

PRESS RELEASE FROM THE NATIONAL RECLAMATION ASSOCIATION ---- WASHINGTON, D. C.  
MARCH 11, 1968

Committees of the Congress on Interior and Insular Affairs met with the Board of Directors of the National Reclamation Association last week. The meetings were to develop actions on the most pressing problems confronting western water resources. These included:

1. A coming crisis in western water supply, caused partly by diversion of funds to other non-military programs.
2. Uncertainties over federal takings of water rights
3. Alternative methods of financing water development
4. The Congressional-Administration tie-up over approving small water conservation projects,
5. The need to let reclamation farms grow in size as technology progresses.

Mr. James F. Sorensen of Visalia, California, a Consulting Engineer who is President of the National Reclamation Association, led the discussion for the Board. Senator Henry M. Jackson, Chairman of the Full Committee of the Senate on Interior and Insular Affairs conducted the Senate Hearings. Congressman "Biz" Johnson, of California, chaired the hearings before the subcommittee on Irrigation and Reclamation, with Full Committee Chairman Wayne N. Aspinall, attending in ex-officio capacity.

Condensed statements of the NRA members are enclosed, together with a list of the 19 members comprising the Board of Directors of the Association. A brief of actions being started by the Association for which complementary actions were suggested to the Committees are:

1. Re-analyze the multi-billion dollar backlog of construction for water development, relating it to the vast programs to re-structure central cities and underdeveloped rural areas. Be certain that other programs to improve people and places will be backed by ample resource development. Use resource development -- keyed to water -- to train people in worthwhile work, building the base for all other environmental improvements.

2. Introduce legislation to assure that all individuals and entities granted rights to the use of water under States' laws, shall not lose the rights through taking by federal agencies.

3. Study the possibility of local organizations' floating bonds for some of the work now in the federal backlog. Consider federal guarantee of bonds, rather than federal funding, where the size and nature of work may make this practicable.

4. Show that there is faith between the Congress and the Presidency to end the current disagreement about approving loans for small reclamation projects. This would hold also for small projects of the Army's Corps of Engineers and the PL566 projects of the Soil Conservation Service.

5. Raise the present limit of 160 acres per person on farm holdings eligible to receive reclamation water, and otherwise modify existing law affecting size of farms.

The Committees stated their appreciation of NRA's actions, as outlined. In fact, Senator Jackson authorized Senator Thomas H. Kuchel, ranking minority member of the Committee, to open hearings in California on water rights problems later this spring. The Committees also asked to be kept abreast of NRA's findings and specific recommendations, as such develop.

STATEMENT OF MR. JAMES F. SORENSEN, PRESIDENT  
OF THE  
NATIONAL RECLAMATION ASSOCIATION  
TO THE  
HOUSE AND SENATE COMMITTEES ON INTERIOR AND INSULAR AFFAIRS  
MARCH 6, 1968

"Money for reclamation programs is severely curtailed, particularly in relation to many other domestic programs," Mr. Sorensen began.

"However, we are concerned that the water development programs of the Bureau of Reclamation and the Corps of Engineers are being down-graded at a time when demands for water continue to expand. Population increases in the western states continue at a high rate. These increases, coupled with ground water over-drafts and continuing shortages, cause the situation to worsen."

Sorensen continued: "Today in the United States, we are endeavoring to improve the lot of large numbers of people who are jammed into urban areas. At the same time, we are concerned and are working to assist the people of the rural areas who are disadvantaged. Many of our resource development programs have direct bearing on these efforts. We must keep a balanced over-all view to provide for the coincident growth of both rural and urban areas".

"The Reclamation program has provided many of the food and fiber items desired by all people. Better-balanced diets are one of the substantial improvements in living standards -- as improvement to which irrigation contributes much."

"The National Reclamation Association has historically supported the multi-purpose approach to resource development and we might also call this the multi-benefit approach. We can look with pride at the results from domestic and irrigation supplies, flood control navigation improvement, electric power development, fish and wildlife enhancement, water quality improvement and water recreation. "

(take)

"We believe that we can pay particular pride in the reclamation program in that the national investment for reimbursable allocations is repaid."

