High Country news

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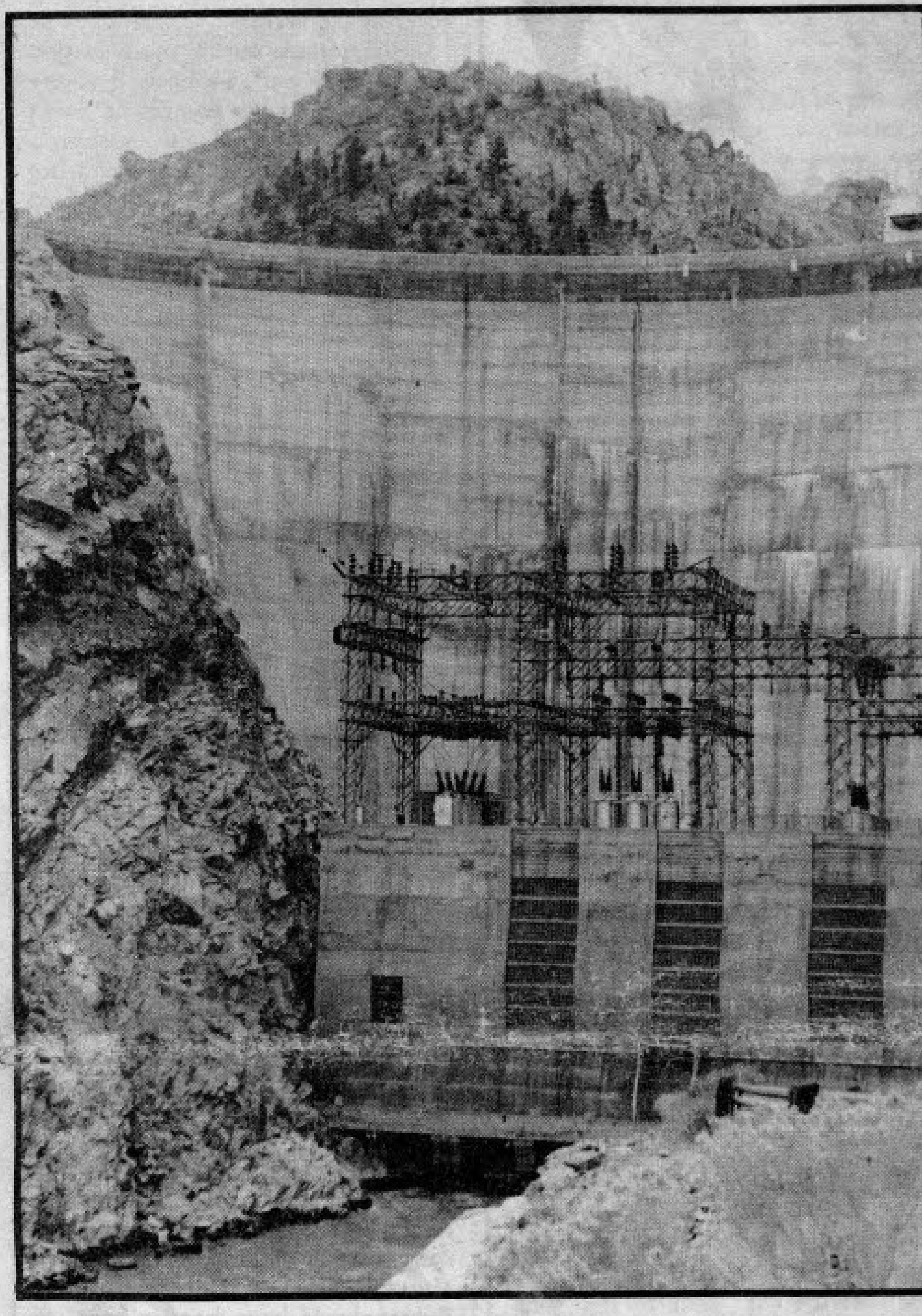
Dollars no longer flow uphill



by Ed Marston

About 150 people held a wake of sorts in Gunnison, Colorado, Aug. 1 through 3.

It was a wake for large federal water projects, which friend and foe agree are dead. It was a 'wake of sorts' because little time was spent mourning, or even gnashing teeth. Most of the three-day conference was spent analyzing the West's water future and jockeying for position in that future.

The occasion was the eighth annual water workshop to be held at Western State College in Gunnison. This one, titled: "Dams: Damned if you do; damned if you don't," attracted speakers from across the nation to talk about water issues in the Missouri and Colorado River basins.

Everyone from dam builders to dam blockers agreed that no new large federally-funded dams are likely to be built. But the conference wasn't serene. There was still much to disagree about.

The dam builders, for example, hailed the past as a Golden Age of Reclamation -- a time when America as a whole generously and far-sightedly helped to build up the West's regional economy.

Brigadier General Mark Sisinyak, who heads the Army Corps of Engineers' Missouri River operations, mourned the passing of the era of consensus. The system of flood and navigation control dams on the Missouri, he said, were authorized 40 years ago when:

"People and property took precedence over fish and wildlife. Individuals made sacrifices for the good of the many. That is not to say that that was a better way of doing things; just different from today."

Today, there is frequently "not enough support for a proposed project to overcome all the adversely affected interests."

Later that day, the conference heard from one of those adversely affected interests -- John Musser. Musser is a fourth generation rancher along the Gunnison River near Grand Junction, Colorado, close to the Colorado-Utah border.

Musser told the group that 2600 acres of cattle and fruit-raising land would be buried by the proposed Dominguez Reservoir, and no new agricultural land would be created.

Musser belongs to a vanishing class of Americans -- people who can still work usefully around the clock. He scorned the flat water recreation economy Dominguez is supposed to create. "I'm not against a good time -- hell, everyone likes to have a good time. Recreation and tourism are fine, but it's asinine when people are starving to call water skiing and power boating a 'need.' "

The rancher said he wasn't against all reservoirs. But he urged that they be put in the high country, where lower elevation agriculture could then make use of the water, and where evaporation would be lower than in his hot, canyon-lands area 60 miles from the Utah border.

The other fire at the conference was generated by Colorado's historic, continuing East Slope - West Slope water fight. About 80% of Colorado's population and 90% of the irrigated land is east of the Continental Divide, in the Missouri River drainage. But 80% of the state's water is west of the Divide, in the Colorado River drainage.

As a result, East Slope farmers as well as the cities of Denver, Colorado Springs, Pueblo, Aurora, et al have individually or collectively burrowed under the Continental Divide for water. And the sparsely populated, rural Western Slope counties have met that burrowing with litigation, invective and appeals to state and federal levels of government for economic development to create their own water-using economy.

At this conference, the heat came mostly from the urban East Slope in the person of Robert Isaac, the mayor of Colorado Springs. He promised his luncheon audience that he would be candid. And he was. Colorado Springs wishes to tunnel under the Continental Divide to take an additional 20,000 acre-feet of water yearly out of the Holy Cross Wilderness area in the Eagle River drainage.

His city's plans for the Homestake II project are opposed on an array of battle fields: administrative appeals to the U.S. Forest Service, which has approved the diversion; pleas to the Army Corps that it not issue a 404 wetlands permit; and court actions.

Isaac, during his talk, showed he is not pleased by the opposition. He said the Homestake II opponents were not honorable environmentalists concerned about the land. He said the fact that the project would occupy only 6 acres out of 120,000 wilderness acres meant the environmental concerns had been seen to.

The reason for the opposition, he said, was the city of Vail's desire to get a free water ride from the East Slope cities. He charged that the ski town wants its water rights improved for free as the price for dropping the opposition. Vail has succeeded, he said, in forging a front with environmentalists to oppose the project.

"It's a strange alliance we've seen created here -- an alliance of developers with environmentalists." Isaac said he knew of Vail's perfidious plans because the smoking pistol had been discovered -- a letter from a Vail Associates ski company executive laying out the plot. The letter, he said, had been accidentally sent to the Forest Service, which published it in its Homestake II Environmental Impact Statement.

Whether or not Isaac had the evidence, he was on good strategic ground in making Vail, rather than the Holy Cross Wilderness Defense Fund, the target of his attack. For whatever reason, Western Coloradoans of all stripes see the now 20-year-old, built-from scratch ski town as an Abominable Snowman. Vail, as defender of the environment, is not on strong ground.

The East Slope - West Slope confrontation is always fun. But it wasn't the heart of the three days. The core was the talks which recounted the history of the federal water projects and tried to chart a path to the future.

With the Army Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation on the program, there was the traditional recitation of the benefits of water projects: the lives and property saved from flooding, the millions of kilowatt-hours generated and barrels

[Continued on page 12]

Dear friends,

High Country News

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How do you move thirteen years of files, photos, business records and bills from a small town in Wyoming to an even smaller town in Colorado?

Routinely, by truck, car and mail.

And how do you move a 13-year-old institution that has survived problems that have destroyed many other worthy publications covering the West?

That, it turns out, is much harder.

The 'easy' part, we hope, is mostly behind us. But we confess it didn't seem easy. During the summer's hectic, often confused transition, we wondered whether this issue would make it. Bits of paper, from bills to stories, had a way of hiding under or between other bits of paper. "Where are the ads?" we'd call Lander to inquire. "You'll find them," came the confident answer.

Why shouldn't they be confident, we thought. They're out of it. But they always proved right -- the files, or checks, or subscription lists were always there, where we should have looked in the first place.

There was also the matter of building a new life-support system for the paper in Colorado. The first task was to find a printer that could approximate the incredible quality achieved by the paper's Wyoming printer -- the *Jackson Hole News.*

The second task was to assemble the computers and typesetters needed to process mailing lists and produce the columns of type that get stitched together to make a newspaper. Then there were the minor tasks: registering the paper in Colorado, shifting the second class postal mailing permit, buying telephones, opening bank accounts, locating a darkroom, and -- most important -- hiring people to handle circulation, typesetting, and the like.

In the first few weeks, all activity revolved around circulation manager Nancy Barbee. In this electronic age, merging the mailing lists of *High Country News* and *Western Colorado Report* should have been a snap. In practice, Nancy admitted it turned out to be almost as difficult as raising her four young boys.

It wasn't only that there's a fair overlap between the two papers. It's that the world didn't stop because we were spending two months in transition. People kept on moving, renewing, giving gift subscriptions, and writing angry letters asking why they hadn't received a paper since Christmas. Then there are the couples who get *High Country News* under one name and *Western Colorado Report* under another. And the other couples who were splitting their sheet just as we were stitching our sheets together.

For days at a time, our activities had nothing to do with the putting out of a newspaper. We could as well have been sticking two chewing gum companies together, or merging an anti-vivisection group with a professional society of biology teachers.

But every once in a while, mixed in with the bookkeeping and paper chases, came reminders that this was indeed a newspaper. A high point was the unpacking of Kathy Bogan's files of photographs. In addition to laying out a beautiful paper, Kathy found time to amass a wonderful collection of black and white photos of the most beautiful, most ugly and most interesting places in the West.

A second high point was the exploration of editor Dan Whipple's writer files. It is presumptuous for anyone to think of covering the Rocky Mountain states, whether you are based in Lander or Paonia, or Salt Lake City. But the group of writers Whipple has attracted to *High Country News* makes that task a little less presumptuous.

In those rare moments when the paperwork blizzard cleared and we could see a ways, things become exhilarating. It was then that we saw ourselves at the center of a web radiating outward to writers and photographers who use words and photographs to convey their vision of the western United States.

We realized that *High Country News* has survived these 13 years because it has an important mission: to tie together that community of people who care about this region.

As a first cut, we define 'our' West as five states: Wyoming, Utah, Montana, Idaho, and Colorado. But in fact, the West that *High Country News* covers has no precise boundaries.

In this issue, for example, a Hotline describes how the blockage of a dam on the Platte River in Colorado is linked to the fate of whooping cranes in central Nebraska. *HCN* has never pretended to cover Nebraska, but that hotline is as much about Nebraska as about Colorado.

The large story on dams ties together activities in the Colorado and Missouri river basins, and has implications for people from the Rockies east to the Mississippi and west to California.

Of all the stories, Don Snow's description of the rise and fall of Butte, Montana, stands most on its own. But it too has implications for the many, many other Western towns tied to the decline of the eastern Rust Bowl. For example, the story in this issue on the aluminum ore mine planned for Lake City, Colorado indicates that despite the fate of Butte, Leadville, or Detroit, large mining-industrial complexes are still being planned.

We are amazed, as we edit the stories, to see the many ties that link them. Don Snow's piece on the Bonneville transmission line, for example, explains how wildlife groups just convinced the Montana Power Company to set up a trust fund to nurture a prized trout stream. That story is related to the whooping crane story. Those few surviving cranes exist today because back in 1977 a wildlife group convinced or forced another electric utility to set up a trust fund to preserve crane habitat.

Finally, dear readers, if anything in this Dear Readers column indicates complacency, or the sense that things are under control, disregard it. The search to eliminate glitches in our mailing list, to take care of the business details of the transfer, to become comfortable with the *High Country News* layout, will take a few months.

More difficult, but still possible, will be keeping abreast of events within the region, achieving a fair geographic balance among the stories, digesting what we saw and heard on our two swings through the region, and attracting and keeping informed and informative contributors.

Most difficult, perhaps impossible, will be the major goal of *High Country News*: To be a newspaper that both describes the West as it is and points the way toward what it can be.

We invite your help.

-The staff

P.S.

On September 17 in Denver, and again on October 15 in Snowmass, *High Country News* will come out of its editorial closet for a party.

The point of the party is to welcome the paper to its new haunt. But all readers and would-be readers -- whatever and wherever their haunts -- are invited to attend, and to bring along anyone they like.

