

ADDRESS FOR DELIVERY AT  
PUGET SOUND AND ADJACENT WATERS  
TASK FORCE MEETING  
Seattle, Washington  
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by Charles W. Hodde, Chairman  
Pacific Northwest River Basins Commission

This is the age of organization. Just about everyone that isn't organizing a new group is being approached to join several. The biggest complaint of the day is too few days for the meetings to be held. The field of planning is no exception to the trend. The Puget Sound Region has under way transportation studies; downtown renewal groups; Forward Thrust; is somewhat of a pioneer with "Metro"; and of course is well along in the coordinated planning for its water and related land through the Puget Sound and Adjacent Waters study. In this situation of abundant activity, I shall discuss with you a new organization and the necessity for it. I would only ask that you keep in mind that it does not add to the number of organizations, as its organization eliminated the Columbia Basin Inter-Agency Committee. This might be a challenge to other embryo organizations. Pick out one to go for each new one planned.

The Pacific Northwest River Basins Commission has been organized to coordinate and review the water and related land planning of the region. It is also charged with developing a long-range comprehensive plan for the conservation, development and use of the water and related land of the Pacific Northwest. A logical question is, "Why is it necessary?" Let's review very briefly what is under way in the Pacific Northwest respecting water planning today.

First, most persons know that certain federal agencies have been involved in water project planning for many years. The Army Corps of Engineers; the Bureau of Reclamation; the Department of Agriculture with its various programs; the Department of Health, Education and Welfare; the Federal Water Pollution Control Administration; the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation; the Sports Fisheries and Wildlife Bureau; and the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries; all these are involved in millions of dollars of authorized studies. State departments of water resources in all the Northwest states now have programs. State fish, game and natural resources agencies have specialized studies that relate. Local government, cities, special districts, public utility districts, and soil conservation districts all have water development projects. Private utilities, state irrigation districts and



private individuals are constantly seeking water use permits to support development. Conservation groups are organized to support wild river dedication and wilderness area stream sanctuaries. A lot of good planning has been done and is under way. The very volume of it demands objective coordination in the over-all public interest.

It is very questionable if there is presently any reasonably accurate source for information on just what is under way or in the planning stage. While there was plenty of water for all purposes and each could pretty well write his own ticket on water use, there was little concern about coordination. What coordination there has been, has largely been through conflict rather than friendly review of alternatives. Pollution control warnings were sometimes subordinated to political expediency. Only our ample quantities of water in relation to our number of people have kept our situation less critical than that in most parts of the Nation.

In the past five years, a new interest has developed in region-wide, state-wide and river basin comprehensive multi-agency studies. This is a good place to ask - Just what do we mean by comprehensive water resource planning? My definition is as follows: "Comprehensive planning is the process of establishing a continuing timely development of alternatives for evaluation of the best means of securing optimum benefit from the use of water and related land with full consideration of the effect of present development and dedication on our ability to meet future requirements."

We must understand that the process of comprehensive planning must be one that will effectively meet changes in technology, social desire and economic necessity as these changes occur. A comprehensive plan is comprehensive only for the moment. Today's comprehensive plan is not comprehensive tomorrow. Today we seek out places where we can enjoy the fresh, clean air of the outdoors. Tomorrow's rural dwellers may well come to town to get a breath of fresh air in the closed environment of filtered, air-conditioned recreation centers. Already there are sections of the country where the cleanest, purest water available is the processed sewage of the town next above, dumped into the river that is the community's source of water supply.

In addition to the many plans under way in which a single or relatively narrow set of objectives is sought, we have three major multi-agency studies under way that are sponsored by the Pacific Northwest River Basins Commission. These are each authorized by the Congress, are being funded with significant amounts of planning funds, and are being supported by the states whose waters are involved. The study of the Willamette Basin in Oregon is due to be completed in 1969. The Columbia-North Pacific study, only well under way this year, is expected to run through 1970, and will lack the detail of the studies of smaller areas, but is expected to be the base for



a detailed comprehensive plan for the Pacific Northwest which will be under way concurrently during the next few years. The Puget Sound and Adjacent Waters study, including the entire area draining into Puget Sound, is the third study and the one we are discussing in today's meeting. Due for completion in 1969, it will be an early input to the Pacific Northwest comprehensive plan which is the primary mission of the River Basins Commission. These three studies involve an expenditure of something over fifteen million dollars of state and federal funds, and will give us a comprehensive recital of our resources, the probable needs during the next fifty years, and the best indicated method of utilizing our resources to meet our needs as they develop.

