

COMMENTS BY MORNING SESSION MODERATOR

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On April 27, 1978, the 23rd Annual New Mexico Water Conference convened here in this room. One topic discussed was National Water Policy. Some recommendations made then were that states should have primary authority and responsibility for water resource management, a greater degree of coordination should exist between federal and state plans, that federally supported research should be expanded and tied to state water concerns, and that water conservation should be the fundamental consideration in all future water management programs.

A lot has happened since then, folks.

Some of our thoughts were addressed on June 6, 1978, when the President presented his Water Resources Policy Reform Message. He called for a policy that would place new emphasis on water conservation. It was clear that traditional impoundment and storage of water was not considered a conservation measure. Rather, his conservation ideas focused on reduced water demands, improved efficiency in water use, and reduced losses and wastes.

Other points in the President's message called for improvement in planning and evaluation of water projects, enhancement of federal-state cooperation (one of ours), and increased concern for environmental aspects of water projects.

Then, on July 12, 1978, the President issued thirteen separate memorandums calling for establishment of reforms in water planning and development of conservation measures that would be in line with his policy message. These memoranda touched on virtually every federal agency (and there really are an awful lot of them).

In the wake of the President's message, nineteen task forces were committed to develop specific implementation procedures. Several of these task forces have completed their work, which can be very roughly divided into three categories: option-alternative papers; draft specific legislation for the 1979-80 Congressional session; and preliminary reports on proposed changes in regulations, guidelines, and procedures which are scheduled for public review right now, between May and July.

Also, in October 1978, our New Mexico Water Quality Management Plan was adopted, certified, and sent to the Environmental Protection Agency for approval. As of today, the EPA has only conditionally approved this plan.