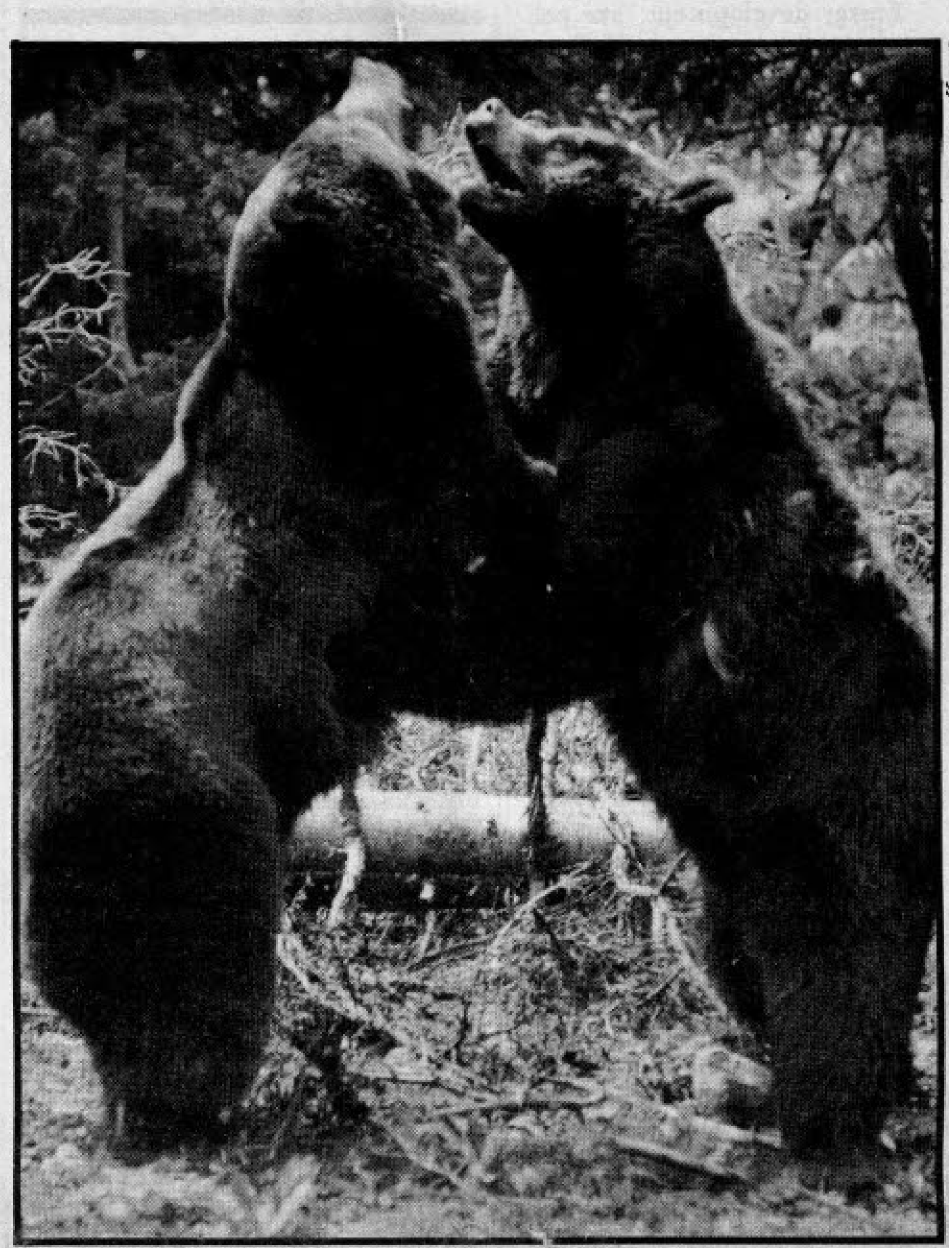
The Denver beer and wine reception will be held at the Meeting Hall (annex), Capitol Hill Community Center, 1290 Williams Street, on the edge of Denver's Cheesman Park. It will go from 7:30 P.M. to 9:30 P.M., and interesting people and good conversation are probably inevitable. The charge is $3 per person.

Plans for the Western Colorado party are not yet complete. But we know it will be held Saturday, October 15, at 6 P.M. at Windstar in Old Snowmass. The official address is 2317 Snowmass Creek Road. However, as everyone knows, official addresses are of little use in the boonies, even if the boonies happen to be near Aspen. So we'll have more information in the next issue, as well as final word on the musical entertainment and on a possible chili supper to ward off the October chill.

We hope to see you at one or another of the parties.

WESTERN ROUNDUP

Forest may close off bear haunts


Stouffer Productions

Shoshone National Forest, which hugs the eastern side of Yellowstone National Park from Dubois, Wyoming to the Montana border, could become the first of five national forests surrounding the park to restrict public access to grizzly bear country.

The proposal -- one of seven alternatives described in a "scoping statement" published by the forest to elicit public comment -- has already aroused opposition from forest users in nearby Powell and Cody. Region One Forester Craig Rupp of Denver, told a recent congressional hearing held at Cody that the public wants "no change," and that he expects "serious opposition" to any restrictions.

Support for separating bears from tourists comes from Rupp and other forest and park officials, joined by state game officials in Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho. They made it clear that major steps must be taken if grizzlies are to prosper in the Yellowstone Ecosystem, a sprawling mosaic of public and private wildlands comprising as much as 20,000 square miles. Grizzlies in the region have dwindled to between 183 and 207, estimated U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist Chris Servheen.

Sen. John Chafee (R-R.I.), who chaired the Congressional hearing August 11, said Congress will back public land managers in whatever strategy they choose to protect the bears. The grizzly is listed as a "threatened" species under the federal Endangered Species Act.

But the hearing demonstrated that there is still considerable confusion over what should be done to protect grizzlies. Chafee and Senator Alan Simpson (R-Wyo.) several times suggested supplemental feeding in Yellowstone National Park or opening backcountry garbage dumps to the bears. Park Superintendent Robert Barbee called the garbage-dinner idea "a great leap backwards."

There were even suggestions that the declining Yellowstone grizzly might benefit from a hunting season. That would keep the bears wary of humans and eliminate male bears that might be killing young cubs, suggested one panelist. The Audubon Society's Gene Knoder found a major flaw in the hunting season approach. Hunters can't tell grizzly sows from boars, he pointed out.

Little opposition was voiced to the notion that a grizzly hunting season might be reinstituted in the Yellowstone if the bear population should rise to a less precarious level.

Claire Huking, who is analyzing the various alternatives for protecting the bears in Shoshone National Forest, said some solution must be found "if we are to follow the Endangered Species Act."

Among the seven possibilities she is reviewing are: Steering the public away from crucial grizzly habitat either voluntarily or through education; setting up permit systems to control or monitor human activity in grizzly areas, and closing areas where grizzly-human conflict is likely. *De rigueur* in scoping statements, the alternative of making no management changes at all is also on the menu.

Although no other national forest in the Yellowstone area is now considering such restrictions, officials from the Bridger-Teton National Forest south of the park have discussed the problem with Shoshone officials.

At Yellowstone National Park this year, some backcountry areas where bears roam were closed to the public. The park's bear management expert, Gary Brown, said that public reaction to the closures has been for the most part favorable.

He also said, "Most of those opposed said in the same breath that we ought to kill all the grizzlies."

The Shoshone National Forest scoping statement on "Limiting Visitor Use Impacts on the Grizzly Bear" is available for public comment from:

Shoshone National Forest
Att: Claire Huking
P.O. Box 2140
Cody, Wyo. 82414

After the Forest Service reviews public comments, an environmental assessment will be prepared for release sometime this winter.

-Geoff O'Gara

State wants to reform Interior

Brant Calkin (profiled in *HCN*, 7/22/83) has been promoted.

The outspoken environmentalist who was New Mexico's Deputy Secretary of Natural Resources when interviewed has been promoted into the Secretary's chair. He succeeds Dr. Shirley Hill Witt, who resigned August 4 due to differences between herself and Governor Toney Anaya.

Calkin has served as National President of the Sierra Club and Chairman of the New Mexico Wilderness Commission, among many other posts.

Calkin said he looks forward "to working more in the public sector," in his new job and that he already has a full slate of jobs to get done. At the head of his list is an assignment from Governor Anaya. He has charged Calkin with getting input from throughout the Western states on how the Department of the Interior can better serve the states.

"I'll be asking all kinds of people for help on the project," Calkin said. "We're working on the reform we think we need." The goal, Calkin said, will be to prepare a new version of Interior's policy manual for submission to the 1984 Democratic presidential candidate.

-Bryan Welch

BARBS

We thought they liked meat.

In a press release, the BLM office in Lewistown, Montana has unwittingly revealed the dietary preferences of local ranchers. The release begins: "An advisory group of ranchers who graze on public lands will meet in Lewistown on September 8 and 9."

Forest Service stands on principle.

The weekly *Vail Trail* is pleased that the Forest Service is "taking a stand somewhere." The newspaper had been critical of the White River National Forest for permitting two Eastern Slope cities to build tunnels and water diversion dams in the Holy Cross Wilderness area.

The agency finally gained the paper's admiration by refusing to allow a wilderness preservation group permission to hold a fund-raising walk through Holy Cross. The paper wrote:

"We take it that this latest ruling means it is OK to drill through the wilderness, dry up its wetlands, and divert its water. It is not, however, OK to walk through that wilderness to raise funds for its defense."

Mindless in Iowa.

Iowans were of one mind in rejecting a proposed Iowa license plate slogan reading:

"Iowa: a State of Minds."

Gov. Terry Branstead thought the slogan would promote high-tech economic development in Iowa. But the state's economy is still agricultural, and the grassroots mocked the idea off Branstead's agenda. But he was given plenty of alternatives to consider, including:

"Hogs are beautiful," and "Iowa: Gateway to Nebraska."

Swan dive into the slick.

Interior Secretary James Watt has announced a new use and a catchy acronym for old off-shore oil and gas drilling platforms. It's called REEFS -- Recreation, Environmental Enhancement and Fishing in the Seas. Watt's office promises "aggressive movement" to turn the platforms into mobile swimming holes.

Message to Detroit.

A man named Timmy Delka in Steamboat Springs, Colorado, got fed up with his car this summer. How fed up? He grabbed a hammer and beat the car up until he ran out of steam. Then, says the Steamboat *Pilot*, he sold the car to a passerby for $6.

Forest with view, sudden moves required.

In Colorado's Summit County, home of Keystone and other ski areas, housing comes high in the summer. So high that some people pitch a tent in the National Forest for a month or two. That is, they try to stay longer than the 14-day limit. Forest Service officials do periodic sweeps to move the squatters, although they've found most folks just move their gear to a new camping site. Forest Service officials, who have some sympathy for their prey, have dubbed the squatters "liver transplants."

Another Watt Jibe.

At the Sierra Club convention in Snowmass this summer, Sen. Alan Cranston (D-Cal.) explained that James Watt has no dislike for trees. "He just doesn't like for them to stand in crowds."

HOTLINE

Ranchers hope to lick rail proposal

The 89-mile-long proposed Tongue River Railroad is at the center of a coal-ranching battle in eastern Montana.

The Northern Plains Resource Council sees the rail proposal advanced by a consortium of coal companies as a wasteful, unneeded development scheme. The agricultural group's newsletter says the Powder River region now has 100 million tons per year of excess coal capacity.

The coal companies which want to build the line say it is needed to develop the 10 billion tons of coal in the region. The firms say it is a prudent investment to meet future need for western coal.

Thus far, only one mine has been proposed. The up to 10 million tons per year Montco project has run into serious permitting problems with the Montana State Department of Lands.

The railroad itself is doing better. The Interstate Commerce Commission, in a draft Environmental Impact Statement, said the line is feasible. The ranching group is preparing to challenge the line before the state's public utility commission.

Coal industry splits over corrosive issue

The U.S. coal industry is moving along two separate tunnels on the acid rain issue.

One group of companies continues to follow the industry's long-standing approach to acid rain. Those companies are calling for additional research while opposing the mandatory use of low-sulfur coal or the imposition of pollution control devices on power plants.

But in the last several months, another group of firms has organized the Alliance for Clean Energy. ACE accepts the inevitability of acid rain control legislation in the U.S. Congress, and wishes to influence the form it will take. These companies assume that continued opposition to acid rain legislation will leave the industry without any say in the resulting law.

The United Mine Workers union is not pleased with the new industry group. The union, most of whose members mine high-sulfur eastern coal, charges that the Alliance is motivated by greed. It says the new group's members are interested in increasing the mining of the low-sulfur western coal they control.

The Alliance's approximately 20 members include A.T. Massey, Westmoreland, Utah International, Burlington Northern and Sunedco.

The industry split reflects the East-West divisions created on many fronts by the acid rain control question. Western utilities, for example, object to a tax on their customers to help clean up midwestern utilities burning high-sulfur coal. Others say it is a national problem, and that the burden should be equally shared.

Navajos, utility agree to talk

Energy development, like politics, can make strange bedfellows.

The most recent bedding of opposites occurred in New Mexico, where the Navajo tribe and Public Service Company of New Mexico have stopped struggling for control over 35,000 acres of coal-rich land 35 miles south of Farmington. Instead, they have begun to negotiate a partnership to jointly develop a power plant on the land.

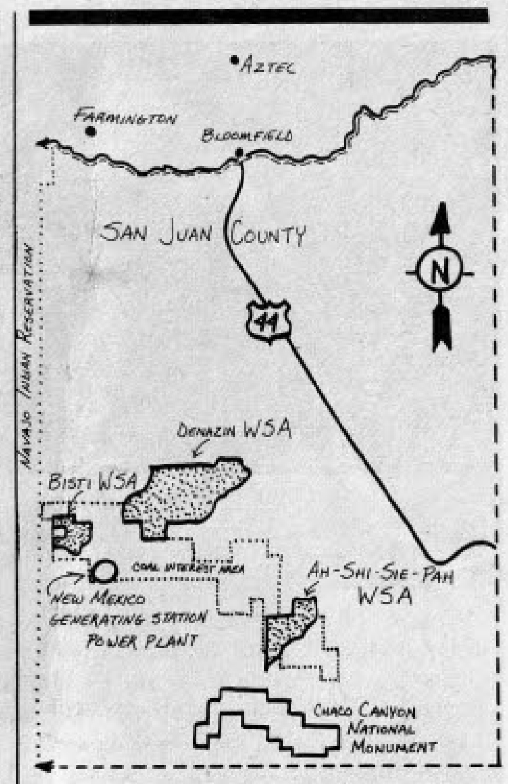
The significance of the agreement to start talking goes beyond the talks. The negotiations provide a first definitive indication of the direction in which Navajo chairman Peterson Zah is likely to guide the tribe.

When Zah first beat incumbent Peter MacDonald last year, many observers predicted Zah would prove strongly anti-energy. But his willingness to negotiate with Public Service, coupled with his willingness to maintain membership in the Council of Energy Resource Tribes (CERT), indicates that he will not automatically oppose energy development.

The issues surrounding the disputed 35,000 acres of BLM land located near Chaco Canyon and three BLM Wilderness Study Areas are complex. The BLM owns the land, known as the Paragon Ranch. But the Navajos have strong claim to it under the Navajo-Hopi Relocation Act.

The Navajos have selected the land as part of their legislated right to resettle members who lost homes as a result of land disputes with the Hopi tribe. The need for the land is indicated by the Navajos squatting on nearby federal land.

Meanwhile, Public Service has been studying the same land and negotiating with the BLM for it as a site for the proposed 2000-megawatt New Mexico Generating Station. In addition, a Public Service subsidiary owns Preference Rights Coal Lease Applications on the land. All together, about 22,000 acres out of the 35,000 acres are underlain by the so-called PRLAs.



Most of the coal would have to be mined by underground methods.

According to a spokesman for Navajo chairman Zah, his willingness to negotiate doesn't mean the tribe has changed its goals. Press secretary Ray Louis said need for land remains the concern. He said the Paragon Ranch could not only provide land where the pastoral Navajos could live and raise livestock; it could also provide jobs at the power plant and possibly in the mines.

The tribe's interest in coal development in the area pre-dates the Public Service talks. The Navajos have been negotiating with Consolidation Coal Company to build a coal-carrying railroad within the existing reservation, but close to the Paragon Ranch. As currently planned, the railroad would run from the Burnham coal fields to Gallup, New Mexico. Coal development on the Ranch property would be consistent with the rail plan.

The Paragon Ranch is within the San Juan basin, where a national struggle has been raging over Interior's plans to lease about one billion tons of coal (*HCN*, 7/22/1983). Opponents of the sale argue that leasing in today's economy makes sense only for companies that get the coal at bargain prices. They say there is plenty of coal under lease now, and that additional leasing will fuel speculation, rather than power plants.

Interior Assistant Secretary Garrey Carruthers implicitly agrees that the lease sale bids will be low. But he argues that royalties once the coal is mined will eventually make up for that. He also says the coal should be leased now, so it will be available when needed.

"When you can tell me what's going to happen in the Middle East in the next few years, that's when I'll change my opinions on leasing coal."

