

★ news release

Nicolai - Interior 3171

SECRETARY UDALL ANNOUNCES STUDY FOR REGIONAL SOLUTION OF WATER AND POWER PROBLEMS OF PACIFIC SOUTHWEST

In his letter to Chairman Aspinall, Secretary Udall pointed out that the metropolitan areas of Southern California now have a population of about 10 million people and that in a little over three decades the population of this area will treble to about 30 million.

As another example, he said, it is estimated that the population of the metropolitan areas around Phoenix and Tucson, Arizona will increase four or five times to approximately $2\frac{1}{2}$ million by the year 2000.

"To support this growth we must move now on plans that will produce the necessary water supplies," he added. "The inadequacy of the Colorado River system to meet this region's continuing and rapidly growing water needs is already evident. The area has, in fact, already outgrown its safe water supply."

Secretary Udall said Southern California is looking to the ambitious State Water Project, costing 1-3/4 billion dollars, to augment its present heavy requirements for water, but even this gigantic undertaking is expected to meet only the needs to 1985.

"Areas around Phoenix and Tucson, in Arizona, now are using all available surface water, and in addition, pumping four million acre-feet from the underground annually to satisfy their requirements," he continued, "This is double the annual rate at which water is flowing back into the ground. A rapid and serious lowering of the water table has resulted."

Secretary Udall explained that the pending decision of the United States Supreme Court in the Arizona vs. California case concerning Colorado River water, even if favorable to Arizona, would have only a temporary impact on the economy of the region and would provide no long-range solution to its ever-pressing water-supply problem. On the other hand, he said, should the Supreme Court rule in favor of California, it would mean only that Southern California's present level of diversion from the Colorado River could be continued. No additional water would be available to meet constantly rising requirements.

The study would include the feasibility of saline water conversion plants in combination with electric power plants on the Pacific Ocean and Gulf of California, and the possibility of using nuclear energy as well as fossil fuels.

In addition to plants for converting sea water and brackish water to fresh, additional water supplies for the Southwest could come from:

More efficient use of water in the lower Colorado River basin itself, and from participating projects in Northern California where it can be clearly determined that long-term surface supplies are surplus to present and prospective needs.

Secretary Udall said that an estimated million-acre feet of water annually in the Lower Colorado River Basin could be salvaged by an effective water-conservation program which would include lining of existing canals to curb seepage; additional storage for re-regulating Colorado River water; improving river channels; and the elimination of unnecessary water-consuming plants.

Financing of the far-reaching water and power development plan must be based largely on the sale of electric power and the sale of municipal and industrial water, Secretary Udall said.

"The study must recognize the increasing high value of hydroelectric power for peaking and, therefore, the importance of power plants on the Colorado River," he said. "Power revenues from the Hoover Dam plant, the powerplants at Parker and Davis dams, and from the additional powerplants to be built on the Colorado River at Marble Canyon, Bridge Canyon--and wherever else such plants on the Colorado may prove feasible--including those powerplants in combination with saline water plants--should be utilized in repaying the costs of the basin-wide water development."

"The problems of the Lower Colorado, which we have studied and are continuing to study, have reached a highly critical stage and now can be solved only through a new brand of thinking," Secretary Udall said. "No one person, no one entity, no one dam or development pattern in any one State can erase those problems. Only regional action--coordinated at every level--will suffice."

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