ones which have, throughout our history demanded bold action. But by the same token, effective action in this field has permitted outstanding economics progress, both for our own State and to the nation as a whole.

With any resource as basic as water is to our economy, you would expect universal interest and universal concern with its conservation and greatest utilization. But, as you whose immediate activities are related to water problems have learned all too well, there are many, many divergent views, not only as to methods and procedures, but also as to the extent of the need itself.

In formulating a general policy of dealing with our water problems, I feel we can place these problems in three broad categories: Those related to the increasing demand for water; those associated with the development of increased supplies of usable water; and those dealing with conservation and multiple use of water.

More and more, we must develop acceptable criteria and methods for allocating water, both as to uses and users. As more and more emphasis is placed on the multiple use of this resource, the problem gains

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tremendously in complexity -- both from a priority and a legal standpoint.

As our economy continues to expand, it becomes more and more essential to achieve improved methods of placing values on various types of water development and use.

In addition to determining how and when water resources should be developed, we also must give serious consideration to the question of who should carry out such development -- public or private agencies, and in either case how to assure continuation of local participation.

To my mind, it is of major importance that a broad educational program be carried out, both to assure public awareness of the many facets of the problems involved, and to stimulate the continuing interest of the widest possible number of specialized interest groups such as economists, sociologists, political scientists and public officials, engineers and various planning experts.

Since there will continue to be less water than we can use, and since there will continue to be overlapping interests wherever usable water exists, we must accept as a basic factor in our approach to water development the existence of conflict in water use.

It is for this reason that I feel that water resource planning is one of the most essential types of planning in which we can engage, and one of the types of planning which can bear the greatest fruits.

Such planning cannot be carried out effectively, however, without continuing research -- research of the type which you who participate in this annual conference are engaging in on an ever increasing scope.

Already the research accomplishments in water problems are proving of inestimable benefit to public officials and lawmakers, as well as those who deal more directly with our water resources. We are never going to be able to eliminate conflict from our efforts at water development, but as more and more of the benefits of research are applied to our water resource planning, a great deal of such controversy can be avoided.

The population of our State is increasing steadily and at a rate that is above the national average. Our per capita income also is increasing, but it, on the other hand, is below the national average. It is essential that we gear our growth and development to increasing industrialization, and to increasing processing of our mineral products within the State.

We in State government are making a concerted and concentrated effort to create the kind of economic and regulatory climate which will attract new industry and promote the expansion of industry already in our midst.

Part of the job that must be done is an educational one. We need to make it known -- and this involves the contradiction of definite public misconceptions -- that New Mexico has the raw materials -- including water, for a major industrial development.

But while water is available for a greatly expanded industrialization in our State -- much of this water is not where we would like it to be.

At the same time, much of our available water is not economically feasible for use by the type of industry best suited to our geography and economy.

What this means is that perhaps the most vital area in which we can seek solutions to water problems is in obtaining sources of water which are cheap enough for industrial use and in achieving sound, workable planning for the development of increasing amounts of industrial water in the future.

At the present time, 93 percent of all water diverted in New Mexico is used for irrigation. Most of the balance of 7 percent goes for municipal and industrial purposes, with only minor amounts being chargeable to recreation, fish and wildlife propagation and other uses.

The important point of this is the resultant fact that municipal and industrial usage could be doubled by a reduction of only about 7.5 percent in the amount of water used in the agricultural economy of the State. This is particularly significant when it is pointed out that only 9 percent of our State's personal income was derived from agriculture.

As this administration views it, adequate definition and solution of New Mexico's water problems is dependent to a large extent on the continuous operation of a planning program of broad scope. This program is being developed on an exploratory basis through our newly inaugurated State Planning division, with water being treated as one of several major factors affecting the development and future well being of the State.

This program will become increasingly complex as it brings into collaboration the many responsible agencies of government and the many interested private organizations and groups. Such a program calls for the application of many and varied techniques of economic and social research, regional planning, and engineering and scientific analysis.

Here we arrive at the significant fact: New Mexico is still far from maximum utilization of her water resources. But the time for determining both the maximum and most effective usages of that water is here now. It is a goal this conference is helping us powerfully to move toward. We must not only come up with answers to how to make the best usage of our water, but we must also translate those answers into action. By continuing to work together, I know we can get the job done.