Back at the Ranch, it is clear that negotiations between Public Service and the Navajos will not be easy. In its earlier, unilateral approach to the BLM, the utility had suggested trading land it owns around Ute Mountain, north of Taos, to the BLM for the ranch. Now negotiations are three way -- the BLM, the tribe and the utility -- and it will be difficult to work out a land trade, joint ownership of the ranch, and division of revenues from the power plant.

The BLM had managed to stay neutral in the earlier tug of war between the Navajos and the utility. The start of negotiations has taken them off the hot seat for the moment. Under the terms of the agreement to negotiate, only the Navajos can comment. The utility stays mum.

Other interests exist beside those of the three main negotiators. Hanging on the outcome is the fate of 5,320 acres in two Wilderness Study Areas which overlap the ranch. The property is in an area highly prized for its history and archaeology. It is close to Chaco Canyon and near or overlapping the Bisti, Denazin and Ah-shi-sie-pah Wilderness Study Areas.

-Bryan Welch

Idaho 'David' beats IRS 'Goliath

A major victory has been won by a small grassroots organization that should be getting used to playing David to various bureaucratic Goliaths.

First, Idaho's Citizens for Environmental Quality (CEQ) forced the U.S. Forest Service to withdraw an Environmental Impact Statement that would have begun a major herbicide application program in the state's northern forests (*HCN*, 3/4/83). That successful challenge took five years.

Now, CEQ has successfully appealed a decision by the Seattle District office of the Internal Revenue Service to revoke CEQ's tax-exempt status as an educational organization under IRS code section 501 (c) (3).

On August 19, 1983, the National Office of the IRS agreed that CEQ should retain its tax-exempt status. District agent Jim Murphy was overruled. Murphy had declared that CEQ violated federal standards for a "full and fair" disclosure of all sides of public issues. He claimed that CEQ's publications "advocate the non-use of toxic herbicides" and that CEQ had "adopted the position that all toxic herbicides should be banned."

In their written appeal to the National Office, Georgia Hoglund, CEQ Co-ordinator, responded that the organization has consistently supported Integrated Pest Management (which allows chemical use as a last resort) and has never advocated banning all herbicides. During the period in question (1979-1981), CEQ had sponsored many public educational projects including a gardening symposium, a pest management slide show, and support for noxious weed control legislation in Idaho.

The IRS National Office decision refined and applied the standard of "full and fair" disclosure. The IRS held that a tax-exempt organization may advocate a particular position or viewpoint as long as it presents enough factual information to permit the public to form an independent opinion or conclusion. The IRS ruled that CEQ's "publications and presentations are sufficiently dispassionate and sufficiently factual." The full and fair disclosure rule does not require that exempt organizations present viewpoints opposing their own, the ruling board noted.

CEQ supporters were jubilant. Regina Gormley, CEQ Board member, said, "It's a real victory for the people -- all tax-exempt environmental groups can breathe easier now."

- Bill London

Salt Lake City may become Venice

A continuing inflow of water to the Great Salt Lake of Utah over the past few years has diminished its famous bouyancy and caused the lake level to rise drastically. The rise of the lake has also raised the possibility that the West as a region is entering a wet cycle.

Since September 1982 alone, the lake has risen 5.2 feet, causing an estimated $156 million in damages to lakeside businesses and property. The potential for damage is magnified by the flatness of the lakeshore. Even a small rise causes the water to flow inland many hundreds of feet. Rises of several feet can displace the shoreline by miles.

Some lake watchers fear the problems have just begun -- they say the potential exists to make downtown Salt Lake the brine shrimp Venice of the West. But others, including the National Weather Service, say the lake has peaked and will now hold steady or even recede. The fate of wildlife and billions of dollars in property hinges on the answer.

If present trends continue, some independent studies predict the lake could rise to between 4,212 feet and 4,218 feet of elevation by the end of the century. That's a seven to thirteen foot change from today's 4,205 feet of elevation; such a level would put its southeast shore in downtown Salt Lake, making the city's name apt indeed.

Several plans to alter the lake's level have been proposed, but no action has been taken. Some call for pumping the water into other desert basins for evaporation. The most controversial calls for punching a $3.3 million hole in a railroad causeway that cuts across the north end of the lake.

Because the causeway happens to act as a dam, water on the north end of the lake is eight inches lower than water on the south side. The height difference is caused by the greater inflow of fresh water to the south. As a result of the imbalance, water on the north side is saltier than on the south side.

Pressure from companies and dependent communities on the south side led the Utah state legislature this July to consider breaching the causeway. Opening the causeway could lower the south end of the lake by more than six inches and reduce flooding losses.

But companies on the north side benefit from the high salinity levels and relatively low lake levels. They objected and convinced the legislature not to act. Peter Behrens, president of Great Salt Lake Minerals and Chemicals, says the breach would reduce the salinity in his part of the lake by 30 percent, making it more expensive for him to extract minerals from the water.

A $70,000 lake level control study is due out in November. But those on the south end of the lake don't want to wait. They favor an immediate breach in the causeway-dam. They say a drop of six to fourteen inches would spare them additional damages when the lake climbs to a predicted high of 4,206 feet in 1984.

The problem was foreseen by one man back in 1976. Hurd C. Willet, professor emeritus at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, predicted widespread flooding from the lake's rising waters. The prediction, coming just before the West's devastating 1977 drought, was ignored. Behrens suggests that the current flooding is a portent of the future, and he urged that Willet's predictions be taken seriously.

The Willet report, titled "The Prediction of Future Water Levels of the Great Salt Lake, Utah, on the Basis of Solar Climatic Cycles," was presented to the Utah Department of Natural Resources in December 1976, along with a warning that flooding was imminent. It has received a great deal of attention lately.

-Lance Gurwell

Wilderness magic eludes Idaho

When Idaho Republican Sen. James McClure agreed to hear testimony concerning the designation of wilderness for the state's 6.5 million acres of roadless areas, he said he hoped for a "magical consensus or a middle ground."

He didn't find it. During the four recent public hearings in Boise, Idaho Falls, Coeur d'alene and Lewiston, 500 people expressed what McClure called "polarized ... opposing viewpoints." That testimony will "make his job tougher," he concluded. The job for the Senator is to introduce an Idaho Wilderness legislation bill to the Senate before the end of 1983.

The two extremes McClure encountered at the hearings were represented by Wilderness proponents and the timber industry. Five conservation groups advocated wilderness for 2.2 million acres of roadless area they consider threatened by timber harvests or other development. The Idaho Forest Industry Council favored adding only 591,000 acres to Idaho's wilderness, while other logging representatives said no more designated wilderness should be added to Idaho's existing 3.8 million acres.

The state's Fish and Game spokesman suggested the addition of 558,782 acres of new wilderness.

There were some off-beat theatrics at some hearings -- a talking tree and a two-legged caribou -- but testifiers ranged from loggers' wives and small sawmill representatives who feared bankruptcy without more timber to process, to recreationists who feared the loss of their back country hiking and fishing.

What most everyone testifying shared was an economic grounding for their point of view.

Timber industry spokesmen spoke about the economic value of the trees in straight-forward measurements of board-feet income. They also held out the promise of jobs for the state's loggers. Wilderness proponents argued that those who use wilderness beef up the state's economy too, through purchases of outdoor equipment.

Don Crawford, chairman of the Palouse Chapter of the Sierra Club, said an economic focus reflects a strategic change for conservationists. The emphasis is now "less emotional and more practical" in pressing the issue before elected representatives, he said.

"We're using the same set of arguments that industry always used. We can play that game, too."

Many of those testifying for more wilderness used watershed and fisheries values as a basis for their economic evaluations. They also cited Forest Service studies which indicated that some portions of Idaho's roadless areas are not economically-sound areas for timber harvesting. If harvested, the timber value might well be less than the cost of building roads.

One example of such an area, which was brought up continually at the Lewiston hearing, is at Great Burn, Cayuse Creek, and Kelly Creek. Located west of the Bitterroots at the headwaters of the North Fork of the Clearwater River, it is included in a group of 10 roadless areas in the "Endangered Idaho Wilderness Core" -- 2.2 million acres favored for wilderness designation by the Idaho Conservation League, Sierra Club, Wilderness Society, Idaho Environmental Council and Audubon Society (*HCN*, 8/5/83). Blue Ribbon trout streams make up part of the "Core."

The Sierra Club's Crawford noted that in every hearing he attended, pro-wilderness testimony was predominant. "The real key here is to see if McClure recognizes it, or will he brush it aside?"

Even if McClure presents a bill before the Senate asking that no more designated wilderness be granted Idaho, Crawford says the fight isn't over. As a result of the testimony presented at the four hearings, he says, "We have a very strong hearing record to use to our benefit" when it comes time for the House of Representatives to consider the bill.

- Lisa Theobald

HOTLINE

Synfuels Corp loses head

The president of the United States Synthetic Fuels Corporation resigned August 26, 1983. In his letter of resignation, Victor A. Schroeder cited the progress made under his leadership toward building a staff and advancing synfuels projects. Schroeder has come under increasing attack lately from his own board and from Congress for the Synfuels Corps' failure to fund projects.

Colorado's water boys beat back opponents

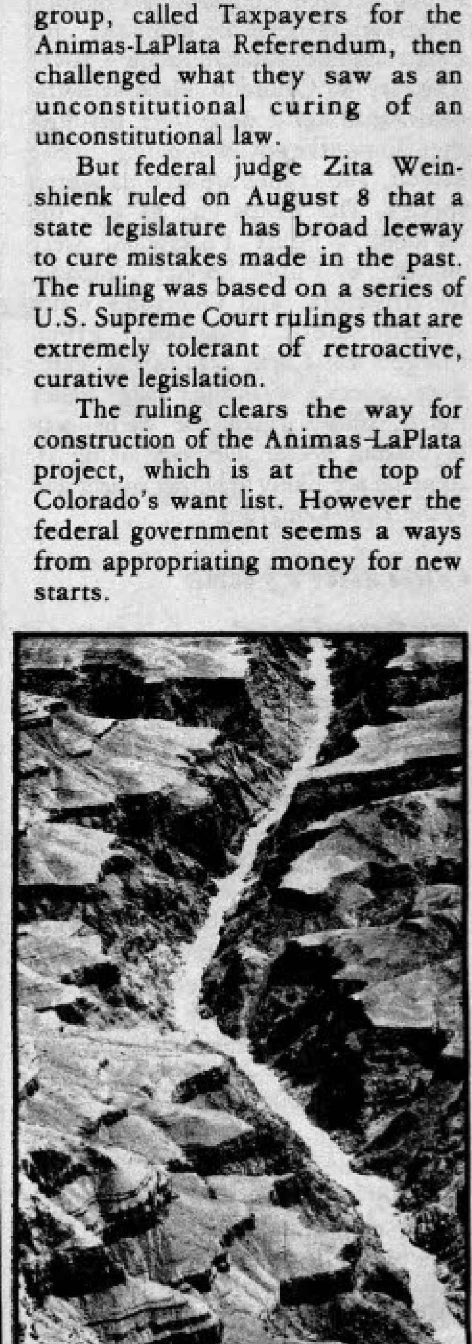
Colorado's water establishment has come out on top again, this time turning back a federal court challenge to the half-billion-dollar Animas-LaPlata water project proposed for southern Colorado, near Durango, and for northern New Mexico.

A Durango citizens group had gone to court, charging that Colorado's Water Conservancy law, under which the Animas-LaPlata District was formed, is stacked against opponents of such districts. Denver attorney Jeff Pearson argued that the citizens' rights under the U.S. Constitution were violated by the way the Animas-LaPlata District was formed.

In response to the legal challenge, the 1983 Colorado *Legislature passed a law (H.B.* 1272) reconstituting all conservancy districts in the state, including Animas-LaPlata. The citizens group, called Taxpayers for the Animas-LaPlata Referendum, then challenged what they saw as an unconstitutional curing of an unconstitutional law.

But federal judge Zita Weinshienk ruled on August 8 that a state legislature has broad leeway to cure mistakes made in the past. The ruling was based on a series of U.S. Supreme Court rulings that are extremely tolerant of retroactive, curative legislation.

The ruling clears the way for construction of the Animas-LaPlata project, which is at the top of Colorado's want list. However the federal government seems a ways from appropriating money for new starts.



HOTLINE

Death results in $25 fines

Four Park Service employees were fined a total of $100 for causing the death of a child at Yellowstone National Park.

The four young men were hiking illegally off-trail August 6 when they knocked loose rocks which fell and struck a ten-year-old boy in the head. Airlifted to a Montana hospital, the boy died enroute from massive skull injuries.

Witnesses said they saw the men climbing across a canyon wall above the boy and his parents. A search was instituted, and about two weeks later the four men came forward, says Yellowstone Park spokeswoman Mary Gunn. All are employees of Grand Teton National Park.

It is not clear whether they were pushed or pulled into admitting their guilt. Park Rangers and staff then held a formal Board of Inquiry, she adds, and the four were charged with Travel Off Trail and fined $25 each.

No one actually witnessed the men kicking over the rocks that killed the boy, she says, and the men did not know the consequences of their act until days afterward.

-Betsy Marston

Whooping cranes are protected

A federal court has acted to protect a 53-mile stretch of whooping crane habitat on the Platte River in central Nebraska. Denver federal judge John Kane ruled that the Army Corps of Engineers properly denied a permit to Public Service Company of Colorado and an irrigation company for construction of a dam on a Platte River tributary in Colorado. Kane said the dam would deplete the river, harming the downstream whooping crane habitat. The cranes are an endangered species. The Corps and its ally, the National Wildlife Federation, were opposed by Public Service Company, the irrigators, and Colorado's water establishment. The latter group charged the Corps was taking water from users, violating state water rights. Kane ruled the Corps was regulating water use, not taking it. Appeals are likely to higher courts and to the U.S. Congress.

Coal slurry line jeopardized

The marketplace has taken a large chunk out of another resource boom. The biting occurred in July, when Arkansas Power and Light signed a 20-year contract with the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad. Ten million tons of coal yearly will be shipped from Wyoming to Arkansas. The proposed ETSI coal slurry pipeline was expected to get the contract, but the railroad got competitive. ETSI's failure jeopardizes both the pipeline and the vision some states had of getting rich by selling water. The anticipated boom was set off when South Dakota sold 50,000 acre-feet of water per year to ETSI for $1.4 billion. It made upper basin states' mouths water, while lower basin states had fears of a dried-up Missouri River. Upper Missouri basin versus lower Missouri basin lawsuits have been filed, and maneuvers undertaken in the Congress.

Roadless areas traded for stream

The Bonneville Power Administration is now free to complete a massive 500-kilovolt power line running from the Colstrip power plants near Billings, Montana westward across the state to Spokane, Washington (*HCN*, 7/22/83).

Bonneville can proceed thanks to a $1.65 million conservation trust fund created by the Montana Power Company, the principal owner of Colstrip. The money will be used to protect fish and wildlife in the Rock Creek drainage near Missoula. Rock Creek is a nationally-renowned trout stream which the power line will cross near its confluence with the Clark Fork River.

The agreement was negotiated between the power company and three sportsmen's groups: Trout Unlimited, and the Montana and National Wildlife Federations. The groups' negotiating clout came from a successful administrative appeal they filed with the Forest Service.

They had appealed the agency's grant to Bonneville of a right of way across five Montana RARE II areas. The groups said the power line would threaten the areas' wilderness characteristics. U.S. Forest Service chief Max Peterson agreed, and blocked construction pending further study.