It is our intention to develop the River Basins Commission into a continuous updating agency that can develop reasonable alternatives as our needs become more clear in the future; an agency that can operate in the manner indicated in the definition I have used to describe comprehensive planning; an agency where state, federal, local government, and private industry will have a voice.

There is an old cliché expressed in the language of a first-generation German dialect that goes something like, "We get so fast old and so slow smart." Viewed in the context of nature's speed of resource creation, we can surely say that we are exploiting these resources in the manner of the above quotation. Too many times, without any basis for a better choice, we have made our decision to exploit resources for short-term gain. We have made the short-term choice not entirely out of disregard for future needs, but more often because alternatives were not developed for evaluation. Alternatives are usually not available for choice simply because we get "so slow smart".

The Pacific Northwest River Basins Commission is charged by federal law with developing a program in the water and related land planning field that considers all alternatives with a reasonable look ahead. This law, the Water Resources Planning Act of 1965, also assures that this will be done in concert with the states affected, by requiring their assent and support to its operation. Unlike the egocentric who writes a will that makes all the decisions for his descendents for two generations, the Act authorizing the River Basins Commission to plan suggests that it should provide a means for constant reevaluation of its planning and the development of alternatives as our increasing technical knowledge and new social objectives indicate change is necessary. With the admission that knowledge will continue to grow and social objectives change, we must realize that one overwhelming guideline must be observed. The preemption of the right to make choices from succeeding generations must be avoided in all instances where acceptable alternatives are available. A subguideline might well read somewhat as follows: The finality of the commitment of an important resource should bear a reasonable relationship to its advantage over any other alternative.



Just what am I talking about in specifics? In the Puget Sound region, choices are being made now with regard to future use of waterfront land. Each time a decision is made to use waterfront for industrial development, a preemption against use of that waterfront for recreation, residential or some other use is established. Surely we cannot say no waterfront shall be used for industrial development, but we can say only industrial development that benefits specifically from a waterfront location should so locate. To a certain extent, the law of supply and demand will raise the cost of waterfront location to the point where industry not specifically benefitting from waterfront location will seek a cheaper location. However, it only operates with effective force when the supply is critically short. I may get an argument from the economists present, but it has always seemed to me that the law of supply and demand is only operative in a society of short supply and operates very poorly in a situation of affluence.

Water planners are faced today with an item of major consideration that was largely ignored until more recent years. Within the memory of most of us, the way to get rid of something we didn't want in the house, whether it was potato peelings or a broken chair, was to "throw it outdoors". The outdoors was big. It would absorb almost any waste. In our history, we have put our waste in the rivers - they were big and could absorb it. We are putting our waste in the air - it is big and can absorb it - or can it? The waste of today is so big in volume and so lethal in character that even the sea may not be big enough to absorb it. The recent hearing on pollution problems in Puget Sound clearly indicates the salt-water of this region is being damaged by it. A very dangerous new place to store our most lethal waste that must be of great concern to water planners is deep in the earth. Ground water pollution preempts that resource more completely and for a longer period of time than is the case in any other environmental waste dump. We know too little about the ground water of the Northwest to even properly evaluate the extent of damage we may be doing when we discharge our chemicals and radioactive waste into the earth. The cost of containerization of waste may well become a necessary and proper cost of that production that creates our longer-enduring and more dangerous waste products. It is inevitable in a free enterprise society that the restrictions of long-range planning are resisted. And yet, the success and long endurance of that free enterprise society lies in its acceptance of those limits on its operation that are determined to be in the long-range interest of the public. Unilateral decisions made in water resource use and development with the purpose of maximum benefits from a limited mission are dangerous to our future capabilities.

In this energy-oriented world of today, we may accept substantial damage to the water, air and esthetic values of the Puget Sound region for a difference of cost of less than a mill per kwh of electrical energy. Our obsession with benefit-cost ratios and dedication to a maximum obtainable rate of return on investment may well result in a lot of hot water - fog and site preemption that will be costly indeed in a small region that seems



destined to be the home of somewhere between five and eight million people by the year 2020. I'm sure the Puget study will show that the remaining potential for hydropower production in the rivers that flow into Puget Sound is very small in relation to the projected needs of the region. In fact, it is probable that the entire potential can reasonably be compared to an alternative of importation over a single transmission corridor from a region of much less critical balance between power and other water uses. Some further water power development will surely be indicated in connection with storage for flood control, low-flow augmentation or development of supplies for consumptive use. I would expect, however, that water power should now be studied as an auxiliary benefit rather than the primary one in future developments in the Puget Sound region.

