

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS IN STATE WATER USE PLANNING

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Planning is viewed basically as a means of assembling facts, evaluating them and then selecting a course of action to fulfill or achieve a specified objective. Therefore, a plan is a scheme which projects and thus implies an imaginative scope and vision. Evidence is abundant that we have failed as planners in the past and there is little evidence that we have gained any major improvement in our vision. Obviously we have not had the "facts" or we have failed to use them.

Our basic conflict arises out of not being able to specify our common objectives in resource allocation. Research, in contrast to planning, is the organized search for new knowledge with the emphasis on understanding of the basic relationships. Understanding the basic relationships is essential in evaluating plans. I am convinced that we have not made full use of available research in our planning as it relates to the basic relationships of man to his environment, his needs and wants. What is or should be the social and economic objectives of a state water plan? How should they be determined?

The word social is defined as pertaining to the welfare of human society. Our water planning has been difficult due to our inability to delineate a common meaning of welfare. Economics by definition would imply that welfare is considered in the laws affecting production, distribution and consumption of wealth or the material means of satisfying human desires. The word economic is defined as pertaining to the management or development of natural resources in satisfying man's needs. If economics did in fact provide for the satisfaction of man's needs, as implied by definition, we would be home "scot free" because it has been primarily economics which has served as our tool for resource allocation plans (plus a lot of politics). Yet, we now know that our social goals have not been clear and are giving much lip service to this failure in meeting social objectives that provide for the "good life".

Our plans have, with limited exception, avoided the basic relationship of man to his environment in the long-run. Our social and economic objectives have been primarily short-run in scope and vision, and I might add, heavily due to the interaction of political factors, rather than a "void of vision". Our planning tends to conform to tenure terms of political office rather than to the long-run needs of man.

Previous speakers at this and former water conferences have discussed in detail the mechanics of the development of a state-wide water plan (4, 3). They have done this well and a concentrated effort is underway to prepare a state-wide water and related land resource use plan.

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Slingerland summarized the four steps being followed in developing the long-range statewide water plan. Those four steps appear to be all inclusive of considerations encompassing physical and engineering aspects of our water supplies both present and future and as this supply relates to population changes (4).

I would like to use one of the presently known facts about our water supply to raise a question on the social and economic relationships on any water plan. The fact is that we have a given supply of water that is known to be diminishing as a result of "mining" underground water supplies for agricultural, industrial and municipal uses (4). Accepting this as fact and assuming we know the approximate "mining rate", how should we as members of society allocate this water for the long-run maximum benefit to society? Mining occurs, in part, because of short-run economic goals of the users of that water. However, such goals could and are believed by this speaker to be out of tune with both desired economic and social goals in the long-run.

Max Linn (2) states much of my argument well in his article "Planning for Equilibrium". Man cannot ignore the facts of nature and expect to come out the winner. Linn states that "the one hopeful situation is that this state still possesses the major portion of her natural resources despite considerable exploitation and could, therefore, move to set up equilibrium if New Mexicans can find and apply the necessary wisdom; if we can turn away from growth and quantity as measures of success and turn, instead toward quality--quality in social services, quality in residential and work environments, quality in education, quality in all human opportunities". He further states that "the long-run objective of our present plans seems nothing short of disaster". I would tend to agree with this but am hopeful that we are smart enough to avoid that condition.

Every city and county in New Mexico is pushing for "economic development", and I am not opposed to this, but I do question the long-run product of much of our past experienced "economic development" that has ignored the social aspects of development. We need economic development but I am convinced that we are pursuing this objective before having clearly defined our social and economic objectives as they are interrelated to determine how much "give and take" will be required to provide New Mexicans with the maximum benefits over the long-run. We observe head-long plunges to achieve economic growth at any cost. We should be constantly considering the overall effect of each action and what the values are in both natural and human terms. Oliver Goldsmith in 1770 is reported to have said "Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey, where wealth accumulates and men decay." Now, before someone brands me as being against wealth or economic growth, the market price system or any basic tenet of our form of government, let me state that my main concern is not against what we have done but rather to focus on that which we must do if we hope to survive on this earth. New Mexicans have a golden opportunity to reverse the "decay" process and to implement the plans for long-run benefits of our natural resources to man, namely water. In some areas it will require reversals of present use plans. I would at this point call your attention to the work by Hughes and Harman

which specifies the projected life of water resources in the High Plains underground reservoir(1).

Many will argue that by technology man can solve any problem. I disagree and say that while technology may be able to solve any technological problem, technology, by itself, cannot and should not be used to solve social problems. Man has used technology to gain much but he is now threatened by much of that same technology. Technology is no substitute for planning. Technology will not save us from ourselves.

My closing remarks can be summarized by stating my concern about our long-run social and economic objectives in contrast to our present short-run generally political oriented objectives. Our allocation schemes do not account for the social or economic costs to man in the long-run. What I am alluding to is distasteful to bankers, storekeepers, religious leaders and politicians as I am suggesting that we move rapidly to stabilize population to provide time to learn if the spaceship earth can in fact afford 3.5, 7, or 20 billion people and still provide the "good life", however that may be defined. We are doomed to failure by not planning our population while we also plan for the "good life" through the wise use of all natural resources. Those resources are threatened by a seemingly uncontrollable population growth resulting in fewer and fewer resources per man in the years to come. To permit unchecked population growth on the premise that we can by technology solve the many ills now confronting man is nothing less than blind optimism. We must plan for equilibrium in the man-to-resource relationship. No present social or economic objective will hold without controls on population growth.

In New Mexico, we can and must look at the man-to-water equation and plan or modify plans to allow us to reach desired social and economic goals. If our water will only support one-million people, then we should plan for those activities that provide for only one-million people. This same concept is applicable nation- and world-wide.

The people as well as planning agencies through an interdisciplinary approach, need to make greater efforts to jointly determine our long-run objectives--social and economic-- before we finalize our state-wide water plans. The people should be kept informed as to the nature of the plan and the objectives assumed so they can accept or reject the alternatives by reacting throughout the planning process.

REFERENCES

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