Using that lever, the three wildlife groups worked out the trust agreement with Montana Power, and withdrew their appeal. The power company wants the Bonneville line built so it can sell Colstrip power to the Northwest.

According to Karl Englund, attorney for Trout Unlimited, the decision to negotiate the trust fund instead of proceeding with the appeal came down to seeing "what we could do for the resource our clients cared about the most," namely Rock Creek.

Englund said the appeal based on protecting the five RARE II areas was a "hammer" to force Bonneville and Montana Power to the negotiating table. With the appeal dropped, the Forest Service is free to allow the crossings with no special protections.

Englund said his clients opted to avoid "delay for the sake of delay." Shortly after the appeal was filed in July, Bonneville officials had said the needed studies could take two years. That could have resulted in Colstrip 3 and 4 coming on line in 1985 with no way to ship the power to the Northwest, and no other customers in sight. Montana Power officials predicted that that could lead to construction shutdowns until the courts settled the powerline appeal.

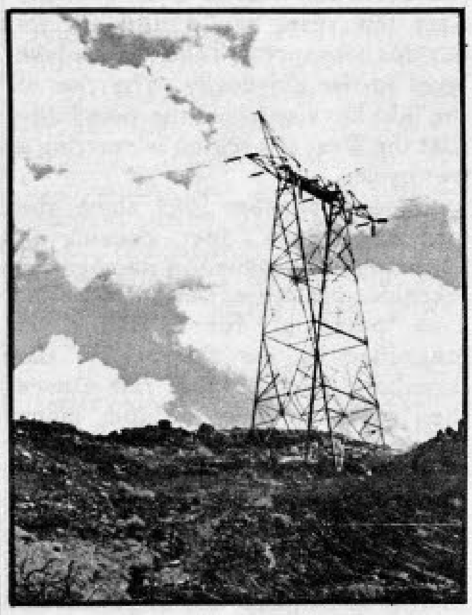
Construction of the line across western Montana forests can now begin this fall. The line is complete from Colstrip to Garrison Junction, west of Helena.

Both Englund and William Rossbach, attorney for the Wildlife Federation, believe the line would have been built eventually. They elected to get what they could for their clients through negotiations conducted, more or less, at gunpoint.

Susan Cottingham, Executive Director of the Montana Environmental Information Center, agreed. "If people thought there was a real chance of winning the case and keeping the powerline from being built, we'd be pretty upset with the negotiations. But the line is half done," she said.

A spokesman for the Northern Plains Resource Council, a rancher-conservation group that has fought Colstrip for a decade, said that the three appellates had little choice but to negotiate.

"If they would have continued with the appeal, they might have lost everything," said the source. "The line would have crossed Rock Creek at the lowest elevation, and



new roads in the drainage would have been built. Most of the five RARE II areas are of marginal wilderness character, so those would have probably been lost, anyway."

Under the negotiated agreement, the new line will be built to run 600 feet above Rock Creek instead of the 200-foot-high crossing originally planned. Montana Power Company has agreed to oppose greater timber yields in the Rock Creek drainage. The $1.65 million conservation trust fund will be used primarily to purchase conservation easements along lower Rock Creek in an effort to halt random subdivision activities that have been a thorn in the sides of western Montana sportsmen.

Montana Power has put a condition on the agreement to create the $1.65 million fund. The money will be paid only if the lines are finished and operable by January 1, 1986. That is intended to eliminate the possibility of further lawsuits by other Montana conservation groups.

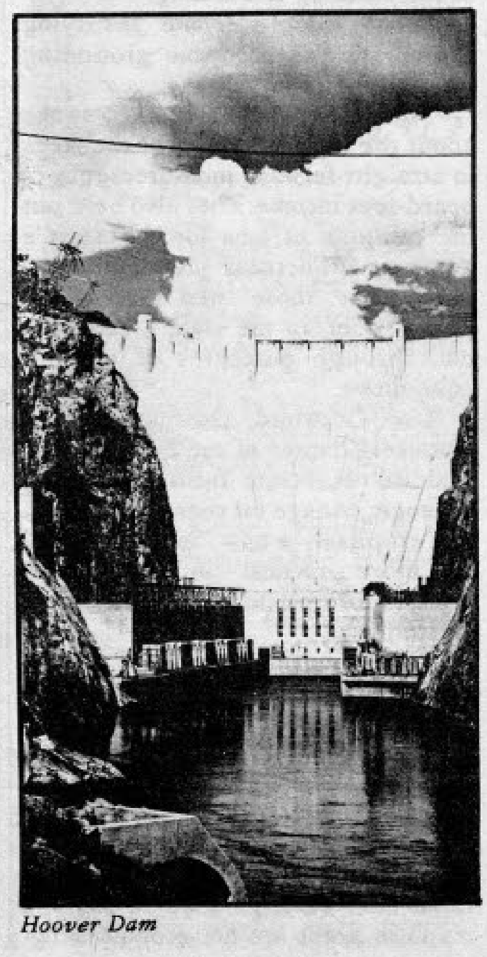
-Don Snow

Hydropower sites are identified

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has located twenty sites where dams could be either built or expanded in North Idaho and Western Montana as part of their Columbia River Basin Hydropower Study. The inventory was part of a Congressionally-mandated, national listing of potential hydropower development.

Dr. James Waller of the Army Corps said other sites were identified but then eliminated from the final list for "economic, environmental, or public acceptability reasons." Waller emphasized that the Corps was "not pushing" for the development of any of the sites, but only offering to assist in further studies if requested by local groups or utilities.

So far, the Corps has begun an in-depth feasibility study on only one of those sites. It is on the St. Maries River about ten miles above the town of the same name in North Idaho. Waller said the study was requested by the local Chamber of Commerce, County Comissioners, and the local utility, Washington Water Power Company.



Hoover Dam

Waller said it is unlikely that the other nineteen sites will be studied by the Corps. No local groups have expressed interest, and an October 1982 change in federal policy requires that those requesting a study must be willing to share costs.

The feasibility study for a dam on the St. Maries River was begun during September of 1982, just before the deadline. During this fiscal year, the Corps is authorized to spend just $25,000 of a projected study budget of $900,000. "All we will be able to do is refine the economics this year," Waller said.

Of primary interest to the Corps is a railroad which parallels the river. The costs of relocating the railroad could doom the project. Other considerations are the impact of the dam on winter range for whitetail deer and uncertainty about flood control protection the dam would provide to the town of St. Maries.

-Bill London

Mountain-lopping plan protested

A plan to lop off the top of Red Mountain to mine alunite is drawing heavy fire from Hinsdale County, Colorado residents who fear it will eventually destroy their scenic, tourist-oriented area.

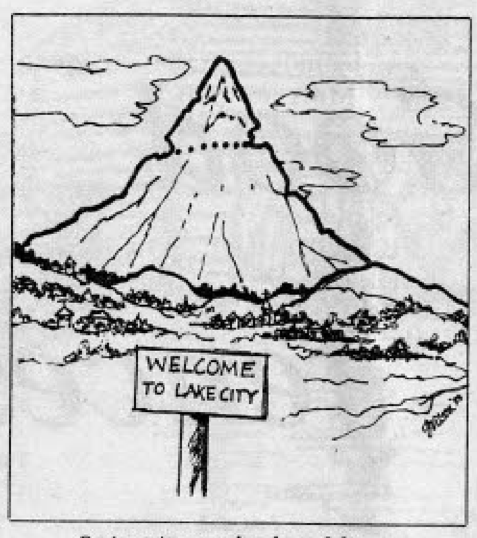
Over 200 people jammed the century-old Lake City courthouse August 25 for two public input sessions on the Bureau of Land Management's Environmental Assessment of the proposal.

The plan proposed by Earth Sciences of Golden, Colorado, would tear down the top 2,000 feet of the 12,800 foot high red-colored peak that provides a striking backdrop for Lake City. Earth Sciences geologists believe the mountain contains the largest deposit of alunite in the world -- about 1.5 billion tons. In a 104-year project with a price tag of $1.5 billion, the company is proposing to strip-mine 12,500 tons of ore a day and ship it over the mountain in pneumatic tubes where it would be processed at a mill near Colona -- 30 as-the-crow-flies miles to the west.

The alunite would be processed into aluminum with potash as a by-product. The United States now imports 90 percent of its bauxite ore to make aluminum, and the Earth Sciences officials say the Red Mountain project could supply 5 percent of the total aluminum needed in this country.

Even though Lake City was founded on mining 106 years ago, the majority of its residents think a new mining boom would mean certain death for the community. Lake City has slowly but steadily been building up a tourist-reliant economic base over the past five decades since the last mining bust. Residents say they don't want Lake City to turn into a ghost town after another inevitable boom-bust cycle.

"People will stay away from here if it doesn't remain quiet and unpolluted and peaceful," testified Lake City summer resident Henry Ohlemyer. "We come here for that lifestyle. We would have stayed in Dallas if we would have wanted the drone of machines and lots of pollution."



Strip-mine on the dotted line

People like Ohlemyer now swell Lake City's year-round population of 400 to 4800 in the summer months.

Earth Sciences exploration manager Duane Bloom doesn't agree that tourism would be destroyed. He said tourism and the mine can co-exist beneficially. "I think tourism would actually go up. A lot of people would come to look at the mine."

Bloom said the only "unmitigatable effect of the project would be on the scenery." Besides losing the top of the mountain, an access road would scar the mountainside and nearly 500 million tons of low-grade ore would be stockpiled.

The majority of the 53 persons who spoke out in opposition to the proposal were also objecting to the reduction in air and water quality around Lake City. Bloom called those fears "unfounded" because of federal standards that would require close monitoring of both.

According to the BLM's analysis of Earth Science's proposal, a moderate reduction in air quality would occur and water quality would possibly be decreased. The report stated, in the worst case, the town's water system might have to be shut down.

During testimony, Lake City water and sanitation district superintendent Tim Deller asked the BLM to determine now who would assume the financial responsibility in that event.

Hinsdale County Department of Social Services director Anne Steinbeck asked the BLM officials to consider not just the environmental impacts of such a project, but also the impact the project would have on people. "We would have increased crime, increased spouse and child abuse, increased substance abuse ... once our social fabric is torn we would never get rid of the blotch."

BLM officials now have five and one-half hours of negative comments to consider before making a decision on the proposal. According to BLM project team leader Gene Becchia, the key in making that decision will lie in determining what a significant adverse impact is.

"We know what an adverse impact is. If you cut down a tree that's an adverse impact. But we don't know what constitutes a significant adverse impact," he said.

Vecchia said the BLM will make a decision before the end of the year. If the proposal is not denied, it will be moved on for an Environmental Impact Study which will look at the entire project - mining, milling and transport - in detail.

Mark McKinnies, president of Earth Sciences, predicts that because of all the permit hurdles the proposal faces, it will be ten years before production could begin.

Meanwhile, 156 Lake City supporters have formed an organization to fight the alunite strip mine. They have also joined Western Colorado Congress, which represents some eleven groups ranging from ranchers and electric consumers to conservationists.

-Nancy Lofholm

HOTLINE

WPPSS holds a remnant sale

If EXXON can hold a $5 million yard sale, why can't WPPSS?

The Washington Public Power Supply System announced in early August it would sell off the remnants of its nuclear generating plants 4 and 5 since it couldn't find a buyer for them. Parts are cheap: $30 million to $50 million, much less than the original price of $500 million. You can also pick up reactor vessels, steam generators, more than 100 miles of pipe, and 1,000 miles of electrical cable.

Operation succeeds, patient dies

An attempt to relocate two grizzly cubs to a remote area of Yellowstone National Park succeeded, said the Park Service on August 25. Unfortunately, one died as a result of the relocation.

A press release explained: "Park officials were transporting the cubs, one weighing 55 pounds and one, 35 pounds, to a location in the northern part of the park, via helicopter. Approximately one mile from the site the release system of the helicopter malfunctioned and the aluminum trap carrying the bears fell into the trees.

"Both cubs survived the fall; however, the smaller of the two died during the night from injuries sustained in the accident. The larger bear was uninjured."

The Park Service said that the cubs were relocated because their mother was teaching them to be "garbage" bears. Park officials don't know what caused the helicopter release system to give way.

BOOKS

Making rocks clear as glass

Roadside Geology of Arizona

Halka Chronic. Missoula, Montana: Mountain Press Publishing Company, 1983. 314 pages. $9.95, paper.

Review by Peter Wild

The alpine lake, surrounded by peaks that you hike to on a weekend, the forest you walk through to get to it, even the gopher holes along the way, are there for complex reasons. The earth's surface, like the skin on a person's body, forms a thin and plastic layer on the planet, and it assumes the various shapes that please our eyes because of forces deep within our globe.

Roadside Geology of Arizona links the features of the earth's surface to the shaping processes beneath our feet. Guided by this book, you see that boulders are not simply boulders but granite slabs broken from cliffs that underground pressures thrust up aeons ago. Now the rocks are weathering into the sand where the gophers build their homes.

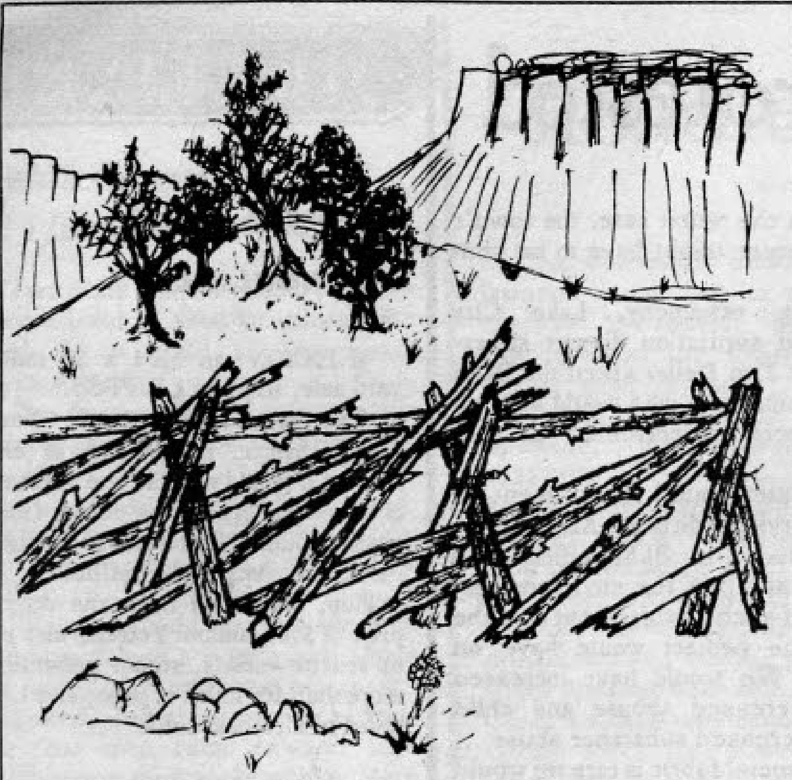
The horizontal streak you make out, like a bathtub ring lining the hills around a valley, is just that, the high-water mark of an ancient sea. Or, more esoterically, as you sit on a vista overlooking the colored bands of the Grand Canyon, you can identify the tilted Precambrian sediments overlain by Paleozoic strata.

Several features set this paperback apart as something more than what one might expect from a handy geological Baedeker. As its title implies, the book explains Arizona's landforms by following the major roads that a visitor is likely to travel. Those conical hills north and east of Flagstaff and the fractured mountains jutting out of the desert around Phoenix become more than mindless scenery in the distance. They are the recent volcanoes and the twistings of metamorphic rock that endow the passing landscape with immediate interest.