Sorensen said that there were serious questions as to this single-purpose concept of the

pending Wild and Scenic Rivers legislation. But: "We feel that the legislation before the Congress presents great improvement over earlier versions." He suggested further legislative protection of state water rights and a comprehensive evaluation of all needs before inclusion of any streams in the Wild Rivers System. Sorensen emphasized that state responsibilities for fish and wildlife should not be reduced. He also described the deterioration of long-used Utah reservoirs because of access restrictions.

The Committees heard from Sorensen that the 160 acre limitation (on size of farms in one ownership, eligible to receive Reclamation water) is becoming more serious as the agricultural revolution continues. He noted that the standard has not changed since 1902.

Other Directors, and also a Chairman of one of NRA's Committees, high-lighted issues which the Association considers requires the attention of Congress. La Selle Coles, Director from Oregon and former President of NRA, pointed out that the water rights granted by states are currently jeopardized. As Coles explained, this is because the Forest Service and other Federal agencies consider that they may take all the water they want, regardless of earlier uses by others under State laws. The agencies claim this right under the so called "Reservation Doctrine". Coles asked for the help of Congress in removing this threat of Government taking.

The Small Projects Act is being stymied, in effect, by a difference in opinion between the Congress and Administration, according to Doyle F. Boen. Mr. Boen is from Hemet, California and is an authority on Small Projects procedures. He explained that many organizations seeking loans either to modernize or to extend systems for irrigation, municipal, industrial or other water supplies are blocked by an Executive-Legislative impasse. He commended the Interior and Insular Affairs Committee of the Congress for having taken the lead toward breaking the deadlock. He asked the help of members of the Committee to persuade the Agricultural and Public Works Committees to support legislation to get the projects moving again. These projects are loans for which the

local people advance the costs of engineering and accept the responsibility for construction of works.

The relationship of Reclamation to National Goals was pictured by Carl Bronn, Executive Director for the Association. Bronn emphasized that in the west, water development is not only basic to progress, it also is becoming, in some places, a rescue operation. Where ground waters are being depleted or river basins are approaching full appropriation, the communities can be rescued from economic disaster only by timely development of water supply. But timely development is now blocked by attention to less basic means for community development.

Joint federal-state studies have proved the need for seven or more billions of dollars of unfunded multi-purpose Reclamation work, according to Bronn. But the current Budget of the Administration would appropriate only \$204 millions toward reclamation construction. However, the Administration's Budget proposes \$246 millions for "recreational resources". That is, less money is proposed for reclamation water supply, where most costs would be paid back to the Treasury, than for outdoor recreation, with less pay-back and lower essentiality.

Bronn found also that programs for the central cities and for the on-farm poor are in competition; this may speed migration into such areas of the poor now living in between. And in-between the central cities and the farms are 19.6 million people classified as poor'. Obviously, such competitive federal programs are not an effective long-range solution to relieve poverty.

Some aspects of poverty programs could be linked with construction programs to assure adequate supplies of water for municipal, industrial, irrigation and recreation, Bronn suggested. This would develop coherent patterns for progress. Bronn quoted recent findings of Presidential Commissions that "The lack of job opportunities in poverty-stricken rural areas usually stems from a sharp decline in the manpower needs of the natural-resource industries." Also: "Programs emphasizing immediate needs will not change the conditions creating and perpetuating poverty." Tying these to the findings that on-the-job training for many disadvantaged workers will prove more successful than institutional training, he advocated more water-supply construction to train

people, while at the same time assuring the water needed for the growth of business and the improvement of communities.

Bronn backed his suggestion with data showing the national benefits which result from regional water development. Further, he pointed out, natural resource development based on water use provides the basic things that people must have to work with and live by.

Confirming that position is a report of the Senate Select Committee of the Congress. That report advised the nation 8 years ago, Bronn observed, not only that water supplies are becoming critical, but also that "water development must recognize human values as well as economic values."

"Human values" mean more than outdoor recreation for people who can travel to scenic areas, Bronn suggested. "Human values" include playing a part in the production of wealth; this comes from resource development done in ways to structure city, town, and country into regions that are productive as well as attractive. And searching for such ways, within the \$40 billions of national needs for water development, is to everyone's advantage, he concluded.