

REPORT ON GOVERNOR'S WATER RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Jack M. Campbell 1/

As has been indicated, I am Chairman of the Governor's Advisory Committee on Long-Range Planning Regarding the Conservation, Development and Use of Water Resources in New Mexico. I should like to present a brief report of the work of our Committee.

The Governor's Committee is composed of myself, as Chairman; S. E. Reynolds, State Engineer; Dr. H. R. Stucky of New Mexico State University; Dr. Harold Busey, a research scientist at Los Alamos; J. L. Merritt, President of the New Mexico Association of Soil Conservation Districts; James L. Dow, City Attorney of Carlsbad; and State Senator Charles Mumma of Farmington.

The Committee in its report stated its understanding of the purpose of its work as follows:

"This purpose requires continuing study of methods and management which will (1) encourage the efficient absorption of natural precipitation into the soils and underlying strata by way of intensive watershed planning and development; (2) utilize efficient surface and underground storage; (3) provide for construction of works for sediment control and salvage of water from non-beneficial plants along stream channels; and (4) result in efficient beneficial utilization of water, serving, where possible, multiple uses. All of this must be done within the limits of existing interstate compacts and state laws and without impairing existing rights. In other words, we must attempt to provide for efficient management of our waters from precipitation, down from the vast watersheds of the State through natural streams and underground reservoirs so that we may utilize a maximum amount of this valuable resource within the limits stated."

It is significant, it seems to me, that the first matter mentioned for continued and intensified study involves watershed planning and development. This same matter was the major theme of recent Fifth Annual Water Conference, held here at New Mexico State University. It should be apparent to those who study water problems that our first and perhaps foremost job is to educate the public, and water users in particular, as to the necessity for and advantages of watershed planning which will increase the utilization of our annual precipitation of approximately one hundred million acre feet. Only about 5% of this precipitation presently becomes divertible as surface or ground water.

Our Committee, in its deliberations, also gave serious consideration to the social and economic impact of watershed planning and development. It is certainly significant that the high altitude watersheds of New Mexico are the areas which have for a number of years been in a condition of economic distress. It takes only a glance at the geographical distribution of welfare payments in our state to recognize and appreciate this fact. For this reason proper watershed planning and management can serve not only the purposes of flood control, soil conservation and the utilization of more of our pre-

1/ Chairman, Governor's Water Resources Committee, Roswell, New Mexico

precipitation, but it can assist materially in enabling some of the people residing in mountainous areas of New Mexico to become more self-sufficient in the operation and management of their agricultural and other pursuits without leaving their present homes, or otherwise seriously disrupting their way of life. Thus, such a program could have advantageous social effects and could make available additional public funds for uses other than welfare purposes.

These social and economic implications of proper watershed planning and management are pointed up by the present pilot project in the Penasco Basin. Our Committee heard a brief report of the work being undertaken on this particular project and we consider it to be of extreme importance as a possible pilot area for future watershed planning in our state.

Now just a few words about the general suggestions made by the Committee. These are more fully set out in the report itself.

1. We recommended careful and complete studies of the many watersheds in New Mexico and suggested that state and federal agencies intensify cooperative watershed studies.

2. We suggested the continuation of efforts to encourage the Federal and State governments to improve channelization of streams from the point of view of flood control and water conservation.

3. We suggested the continued and intensified use of state agencies for research programs relative to corrective action to eliminate non-beneficial consumptive use of water by evaporation and transpiration.

4. We urged full cooperation with federal agencies in their efforts to develop economically feasible desalinization techniques and suggested a close association with the research effort now getting underway at a pilot plant at Roswell.

5. We recognized the urgency for planning for the supply of water for rapidly growing municipalities and for industrial development in New Mexico and we suggested cooperative studies by municipalities and state agencies for the possible use of treated sewage water at least for industrial purposes.

6. Continued use of Interstate Stream Commission loans to local water agencies for water conservation purposes was encouraged.

7. We suggested that the work of the New Mexico Mapping Advisory Committee involved in supervising the very elementary matter of complete mapping of the state should be stepped up.

8. It became apparent to the Committee that in the field of water resources we need much more basic research to keep pace with the requirements of operational activities in certain areas of water conservation and use. This basic research needs to be in conjunction with applied research which will establish economic feasibility of various methods of conservation and use of water.

9. We urged that the state and its various agencies in cooperation with local and federal agencies make maximum multiple use of water resources in planning and operation of water facilities.

All of these things, it should be apparent, require a great degree of cooperation and co-ordination of effort by the federal, state and local agencies and with private organizations interested in water resource planning and development. As the Committee stated in its concluding remarks,

"Through all of this study of the need for planning in the field of water resources - as is undoubtedly the case in planning other resource development - we find apparent the necessity for the planning to be in relation to other

factors affected by the population growth and migration in our state. This necessitates a co-ordinated planning effort not only with regard to multiple use of water as a resource but planning for the development of various resources in full recognition of their interrelationship."

The Annual Water Conferences sponsored by New Mexico State University can go a long way to bring together representatives of all these various groups interested in water problems for an exchange of ideas and it is my hope that at some time in the future we may devise a way by which this type of conference may provide the basis for actual working arrangements both in the field of cooperative planning and in the field of development of those plans.