Having flunked geology in college, I can speak on the next point with authority. Using a combination of colored charts, maps, and photographs, Halka Chronic makes the state's geology clear to people with little or no geological aptitude or training. She blesses her chapters with a style that is cheery rather than pedantic, and thorough rather than condescending. She clarifies Arizona's geology, but always with a sense of wonder for the ancient forces that produced the landscapes of her subject.

Two further points mark the book as the product of a splendid teacher. Devoting a separate chapter to each, the writer pays particular attention to Arizona's special places -- the national parks and monuments -- such as Canyon de Chelly and Grand Canyon, that the traveler is most likely to visit. She delights in pointing out the details that will stick in his mind: the arid valley that once was the home of llamas and camels, the tracks left when a dinosaur with a seven-foot stride walked across a muddy flat millions of years ago.

There's more good news. The publisher has brought out similar guides on the geology of Colorado, Oregon, Northern California, Glacier National Park, and the Northern Rockies. All of them are available postpaid from Mountain Press Publishing Company, P.O. Box 2399, Missoula, Montana 59806.



○ RIP-GUT FENCE ○ ®

Good fences

by C.L. Rawlins

My friend was from Utah. A ranch out of Tooele. He had a rural Utah drawl broader than the salt flats and a cowhand's laconic style; a sentence is composed of four words or fewer.

Besides a respectably filthy Resistol hat, he wore a pair of down-at-the-heel Tony Lamas, faded jeans and a lime-green cowboy shirt with cuffs and collar buttoned. Across his cheek, from lip to ear, was a piratical-looking scar which I assumed was the mark of some late night battle. I asked him about it.

"Bob Warr done it," he said.

My friend was a tough character and I figured Bob Warr to be at least six-five and built like a bull. Definitely a natural hazard. Since we were enroute to Tooele for a weekend of carousing, I wanted to avoid Bob Warr; there might be lingering hard feelings.

"Is he going to be around?" I asked.

"Huh? Who?"

"Bob Warr."

He gave me a glance that questioned my sanity, parenthood and right to be breathing the same air. He sighed.

"Got bucked off. Into a fence. Bob Warr fence."

My feelings about barbed wire haven't changed much since. It won't pull a knife on you outside a bar, but it is dangerous, miserable stuff. Rips holes in jeans and skin. Puts deep cuts in horses and cattle. Degenerates into a rusty, ugly tangle. But it shaped the West because it has two strong points: it's cheap and it works.

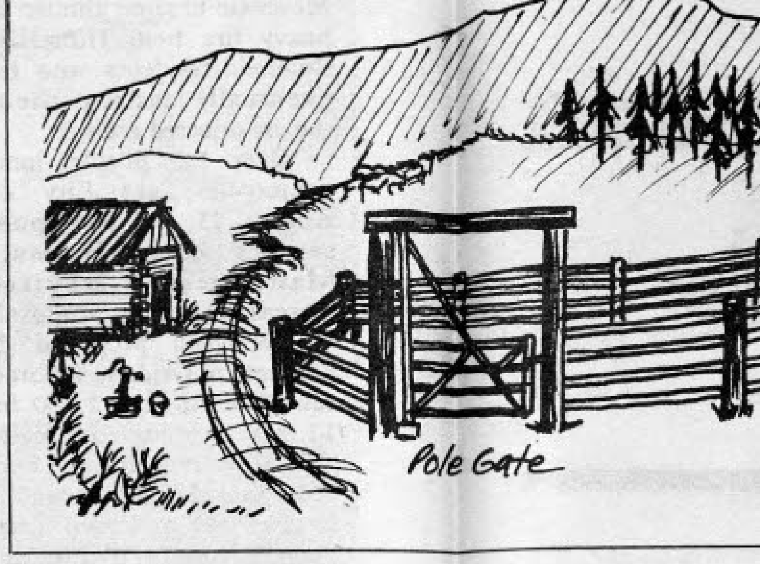
A pair of competent ranchhands can string miles of wire in the time it takes to put up a short stretch of timber fence and for a quarter the cost in money, sweat and thought. It doesn't take imagination or craft to stretch wire.

Timber fences are another story. A well-built buck-and-pole fence, as it settles and weathers, becomes part of the landscape. To build one requires a knowledge of wood, axemanship, applied physics and a canny eye for the land. You have to judge where the deep drifts collect in winter or the ground is soft in spring. If you throw one up in a hurry, it will fall down just as quickly.

Timber fencing is a dying craft. The accumulated knowledge of farmers from America's colonial times onward included an array of techniques to fit many different purposes and landscapes. A litany of types: stake-and-rider, buck-and-pole, ripgut, log-and-block, post-and-rail, worm. Using basic tools and local materials, the expanding agricultural empire fenced livestock in or out, protected crops, enclosed pastures and marked boundaries. A farm's or ranch's fence was its signature.

LOG and BLOCK
for big timber ®

Post & Pole Corral
for horses.



When farms were abandoned, the old timber fences groaned and sank to ground level, becoming tracks of decomposing wood with a few rusty spikes disappearing into humus, hidden under saplines and brush. Like the trees they came from, they returned to the soil and enriched it.

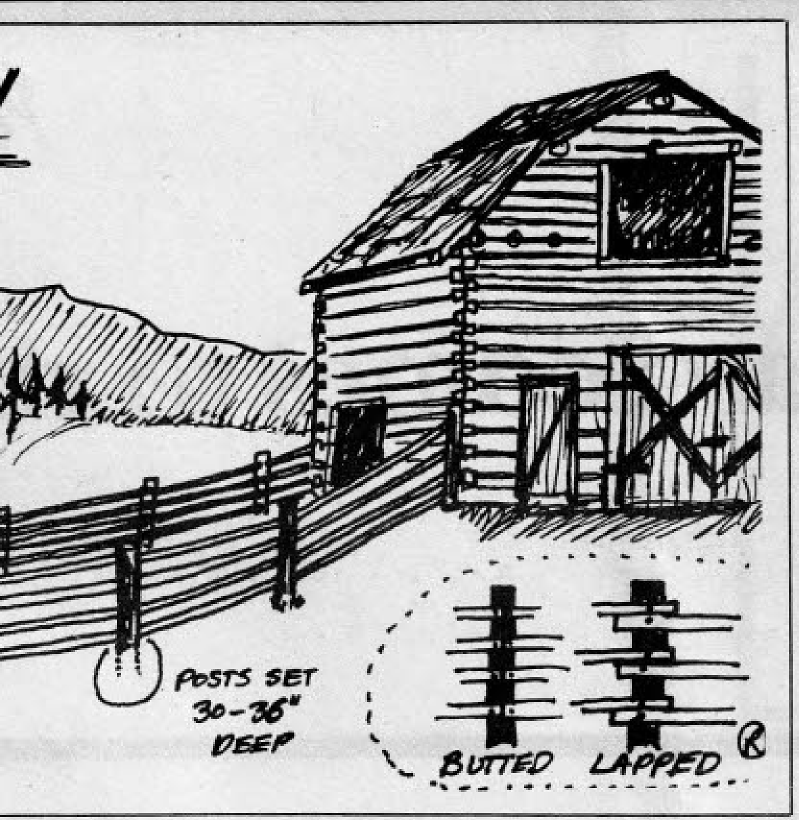
Most visitors to the West will notice one kind of fence: barbed wire. The total length of wire along highways alone would probably stretch several times around the earth. Long, straight runs of wire -- rusty or new and glittering -- have altered the sweeping views, changed patterns of game movement and made ranching, as practiced today, possible.

Still, there are enclaves in the high country of the West where timber is the preferred material, mostly in places where lodgepole pine grows thickly and heavy snows and wandering moose turn barbed wire into galvanized hash. There you find timber fences and people who know and appreciate the craft, even though most of the old-style fences are built to enclose summer homes and tourist traps, to lend a rustic look.

Having built miles of buck-and-pole drift fence in the Upper Green River country of Wyoming, I've become a collector of fences. I return from a trip to the pinon-juniper mesas of Utah or the Stanley Basin of Idaho with sketches and notes on a particular ripgut fence or a six-rail-buck horse pasture. The details of material and method fascinate me and I gaze at a well-balanced pole gate or finely-braced corner with relish and recognition, like an artist judging the brush strokes of another.

Rails must be just right: too long and they bend under snowload or their own weight; too short and they make a fence more work than it should be. Notches should be clean and angled to drain water or the wood rots. Spikes should be driven to work with the pull of gravity and the weight of snow, and braces set with a keen eye for stress and slope. If the rails are too far apart, itchy cows will rub and knock the fence down, or the calves will slip through.

A poor fence can be worse than none. It won't hold the stock and will take more work to maintain than it's worth. On a recent ride, I saw a fence built by a private contractor for the BLM. From a distance, it looked all right; close inspection revealed trouble: the notches were chainsawed at the perfect angle to collect water and start rot working around the joints. The spikes weren't spikes -- they were skinny little nails. The braces, up hill and down, were set at the same spacing and angle, insuring that the fence will some day fold like an accordian and flop like a dead sheep.

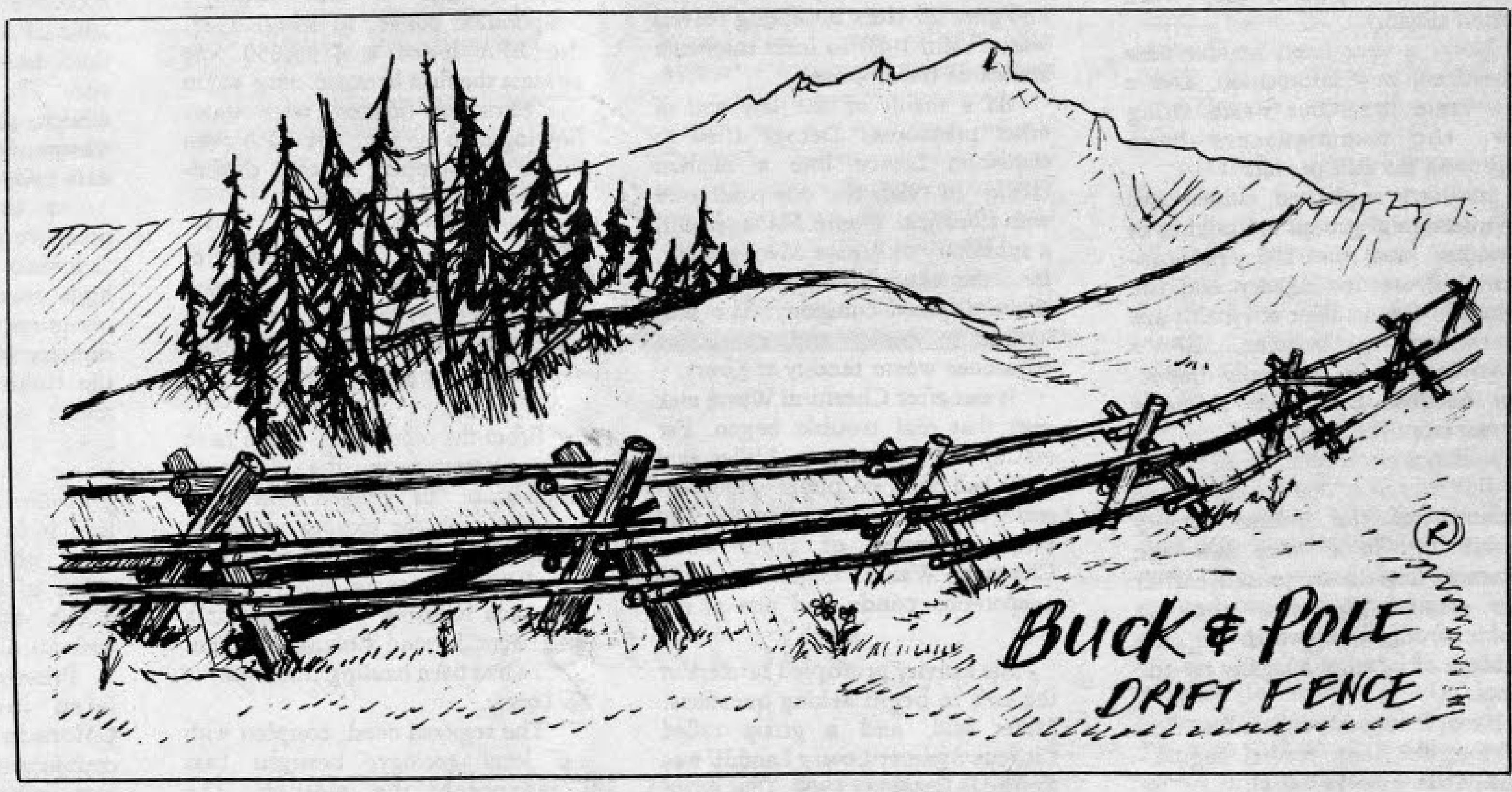


The fence had weathered a single winter and already rails had fallen and bucks twisted with the movement of snowdrifts. It was more an extended problem than a fence, built from a general idea of fences rather than from any specific knowledge. The apparent object was to slap up something that resembled a fence, collect the money and run. The result is several miles of headache.

Although we like to think of this as the age of high technology, the means and methods of our ancestors were neither low nor crude. Given their limitations in materials and tools, their sense of fitness and ingenuity often surpassed that of the present day. There are plenty of modern miracles, but there are also cars that flip at 30 mph, dams that crack, buildings that fall down and chemicals that are discovered to be toxic beyond any benefits they yield.

It turns out that any technology, so-called high or low, needs patience, judgment and an observant eye to give us fences or spaceships that don't crash. Greed, haste and incomplete understanding never build anything but future problems. Miles of headache for us all. A tangle of rusty barbed wire.

C.L. Rawlins is a cowboy and poet from Boulder, Wyoming



Toxic hot potato comes to rest in

by Carol Jones

On the surface, at least, the state of Colorado has solved the hazardous waste problem affecting itself and neighboring states. Also on the surface, Colorado is pioneering the new age of hazardous waste management, lighting the way for less adventurous states.

But some believe the landfill approach to hazardous waste adopted by Colorado is best compared to herpes. They think it will prove to be a chronic disease that will erupt painfully at unpredictable times.

The center of the debate is the small town of Last Chance, located 70 miles east of Denver amidst wheat fields and grazing cattle. It's an unlikely spot to be at the center of a state-wide debate. But Last Chance was put on the front pages of Colorado's newspapers when the Adams County commissioners last month approved a site 7 miles west of town as a hazardous waste dump.

Last Chance became part of Colorado's hazardous waste controversy in 1982, when Browning-Ferris Industries, Inc. of Houston, Texas, asked to locate a landfill near the town. But when BFI, which is the second largest chemical waste disposal firm in the nation, went before the Adams County commissioners for a permit, they were turned down.

Now, a year later, amidst new pressures, new information, and a new state hazardous waste siting law, the commissioners have approved the BFI permit.

Industry is pleased, citizen and environmental groups are talking of lawsuits, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Colorado Department of Health are somewhere in between. EPA's in-betweeness is especially important because BFI needs a major permit from the agency.

It is not clear what the EPA will do. But it is clear that the key to the issuance of the Adams county permit lay in a state law the Colorado Legislature passed earlier this year. The law took a double-pronged approach to the problem of locating a facility no one wants.

First, it set state regulations that are tougher than federal regulations. That was the carrot.