Most choices of alternatives will be made on the basis of benefit-cost ratios measured in dollars. Many of those items used on the benefit side are hard to price, and costs are usually limited to those requiring a transfer of value from the constructor to another. Values that are difficult to measure can easiest be disregarded. The project proponent can use a degree of judgment in either the cost or benefit side of the equation. If all reasonable doubt is resolved, so as to support the lowest cost and highest benefit, the ratio on any project is likely to be favorable. The basic flaw in benefit-cost ratios is their tendency to depend either on values easily measured in present values or arbitrary values assigned to benefits that are not marketable production.

I do not know how much it is worth for a ten-year-old boy to catch a catfish. I only know that a fifty-year-old man will pay more to catch a steelhead. It is quite possible that the ten-year-old gets more real enjoyment out of his eight-inch catfish than the fifty-year-old gets out of his eighteen-inch steelhead. If we put a value equal to the cost of catching a steelhead on the boy's catfish, every mudhole in Missouri becomes a feasible water project.

The Pacific Northwest River Basins Commission does not represent the first effort to develop water planning on a comprehensive basis giving proper weight to all water uses. The Columbia Basin Inter-Agency Committee has attempted this coordination for over twenty years in the Northwest. The present Puget Sound and Adjacent Waters study and two others were under way with sponsorship provided by the CBIAC before the Executive Order establishing the River Basins Commission was issued. However, the Pacific Northwest River Basins Commission represents the first region-wide water planning agency with legislative sanction and funded to support a staff with a mission of coordination and review of state, federal, local government and the private sector in all respects relating to the preservation, development and use of Northwest water in the Northwest. Staff recommendations and reports will be reviewed by a Commission with a membership from the five Northwest



states and nine federal departments engaged in some way in water and related land planning. These five states and nine federal departments represent several times that many special-mission-oriented agencies. By the very process of having everyone interested in on the action, we will guarantee a more objective end result than has been the case in the past.

The Commission's main objective was spelled out in a policy statement adopted on August 24. It will develop, for the next several years, a comprehensive plan for the conservation and development of the water and related land within its jurisdiction. This plan will be developed in such a manner that alternatives will be presented and decisions by the state legislatures, the Congress and private developers as well will have the advantage of valid information on choices available. Studies under way such as that of the Puget Sound basins will be an input to this regional plan. One of our first efforts is to assemble the most comprehensive information available of what is under way or planned in the Northwest. The comprehensive plan will not be built in secret and appear full-fledged at some date in the future, but develop step by step in public view. I would expect the procedure for updating to be under way even before the first publication of the regional plan.

Much of the present interest in water planning in the Northwest has developed through threats of diversion from Northwest streams to the Southwest. While this possibility is not to be ignored, the more likely decrease in value of Northwest water lies in depreciation of its quality through pollution and loss of its best potential through dedication of it to other than the future use of most value to the region. Availability for uses requiring clean, cool, unobstructed waterways are limited by obstruction, withdrawal and contamination. A great deal of obstruction, withdrawal and some contamination is occasioned by uses that are fully justified. In fact, such uses are so extensive that we can hardly afford to lessen water availability for purposes that can be served in no other way through dedication of fresh water to purposes that can be served with other alternatives.

The establishment of quality standards for all interstate streams in the Nation is a tremendous step forward. Some of the standards may actually be more severe than public opinion will support. The temperature of the Columbia River from the Pasco area to the mouth has been above the standard of 68 degrees for over six weeks this summer. It has been as high as 73 degrees at The Dalles measuring point. An argument regarding the discharge of pollutants into Puget Sound is current and substantial. If the standards created no arguments, they would be either unnecessary or ineffective.



The Pacific Northwest River Basins Commission will not answer all these problems. It will not establish a pattern of no variance for the next fifty years. It is expected to point the right direction for water and related land development of the Northwest and develop a process that will indicate the proper direction as technology, social desires and a less affluent supply of water changes our judgment.