

Interagency Committees

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Our purpose is to provide a brief overview of that issue with the expectation that it will be given its proper priority place in the context of the Commissions review draft.

First; we also are new comers in our interest in institutional arrangements to improve federal-state-local and Native American inter-government and inter-agency cooperation. Our interest extends well beyond thirty years.

Together with Professor Ronald M. North, now retired from the University of Georgia, we initiated two seminars on Unified River Basin Management, the reports of which were published by the American Water Resources Association in 1980-81. Under contract with the Water Resources Council, we reported to Interior Secretary James Watt a report devoted importantly to institutional arrangements in 1985. About the same time we initiated an Engineering Foundation Report on Water Resources Planning and Management in the United States Federal System.

***Principle Issues Under Consideration by the Western Water Policy Review Advisory Commission.**

We bring to your attention a proposal we have written for a Regional State-Federal-Local Inter-Agency Coordination Institution to strengthen water resources management in the United States. This proposal addresses one of the principle issues under consideration by the Western Water Policy Review Advisory Commission.

A regional inter-agency entity had been used to coordinate United States water resources management among federal, state, and local governments beginning with the National Resources Board during the late 1930's. It was improved and replaced by the Federal Inter-Agency River Basins Committee in 1943, and further revised and strengthened by the Inter-Agency Committee on Water Resources in 1954.

Gradually improved with experience, it was used until replaced by the Water Resources Planning Act of 1965. Experience with the six river basin commissions established by the 1965 Planning Act was concluded in 1981. Since then, for eighteen years, the United States has not had the use of an inter-agency institution to facilitate the coordination of water resources management under the responsibilities of the 50 states, the several departments of the federal government, thousands of local and Native American governments.

This new proposal is built on the experience of Inter-Agency Institutions over thirty years and of the best parts of the sixteen years experience with river basin commissions. It

provides a framework on which to build the specifications of a substantially new and improved coordination Institution, much needed to fit the many pieces of the United States Federal System together for improved service to the American public.

Executive reorganization plans to force inter-agency coordination by past Administrations have been rejected by the Congress. Proposals to integrate agencies with specific and different technical and scientific functions but related to water management have not been favored. There may still be limits upon the authority of department heads to transfer responsibilities or enforce coordination among subordinate agencies, especially budgetary matters.

The establishment of facts, the coordination of basic data, the exchange of information, providing opportunities for dispute resolution, public involvement, shared and close cooperation and coordination of federal-state-local functions, and budget formulation but not budget decision-making are among the principal objectives of Regional Inter-Agency Committees, and of our proposal.

Within the limits of law and as directed by Congress, the Executive Branch, and by State and Local and Native American governments, these objectives reflect the limits generally sought in such Institutions. What are not sought, or unlikely to be provided, are decision-making authorities over water and related water resource programs of the members of the Federal System .

In our opinion the 16 years under the Water Resources Planning Act of 1965 was a deviation from the normal historic processes followed by the Congress in the

management of that part of the nation's water resources programs under their jurisdiction.

Examination of the record has shown that Congress would have had to make changes in the way they managed water affairs if the processes under the Planning Act of 1965 were to be effective, As the last Director of the Water Resources Mr. Leo Eisel counseled, if the Congress will not change their ways, it is incumbent upon all others to recognize and proceed under "real world" conditions.