And second, it said that if counties failed to come up with hazardous waste landfill sites by the middle of 1985, the state would select the landfills for them. (*HCN*, 5/27/83). That was the stick.

Although not perfect, the new law is considered a large improvement over the previous state law. The new law was prompted by the June, 1982 shutdown of Colorado's only operating hazardous waste facility. The Lowry Landfill, located just east of Denver in Arapahoe County, had been owned by the city of Denver since the 1960s. It operated under permits from Arapahoe County.

It was a generic dump. In those days, chemical wastes were buried along with household garbage, according to Kay Miller, intergovernmental relations agent for the city of Aurora. (Aurora is located within Arapahoe County, close to Lowry.)

In addition to the mixing of wastes, there were no clay liners, no synthetic liners, liquids were dumped with solids, and little thought was given to where the wastes might flow, leach or percolate.

Miller said, "It was just -- dig a hole and bury chemicals with trash." An estimated 100 million gallons of hazardous waste was dumped in Section 6 of Lowry between 1967 and 1980.

The all-purpose dump was outlawed in 1976, when the U.S. Congress passed the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA). It set federal regulations and gave all sites accepting federal wastes until 1980 to meet minimum standards for disposal.

As a result of the law and of other pressures, Denver tried to transform Lowry into a modern facility. In 1980, the city contracted with Chemical Waste Management, a subsidiary of Waste Management, Inc., the nation's largest chemical waste disposal company. The firm agreed to build and operate a hazardous waste facility at Lowry.

It was after Chemical Waste took over that real trouble began. For starts, P.R. was poor. Miller said there had been no public announcement of the coming changes. The public learned of them when Chemical Waste began to build evaporation ponds and pits at the site.

The activity prompted farmers in the area to begin asking questions, Miller said, and a group called Citizens Against Lowry Landfill was formed in October, 1980. That group now has 300 members.

In addition to lack of communication, Chemical Waste did not inspire confidence in its technical abilities. According to the organization Greenpeace, Chemical Waste pumped over 100,000 gallons of water out of chemical drum burial pits between 1980 and 1982.

Critics of landfill disposal say drums standing in water are likely to corrode and leak, polluting groundwater through percolation and surface water when the pits are pumped.

Because the drum burial pits were full of water and were not being pumped properly, the Colorado Health Department and the EPA closed Lowry for 10 days in May, 1982. The firm was allowed to reopen after agreeing to stipulations, one being that they would pump all excess water out of the pits.

However, shortly after being reopened, Lowry was closed permanently by order of the Colorado Supreme Court. The order was the result of a two-year legal effort by Arapahoe County to stop hazardous waste disposal at Lowry. Arapahoe County successfully argued that it had given Denver permit to operate a solid waste facility, not a hazardous waste facility.

The closing did not end the problems at Lowry. Still responsible for the site, Chemical Waste was fined $48,650 in January, 1983, because it did not report a leak in a liner at one of the facility's evaporation ponds. In May, 1983, the EPA levied a $193,650 fine against the firm because once again the burial pit flooded, with water flowing onto the site. The EPA even found the pumping system disconnected. (*HCN*, 6/10/83).

Citizens continue to be concerned, with their list of fears headed by the possibility that toxic substances from the site will seep into their groundwater.

From the other side, there have been attempts in the Colorado Legislature to reopen the site because with the closing of Lowry came the problem of what to do with the hazardous waste generated by Colorado industry. The need for a site went beyond Colorado. Other states had been hauling their wastes to Lowry.

The regional need, coupled with its local geology, brought Last Chance into the picture. The Colorado Geological Survey had conducted a study in 1980 to find optimal landfill sites. The agency decided that the Pierre shale formation in eastern Colorado and the Mancos shale formation in western Colorado would do best. They are relatively impermeable, non-water bearing shales. Last Chance has the Pierre formation.

There is more to a good site than the right underlying shale. Both the Colorado Health Department and the EPA have long lists of criteria. If a site looked possible, and a waste disposal company was interested, studies were done of the site. Environmental and citizen groups would then often counter with their own studies showing just how awful the site was.

In some cases, firms quickly lost interest in a site. However, BFI persisted with the Last Chance site. Its studies and those of the Colorado Geological Survey showed Last Chance had potential. The studies said that groundwater pollution should not be a great threat because the area is underlain by 1,000 feet of impermeable shale.

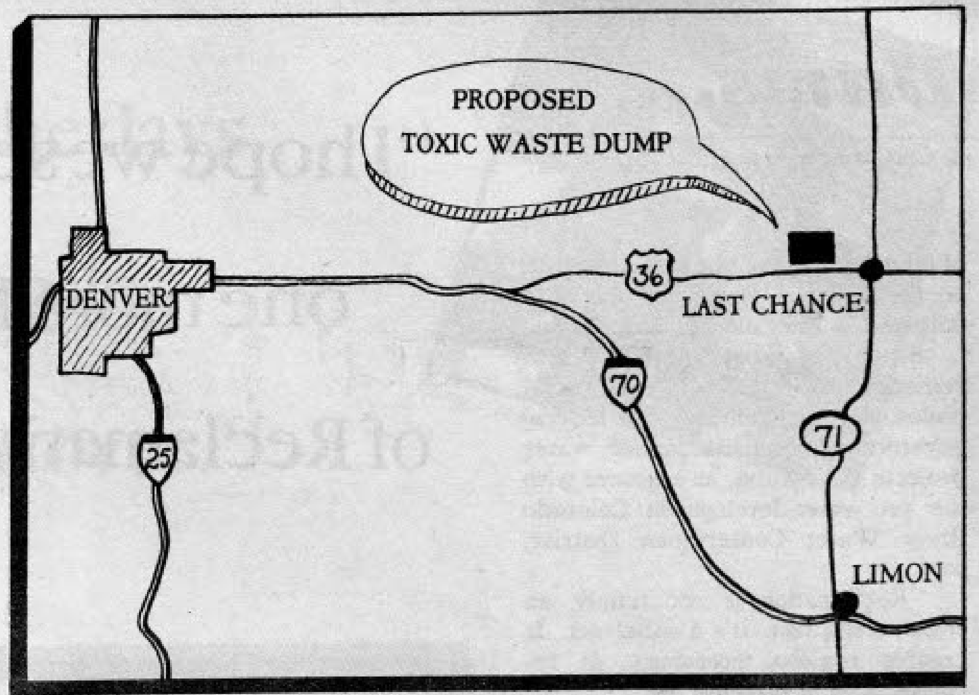
And BFI promised to supplement the 1,000 feet of water-proofing with state-of-the-art landfill technologies, including clay liners in the burial pits, heavy monitoring, pre-treatment of wastes, and a strong commitment to cleanup in case of an emergency.

But the people of Last Chance didn't buy the program, and neither did the Adams County commissioners or environmental groups. Moreover, according to an April 13, 1982 EPA memo, that agency didn't think Last Chance was a very good site. The EPA memo cited poor design, possible leaching of organic wastes, and incomplete analysis and data collection on the part of BFI.

At the same time, however, pressure for action was building as Colorado firms began seeing the high cost of shipping wastes to out-of-state dumps. Olie Webb, director of environmental affairs for the Colorado Association of Commerce and Industry (CACI) said it costs 8 to 10 times more to ship waste out of the state. Landfill proponents feared Colorado would lose industry because of the high costs, and that firms considering a move to Colorado would back off. Webb said, "We're vulnerable without a site."

Pressure from industry translated into pressure from the Colorado Legislature on the counties. Geoff Wilson, the legislative director of the Colorado Public Interest Research Group (COPIRG), said the new state law "pits the counties against industry." It forces the counties to either come up with landfill sites by mid-1985 or lose the right to make that decision.

tiny Last Chance



The issue is so hot on the local level that it is difficult for commissioners to choose a site. But if they don't, the state will come in and choose a site for them.

With that in mind, the tide turned at the Adams County commissioners meeting on Aug. 15, 1983. A year after rejecting BFI's Last Chance application, the commissioners unanimously approved the same site for use as a hazardous waste dump. The site was also blessed by the Aurora city government and the Colorado Health Department.

Citizen group spokesman Pam Whelden, who lives three miles from the Last Chance site,did not add her blessing. She said the commissioners "sold us out. The burial of hazardous wastes doesn't work and it must be stopped everywhere." Wheldon, whose Concerned Citizens of Eastern Colorado has fought the BFI proposal for the last two years, also said, "The commissioners changing their vote one year later on the same application makes you wonder."

Commissioner Steve Cramer said there was nothing sinister about the change. He told the *Denver Post* that in the last 18 months he'd learned a lot about hazardous wastes, and that he now understands the situation better.

His fellow commissioner, Ron Nichol, gave the *Rocky Mountain News* a more political assessment. "If (we) hadn't approved it, we probably would've been stuck with it anyway."

But Whelden charges that BFI's application is unchanged from a year ago. The company disagrees. Jim Spaanstra, an attorney representing BFI, said the biggest change was in size. The approved application proposes a maximum capacity of 12 million gallons of waste per year. The 1982 proposal was for a 48 million gallon per year facility.

There is plenty of twenty-twenty hindsight available on what went wrong at Lowry in particular, and the old ways of handling hazardous waste in general. But judging the new state law and its first product -- Last Chance -- is more difficult.

An Overview

Although the 1983 state law pushed landfills -- a technology many critics believe is totally wrong -- Wilson of the Colorado Public Interest Research Group said there is much good about the bill. He is most pleased that the state can impose more stringent rules than the federal government imposes under RCRA.

Wilson also said that the new law, unlike the state's old law, puts the burden of proof on the companies. Formerly, he said, the counties had to approve a site unless it violated certain criteria. Now the firms "must show they can meet the state's criteria." The criteria include a need for the facility, and proof that the company has the financing, expertise, and track record at other facilities to operate the dump.

He also said the law looks to the future by encouraging the use of alternative disposal technologies, as well as conservation and recycling. Critics of the BFI proposal have pushed alternative technologies since the fight began. Whelden, for example, said burial of hazardous wastes doesn't work. Most everyone agrees to some extent.

One of the highest placed critics of landfill disposal is Hugh Kaufman, assistant director of the hazarous waste control division of the EPA in Washington, D.C. Kaufman is best known for uncovering Love Canal and for starting the investigation of the Superfund Program -- an investigation that led to the resignation of EPA head Anne Gorsuch Burford.

Kaufman suggested to the Adams County commissioners that they not approve the site. "If that site is approved," he said a few weeks before the decision, Adams County "can look forward to the same things that happened at Lowry.

"There will be typical groundwater contamination, heavy truck traffic, air pollution. And not just from Colorado, but from all over." Under the interstate commerce provisions of the U.S. Constitution, Colorado cannot bar wastes from out of state. Kaufman continued, "No one has built a landfill that hasn't leaked."

CACI's Olie Webb agreed that no landfill is completely leak-proof. "But that isn't the question. You must look at the probability -- at the law of averages. If the dump site is undisturbed, it can last hundreds of years. If it is disturbed, then it can be damaged."

BFI attorney Spaanstra said that assuming maximum operation, the Last Chance should operate for about 40 years. BFI must monitor the site for 30 years following closure; then responsibility shifts to the state.

On a related subject, Webb said Colorado had made large strides in cutting down on the amount of waste. He said that three or four years ago, Colorado was generating about 300,000 tons per year of wastes. But as a result of the passing of the federal RCRA law and changing attitudes on disposal, the state now generates only 30,000 to 50,000 tons per year.

Despite the progress, Webb believes there will always be waste. "What do you do with it? You must put it somewhere." It all can't be recycled. "The real solution is a centralized regional facility to handle solids, industrial and hazardous wastes, and to recycle and recover as much as possible."

Jody Berman, program director with Greenpeace in Denver, strongly disagrees that a landfill has a role to play. She advocates an above-ground system that could be easily monitored and constructed to withstand natural disasters. Wastes would be stored above ground with the idea that they would someday be recycled into useful or harmless substances.

"It will be years before industry takes the steps toward alternatives." Greenpeace recommends storing wastes above ground until the alternatives are feasible.

Berman backs up the Greenpeace no-landfill proposal with a study of 10 years' experience with hazardous waste landfills. The work was done by K.W. Brown and Associates of College Station, Texas. It shows:

"Liners, leachate collection systems, and caps (tops on landfill pits) on below-ground landfills may cease to function properly some time within the first few decades after closure of the landfill. There is now no requirement for leachate collection following the 30-year closure period. Yet many wastes are likely to remain hazardous for centuries." The study says above-ground landfills would reduce the threat to groundwater and lessen long-term liability.

"The real emphasis should be on alternatives now." Berman also said that while the short-term cost of landfills is low, the long-term costs are higher than for other technologies. However, the long-term costs may not be paid by the companies. She said they may only pay the up-front dumping fee, rather than the eventually higher cleanup costs.

The EPA's Kaufman agrees. "Local people will eventually have to pay if they want it (a dump) cleaned up." He cited New York's Love Canal as an example. Kaufman said Hooker Chemical Company has spent about $2 million on the cleanup. "But it has cost the taxpayers over $100 million. And Love Canal is a better site than Last Chance."

Although much about Last Chance is unclear, one thing is certain: the fight isn't over. Pam Whelden, speaking from her home near the site, guarantees a court battle if the EPA follows Adams county's lead and approves the proposal.

She said the biggest fear continues to be the threat to groundwater. "They keep telling us there isn't much water out there, and that is why it is supposed to be a good site," said Whelden. "But our water is only 30 to 40 feet below the ground and we depend on it. What are we supposed to do?"

As Last Chance opponents prepare for more fighting, other Colorado counties sigh with relief. The heat is off them for the moment.

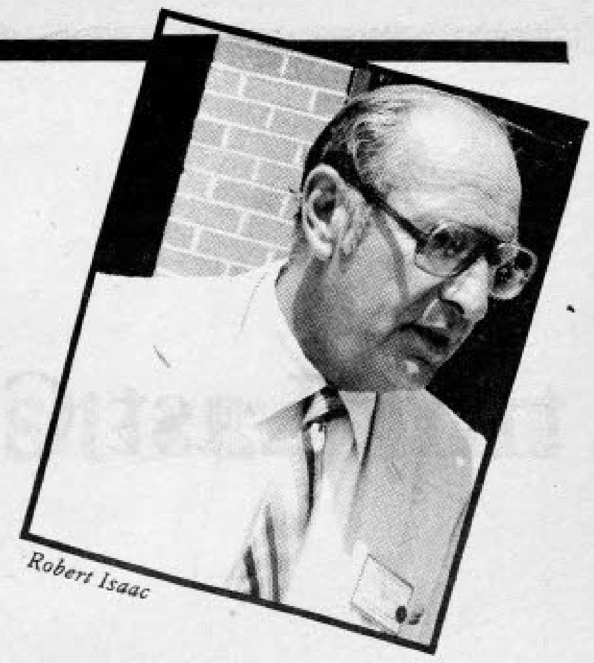
From a national perspective, this hazardous waste site approval is the first in the country in two years. What happens next could be important to other states facing similar situations. The rest of the country will be watching.

"Love Canal is a better site than Last Chance."

Dams...

[Continued from page 1]

"I hope we see at least one more Bureau of Reclamation project."



Robert Isaac

of oil not imported, the barges floated on the Missouri River, and the land irrigated in the Colorado River basin.

But the talks went beyond statistics to speak of the social philosophy that underlay the federal government's construction of water projects. Eric Kuhn, an engineer with the pro-water-development Colorado River Water Conservation District, said:

"Reclamation is not simply an engineering feat. It's a social act. It creates regional economies. It reclaims land of marginal use."

He said Reclamation was part of the post World War I effort to settle soldiers on the land. "And after World War II, it was the West's piece of the expanding American pie."

Gilbert White, a geographer at the University of Colorado, Boulder, had a different perspective. "The Reclamation Act was intended to improve the quality of rural western family life. Water projects are only one way to do that."

He suggested that rather than spend billions on projects such as the Central Arizona Project to "grow low value crops," the money be spent in other ways to improve the quality of life in the West.

Brigadier General Sisinyak, in addition to talking of the loss of social consensus, said the economic rationale for big dams had eroded. "The traditional role of the federal government reflected a national economic theory that development of water resources... increased our national wealth."

Today, however, "An element exists that denies this kind of growth takes place." Economist Lester Thurow maintains that "our society resembles a zero-sum game." If that is true then "those who benefit from water resource development should repay the costs. It's simply a matter of equity."

Colorado's State Engineer, Jeris Danielson, indicated it didn't matter which economic theory one followed. The political fact of life is that the East's physical infrastructure is crumbling. The nation, he predicted, will choose to rebuild its decaying highways, bridges and antique water systems.

"Those projects are starting to come unglued. The votes are east of the Mississippi and the money will be funneled there. I hope we see at least one more Bureau of Reclamation project. But I think the days of large scale projects are over. It was a golden age, but the money is no longer there."

The new age, he said, will require the states to pay a large share of water project costs. "If we could just get Jim Watt to tell us" how much we have to pay.

Danielson indicated an Interior Department decision might not do Colorado much good in today's competitive world."Wyoming put over $100 million into water for its 600,000 people. Texas has $750 million in seed money -- to use as local loans and grants."

By comparison, the Colorado Legislature two years ago appropriated $30 million for the Water Resource and Power Development Authority. None has been added, and some water resource money is being used this straitened budget year to pay the state's operating expenses.

It's not only the states that will have to pay, Danielson said. "At present, it doesn't cost you a dime to fish or water ski" on federal projects. But the feds, he said, will no longer be picking up the tab for recreation, wildlife, fishing, and open space as part of water projects. Fishermen, hunters, and campers will have to pay.

Although nostalgic about the past, Danielson also had a precise agenda for the future. First, he said, Colorado has about 200,000 acre-feet of unusable reservoir storage spread around the state. That's equal to the size of Dillon, which is Denver's major reservoir.

The 200,000 acre-feet is unusable because the mostly private or water district-owned dams creating the reservoirs are unsafe. "They could all be repaired for $20 million to $30 million. It is absolutely the cheapest storage you'd find -- only $100 per acre-foot." By comparison, new reservoirs cost upwards of $1,000 per acre-foot.

On a related subject, he said a recent Colorado Supreme Court decision in the John Houston case had given the state the freedom to do as it wants with 100 million acre-feet of non-tributary ground water in the urbanized area on the Eastern Slope. "It's the equivalent of 500 Dillons. And it's unconstrained by case law or by the doctrine of prior appropriation. What will the Legislature do?"

Danielson, who in theory administers the state's water, had other tasks for the Legislature. He lacks, he said, the power to administer the river and stream basins in a rational way.

"The Appropriation Doctrine (first in time; first in right) served us well. But we have 900 reservoirs on the South Platte. And none are managed as a system. We see water carried over to the winter in one reservoir while another ditch company runs out of water in July."

Economist Edmund Barbour brought an historic perspective to the conference. Barbour had worked for the Bureau of Reclamation on national policy, as its "chief metaphysician," to quote him. It was his job to help develop the various methods of assessing proposed water projects -- weaving together and choosing among such interests as the national economy, regional economy, the environment and wildlife. That weaving took place in the 1950s and 1960s against a vision of an ever-expanding future:

"We thought the fast breeder reactor would be operating in 1985." In that heady time, he said, it was assumed electricity would be free, financed by plutonium the breeder would produce. The lower basin desert would be blooming, and the upper basin would be making energy and keeping the water flowing.

That vision has vanished, and today Barbour is an economist with private industry, pursuing a different, smaller, more dispersed strategy. "The action is moving to the states, to water districts, to private groups. It's moving toward management, rehabilitation, conservation, and small hydro retrofitting of dams."

Much the same message, with a different tone, was heard from Amory Lovins. The energy specialist has recently turned to the study of water; he told his audience that there are similarities.

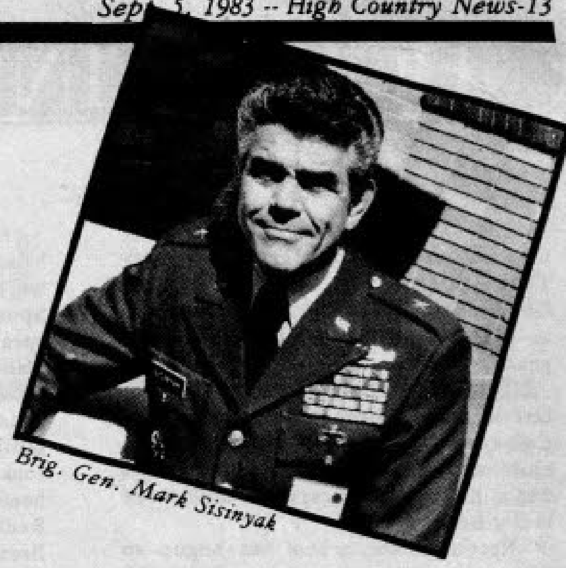
"Water policy is repeating the same mistakes made with energy. They're assuming we need more water, rather than efficient use of existing water."

Lovins, with his always amazing collection of statistics and colorful phrases, painted a bleak picture of existing agriculture. He said farmers were staggering under an immense debt burden -- $12 of debt for each $1 of annual income.

The reasons are related to farming practices, he said. Equipment today is monstrous, and monstrously expensive to buy and maintain. A breakdown can send a farmer into bankruptcy. In the day to day operations, "The loss of soil and fertility is masked by intensive chemotherapy." As a result, "Agriculture is the biggest polluter of groundwater."

Another environmental perspective was presented by Bob Weaver, a Denver consultant who has been following water issues for a decade. Weaver addressed himself to the major Colorado (and Montana, and South Dakota, and Wyoming) water debate: the 'use it or lose it' question.

But I think the days of large scale projects are over."


Brig. Gen. Mark Sisinyak

In the case of Colorado, 200,000 to 700,000 acre-feet per year of water that the state is entitled to by interstate agreement flows past its borders to California. Colorado, a typical upper basin "undeveloped" state, like the Dakotas and Montana, has no economic use for that water. In fact, it has several hundred thousand acre-feet of unneeded water sitting in existing dams.

But the water establishment, fearing the permanent loss of water, urges construction of dams to save it for future need. It sees the dams as Colorado's only way to not lose the water.

Weaver said, "Environmentalists are divided" over the 'use it or lose it' issue. "Some think it's great to let the water flow downstream; to let California develop" while Colorado enjoys the recreation industry and wildlife benefits of water flowing freely in streams through an undeveloped countryside.

"But some of us say if we did lose the water, and the state grew, they'd have to take agricultural water. That would lead to an agricultural decline, and it's agriculture which keeps land in open space."

To prevent the future decimation of agricultural land, Weaver argued, Colorado should take steps to prevent permanent loss of its water. But he said after the talk, the mere building of dams won't prevent the loss. Dam building, he said, only increases evaporative losses. And wasteful use of the unneeded water wouldn't help.

"It's not uncommon for some Colorado farms to apply 6 to 8 feet of water to crops needing 14 inches. Towns use 300 gallons per person per day. California lawyers," he said, know of this waste and use it as an argument to reduce Colorado's water rights. "So over-development and wasteful use may not work."

"We need to try more creative uses. But their only option is more dams. To them, compact entitlement justifies everything."

Weaver argued that without the underlying economy to use the water, dams do nothing. "The only feasible solution is a political one -- an interstate agreement on leasing." Such a suggestion created a stir at last year's Gunnison water meeting. Denver engineer Ben Harding suggested that Colorado lease its water to California for a decade or two. The idea, Weaver said, is that the water will be available when Colorado reaches the point where its economy can use it.

Weaver also tried to put the present water problems into an historic perspective. "The irony is that water politics have been so successful that water decisions now involve many more interests." But, he said, the additional interests are disenfranchised when it comes to water decisions. Fishermen, bird watchers, rafting companies and others may use water. But they don't, can't, own any. So they lack a say in how it's used.

"Those other rights have been recognized and legitimized on the federal level," through the endangered species act, the clean water act, and the like. But the water establishment, he said, remains "hostile to the other interests."

In the past, he indicated, that hostility may have been warranted by conservationists' kneejerk opposition to all water projects. But over the years, "The environmental community has evolved to recognize water needs and to want to see them fulfilled in an environmentally sensitive way."

As part of that effort, Weaver said, he and other environmentalists have "learned to speak the language of technology and economics. That has had two results." They have neglected their responsibility to educate the public on environmental values. "And the water development interests are even more suspicious of us than before."

The three-day conference was organized by Ms. Theo Colborn, a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin. Its major sponsors were: The Rural Communities Institute, Western Colorado Rural Communities Program, Western State College of Colorado, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

BULLETIN BOARD

HELP WANTED

The "Oxford of Rocks" is searching for a president to replace retiring Dr. Guy T. McBride. He will be named President Emeritus of the Colorado School of Mines at the end of the 1983-1984 academic year.

The energy and minerals boom of the last decade has been good to the Golden, Colorado, school: its undergraduate enrollment nearly doubled, it fund-raised $38 million in six years; and it built three major buildings.

Recently, the school has begun to move toward paying more attention to the environmental sciences. For example, in 1981, the Environmental Sciences and Engineering Ecology program became a full department headed this year by air pollution specialist Dr. William Marlatt. However, Mines still does not offer an environmental major.

MINING LAW REFORM

The top environmental law experts on mining from around the west will gather at Crested Butte, Colorado on Saturday, October 1, to discuss mining law reform. This fourth annual workshop had its genesis in the Mt. Emmons molybdenum mine AMAX proposed for Crested Butte in the mid-1970s. This will be the first open, general meeting -- past sessions were devoted to legal strategy. But the meeting is just barely open, due to a lack of space. For information, call conference organizer Don Bachman in Crested Butte at 303/349-7104.

WESTERN WATER

The 1983 convention of the National Water Resources Association will have a large number of speakers on Western water topics. For information about the Oct. 25-28 meeting in Tulsa, OK, contact: NWRA, 955 L'Enfant Plaza, North Bldg., S.W., Washington, D.C. 20024. Or call: 202/488-0610.

WATER COST SHARING

The subject of state and local cost sharing in water projects is to say the least -- fluid. But the 'now' of this ever flowing subject has been caught in a study titled: *"Current Cost-Sharing and Financing Policies for Federal and State Water Resources Development."*

It describes the 40% reduction in spending on water projects over the last 20 years and examines state efforts to pick up where the feds left off.

It's available from: The Congressional Budget Office, Publications Office, U.S. Congress, Washington, D.C. 20515.

SMALL, WET KILOWATTS

A two-day seminar on small hydropower resources in the mountains will be held Oct. 6 and 7 at Vail, Colorado. Sponsored by CalHydro, Inc., the speakers include Pitkin County (Colorado) planner Mark Fuller, Public Service Company engineer John Serfling, energy consultant David Marcus, Denver attorney Jeff Pearson, small-hydro consultant Barbe Chambliss, CalHydro head Gerald Korshak, and Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner Robert Broadbent. Registration is $250 before Sept. 7; $300 after. Call 916/442-8374.

CONSERVATION EASEMENTS SEMINAR

The technique is conservation easements, and the result is land saved from condos and subdivisions in areas inappropriate for development. Conservation easements will be explained September 24 at a seminar offered by the Trust for Public Land, a national non-profit land conservation organization.

Speakers on tax and appraisal issues include William Hutton, attorney, and Joseph Dunford, appraiser, among others. Glenwood Springs will host the seminar at the campus of Colorado Mountain College from 8:30-4:30 P.M.

To register, send $15 to Chris Randall, Trust for Public Land, 82 Second St., San Francisco, CA 94105.

CELEBRATE THE PRAIRIE

Aurora, Nebraska is the site September 23-25 of Prairie Appreciation Weekend, a festival celebrating Nebraska's natural heritage. The weekend is sponsored by the state's Audubon Chapters, the Prairie/Plains Resource Institute and other conservation groups. Lodging at the Nebraska Youth Leadership Development Center in Aurora is dormitory style, we're told, "so bring your own bedding." For Willa Cather afficianados, there is a 200-mile round trip to Red Cloud.

Make your reservation by Sept. 10 by sending $35 to: Prairie/Plains Resource Institute, 1219 16th St., Aurora, NE 68818.

WILD ENCOUNTERS

If you're a photographer and like to shoot wildlife through a lens, *Idaho Wildlife* magazine wants you to enter their third annual Encounters of the Wild Kind photography contest.

Entrants must be amateurs who earn less than 25 percent of their total income from photography. All photos in either black and white or color must be taken in Idaho, and no more than ten entries are permitted. The deadline for submitting photos is September 30. Contest rules are available from *Idaho Magazine*, Box 25, Boise, Idaho, 83707.

BLOCK GRANTS FOR INDIANS

Free, two-day seminars on federal block grant opportunities are offered to Indian tribes by the Institute for the Development of Indian Law, which is based in Washington, D.C.

The workshops will be held in Denver, Colorado, September 12-13 and at Las Vegas, Nevada September 15-16. The Institute has a grant from the federal Office of Community Services to hold the seminars throughout this year.

Eleanor McComber, 202/293-6141 is handling enrollment and logistics for the Institute.

RURAL MONTANA PHOTO CONTEST

The Northern Plains Resource Council is sponsoring its first annual *"Rural Montana"* photo contest open to all amateur photographers. You're amateur if no more than half your income comes from photo work.

The entry deadline is September 24, five prints may be entered, and the fee per print is $5. Categories are people, flora and fauna, scenics, humor, and photos by kids age 14 and under. Cash prizes go to Best of Show, Best Color, and Best Black and White, but all pictures must be taken in Montana.

Call 406/248-1154 for more information.

NATIONAL FORESTS IN NEW MEXICO

If you want to learn about *"The future of New Mexico's National Forests,"* you need to register by Sept. 9 for a citizen education workshop in Albuquerque, New Mexico on September 17.

The workshop is sponsored by The Wilderness Society in cooperation with seven other conservation organizations, and features participants such as Brant Calkin, the state's Natural Resources chief, Al Sample, forester for the Wilderness Society, and Jim Perry, Supervisor of the Santa Fe National Forest, among others.

Registration is only $3 and $2.50 more buys a box lunch. The workshop will be held at the U. of New Mexico Law School.

Call Chris Sanborn in Denver at 303/388-5801 or Ted Davis in Albuquerque at 505/884-2106 for more information.

SELLING TO JAPAN

The Institute for the Rockies, a non-profit group based in Montana, is sponsoring an economic development conference September 7-9 called World Markets for Intermountain Products.

The states of Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming are sending their governors to the get-together at Sun Valley, Idaho, which seems to have as a major focus opening markets in Japan. At a registration cost of $300, the event is not cheap. For more information, call The Institute at 406/728-5352.

CLUB 20'S FALL MEETING

Summer must be over if Western Colorado's Club 20 is holding its annual Fall Meeting in Grand Junction September 9-10.

The first day is devoted to a free seminar on small business, and the second session focuses on the state's tug of war over water, its National Forests, public land management, clean air, and the Colorado River in a record water year.

Speakers include Dale Shaffer, president of Denver's Water Board, Clifford Barrett, Upper Colorado Regional director of the Bureau of Reclamation, Craig Rupp, regional forester, and George Francis, Colorado director of the BLM.

The events of September 10 begin at 8:45 A.M., cost $35, and end with a banquet at 7 P.M. at the Hilton Hotel. Call Club 20 at 303/242-3264 to register.

EXPLORE BLM WILDLANDS

With 22 wildland areas in Western Colorado under review for wilderness designation, four conservation groups are sponsoring trips to the areas to acquaint residents with their geology, wildlife and plants.

Coming up September 10-11 is a foray to Dominguez Canyons where black bears and petroglyphs abound. Call Paul Petersen at 303/434-7390 for more information.

The sponsors -- Audubon Society, Two Rivers Citizens Association, Montelores Citizens Resource Forum, and Colorado Open Space Council -- plan six other trips this fall. We'll keep you posted.

OPINION

Nuking the media

The *Wall Street Journal* ran an amusing story on its front page two weeks ago. Titled: "High Technology Age Causes New Problems In Coverage By Media," the lengthy article accidentally gave excellent insights into the nation's media.

The story was an attempt to review the quality of the media coverage of the 1979 Three Mile Island nuclear occurrence. In his research, *Journal* writer Daniel Machalaba came up with such shockers as: Reporters know little about the innards of nuclear reactors.

He also learned that reporters don't know how to choose between authority figures. One TV journalist told the *Journal:* "Who am I to be an arbiter between Ph.Ds?"

Another journalist was shocked to learn from TMI that not everyone come to the press with their cards on the table. "We're being used by both sides on the issue."

The tone of the story is best described as what one would expect from from a society editor out of Puresville, Iowa, suddenly assigned to cover the social interactions in the Hill Street Blues police station. The major difference is that the Puresville editor would probably do a better job than the *Journal* did on its TMI-media story.

The story the *Journal* searched for, and failed to find, can only be understood by starting from the fundamental but ignored fact that journalists are human beings. And human beings do not like to be betrayed, even when they participate in their own betrayal. Nor do they like to be tricked and half-truthed into writing stories and editorials which are not true.

But trickery and half-truths are exactly what the nuclear industry and its appendages fed to America's journalists for several decades. It used journalists to tell America that nuclear power was perfectly safe; that nuclear reactors are run by well-trained technicians who can tear down and reassemble a plant much as grandpa used to go at his Model T; and that nuclear plants will provide the nation with endless amounts of very cheap energy.

The reporters dutifully ate up and wrote up that stuff through the 1950s, 1960s and most of the 1970s. And editors dutifully found room for the puffery, masquerading as reportage, on their pages.

When TMI got the nuclear runs, and began disintegrating in 1979, the reporters and editors realized they'd been had. They realized they'd been writing fiction for years. So, possibly unconsciously, they took revenge on the people who had led them astray -- on the Atomic Industrial Forum, on GPU and its fellow companies, and on the nuclear bureaucrats. The revenge took the form of asking hostile, probing, doubting questions, and then attempting -- as best they could -- to write the answers.

It might not make for the best journalism, but not until this generation of journalists retire or get promoted into flack-dom will the nuclear barrage end.

This is not a defense of hysterical, uninformed, pack journalism. It is merely to say that the *Journal's* hand-wringing about sloppy, sensationalized TMI stories comes decades late. The sad little cry quoted above -- "we're being used by both sides" -- is a complaint that the good old days are over. In the past, only the industry-government side got to use the media. The other side couldn't get in the door. TMI opened the door.

The *Journal* missed another essential point -- this time about history rather than human nature. The paper doesn't understand that Americans have always lived in an age of high technology. Compared to the introduction of concrete, of assembly lines, of offices and paperwork, of electric energy, of the telephone, and of the auto, today's is a relatively slow-to-change, low-technology age.

We have fewer genuine changes -- changes that directly affect our lives -- to adapt to. Past generations had to move from horses to autos or tractors; from nothing to radio; from shovels to backhoes. By comparison, it is a very small step for us to watch, via TV, someone else operate a spaceship.

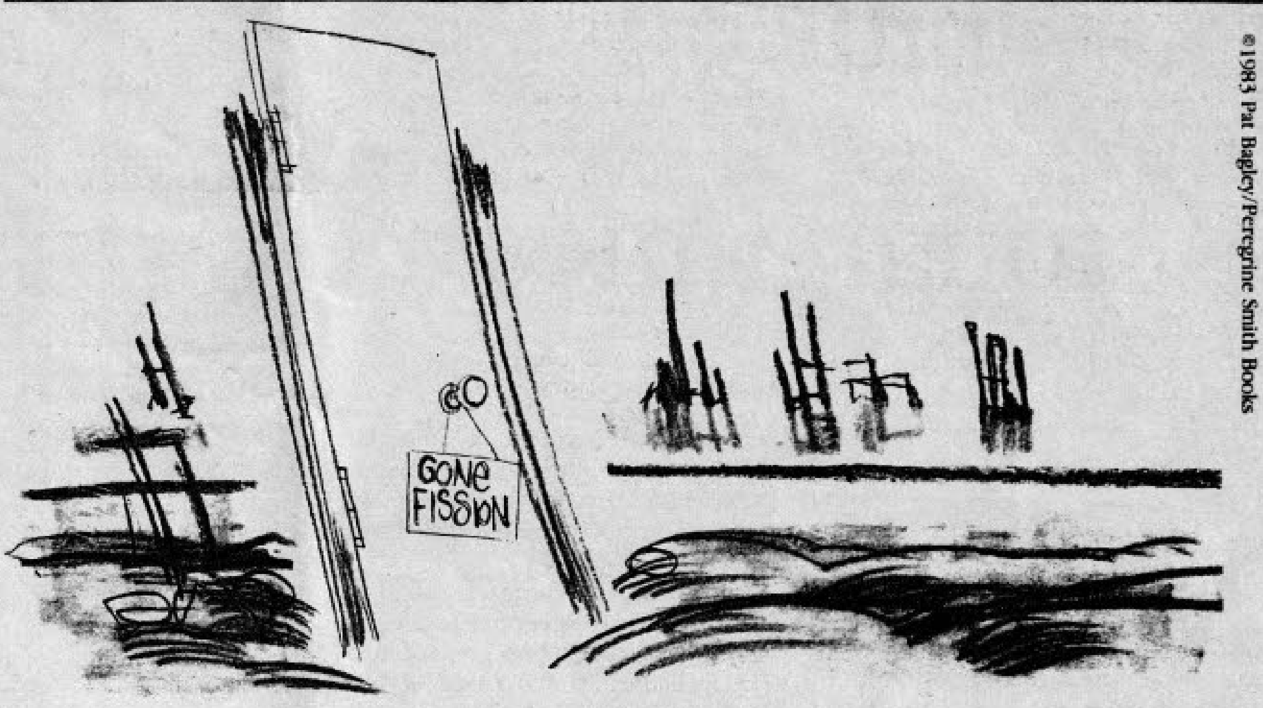
Unfortunately, the *Journal* based its story on the false assumption that we live in a uniquely complex technological world that is confronting the media with problems they didn't face a generation ago.By assuming that technological complexity was the root, they missed the real problem -- the way our technology is managed.

The *Journal* might have happened on the actual story had it asked the TMI reporters how it felt to discover that industry, government and the universities had teamed up to whitewash nuclear energy. Or if the reporters had been frightened to learn that the most 'responsible' forces in our society had deliberately led them astray.

Finally, the *Journal* could have asked the reporters who covered TMI how America can survive an age that is both centralized and technological if those in charge of the power centers cannot be trusted.

Those are the questions we face. They go far beyond being for or against nuclear energy. TMI has helped us see that nuclear energy is a technological Watergate, raising fundamental social and political questions about the society in which we live.

-E.M.



LETTERS

SORTA SICK

Dear *HCN*,

I could say a lot, as I'm sure quite a few others could, on the stunning announcement right out of the blue that *HCN* is moving to Colorado.

I have close ties to both states, but have always associated *HCN* specifically with Lander and the surrounding area. It's very difficult to imagine it suddenly not being there anymore. In some ways, needless to say, this certainly marks the end of an era.

Frankly, the whole thing sorta makes me sick.

Del Owens
New York City

SNOWMASS OBJECTS

Dear *HCN*,

As a year 'round resident of Snowmass Village, Colorado, and an *HCN* reader, I objected to Dan Whipple's potshots of July 8 (*You Gotta Have Hart -- Playing Presidential Politics in Colorado Ski Country*).

To equate Snowmass Village with Aspen and call it trendy is like comparing singles bars with Sunday School, environmentally or socially. The ski runs, swimming pools and one golf course are here, yes, but so is a presentably wild mountain experience. The "convention facilities" Whipple says the bulldozers gouged way for must be the conference center scheduled for groundbreaking next spring. That such "facilities" were mentioned is ironic in that proponents of the planned facility faced largely environmental concerns in gaining approval to build it, and they bent to them.

Mr. Whipple, I don't believe you have ever seen Snowmass Village.

Stephanie Peterson
Snowmass Village, CO

CONGRATULATIONS

Dear Friends,

Congratulations on your August 5th issue. It is a wonderful compilation of regional information. I'm sure it wasn't easy, but it will be extremely useful to all of us who care.

It is timely too for somehow we must form a coalition among those of us who care for peace and abhor war; those of us who are concerned about the environment, present and future; those of us who are concerned about rights and justice for women and minorities; and those of us who are concerned about health and justice in the work place. The ills we seek to correct all stem from a common economic/political system. Only our common effort can bring about the profound change needed.

I enclose a check for $25.00. I'd like 10 or more copies of Vol. 13, No. 15. I hope that you printed enough extras so that many of us can distribute copies to interested non-subscribers. Keep up the good work.

Nicholas Helburn
Boulder, CO

Tough Butte falls on tough times

by Don Snow

Monday, 10 A.M., at the M&M Bar in Butte, America. Middle-aged men in faded green poplin work clothes sit elbow to elbow at the bar. They stare straight ahead as they talk, and a gallon of pickled eggs stares back. Little cans of tomato juice are being passed around, a tentative stab at nourishment stirred into a beer breakfast. There is no attempt to cut off the morning light streaming into the crowded bar. Faces and faults are plainly visible as if these are people accustomed to facing harsh truth, even in a workday bar at 10 A.M.

In the backroom poker parlor, a game is getting fierce. Five players hunch around a table while spectators mill in and out. The winner so far is the one woman in the game. She's in her 50s, skinny as a drill, wearing a baby-blue plaid pant-suit and a pair of shimmering gold pumps. Her lipstick, the color of grenadine, is a perfect painted Cupid's-bow. Each of her many stubbed out cigarettes has that dipped-in-fingerpaints look. She's cleaning up on the four guys around the table, but no one says a word.

Butte likes gambling and always has. The jingle of hard silver on the board, a fat wad of bills, the itch to turn a few bucks on luck shrewdly manipulated. Mining, after all, is just another form of gambling. And Butte through the years has had plenty of both. The city was once a regular winner: Montana's biggest town, its political power center, the hub of its fame and fortune. But now it's all loss. Butte couldn't turn a dollar in a windstorm.

The irascible William A. Clark in the 1890s brokered his investments in a Deer Lodge, Montana bank and a Walla Walla mail service into some of the richest copper mines in the world and then the golden fleece of a seat in the U.S. Senate. It was Butte where his fortunes were made. Marcus Daly, a gambler all the way and Clark's most determined rival, brought an extraordinary nose for ore to the Richest Hill on Earth. With San Francisco money, he started the Anaconda copper empire, named for a large constricting snake.

The earliest miners gambled on silver in Butte, throwing away the annoying quantities of copper sulfide ore that kept obstructing the rich silver lodes. But by the late 1870s, the annoying copper had replaced silver as Butte's most important metal. Local control of the copper mines gave way to corporate domination when the Standard Oil Company bought out the Anaconda mines in 1899 and placed them under hold of the Amalgamated Copper Company.

Antitrust prosecution stripped Standard oil of its copper holdings in 1915, but by then out-of-state domination of Montana copper was a well-established fact. The Anaconda Copper Mining Company would control copper, Butte, and Montana politics until the early 1970s when Montana passed a new state constitution and Anaconda began a long slide into financial decline, culminating with its ultimate takeover by the Atlantic Richfield Company.

Along the way, Butte became one of the West's most colorful towns -- a true melting pot where immigrants from a dozen European and Asian countries came together to redden their hands in copper. Ethnic ghettos sprouted in Butte: Chinatown and Finntown, Dublin Gulch and the Slavic neighborhoods. Cornishmen, known as Counsin Jacks, were imported from England. These undisputed masters of metal mining helped dig out thousands of miles of tunnels beneath the homes and businesses of rowdy Butte.

By 1955, the Anaconda Company of Butte, Montana owned one of the world's greatest mining empires. Anaconda led the country in the production of copper, zinc and manganese. It opened a new aluminum smelter in Columbia Falls, Montana while it busily explored for molybedenum in Nevada and uranium in New Mexico. It owned 400,000 acres of Montana timberlands, and seven of the state's largest newspapers. The antique green dome atop the state capitol building reminded Montana's mostly rural citizens of who was really boss in the Treasure State. And what the treasure was.

Today that once-great copper empire rests in the belly of a whale called ARCo. Like several other copper giants, Anaconda is now owned by a multinational oil company with apparently great intentions, but a greater need for large tax write-offs. In 1980, ARCo-Anaconda announced closure of the Washoe Smelter in Anaconda and the old copper refinery at Great Falls. Fifteen hundred workers lost their jobs. After promising to sink $2 billion into improving its Montana copper operations, ARCo decided instead to ship its concentrates from Butte to efficient new smelters in Japan. A portion of the Berkeley Pit at Butte would remain open, ARCo said, keeping the 800 workers there on the job.

Then, in early 1983, just a few days into the 48th Montana legislature, ARCo announced that all Butte mining operations would cease at the end of June. This summer, the East Pit and ore concentrator closed on schedule, throwing another thousand workers out on the streets. Anaconda officials complained they were losing a million dollars a week on the Butte operations, producing copper at a dollar a pound for a market that paid 70 cents. The company claims it owns a 20 year reserve of copper at the East Pit, but can't mine it economically in today's market.

Members of the Butte legislative delegation responded to the final closure by introducing a series of so-called "Butte relief bills." Most would have funneled various mineral trust funds and taxes into impact payments and community development funds for Butte and Anaconda. One bill would have legalized certain forms of gambling in Silver Bow County, but most of the measures would have created jobs in pollution control and mined land reclamation.

One by one, the bills passed the Democratically controlled House and then died in the Republican Senate.

Now the final thread of hope for mine-related jobs in Butte hangs from Sen. Max Baucus' (D-Mont.) effort to skim a million dollars from Montana's abandoned-mine reclamation fund, established by the 1977 federal Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act, to pay for pollution control along Silver Bow Creek near Butte. A company-owned tailings pond is leaking sulfuric acid and toxic metals into the creek.

Reclamation might help Butte hang onto what it's still got. The biggest employer in Butte today, with 1,200 workers, is the Montana Power Company's central offices. Recently, rumors that MPC might move to a more desirable city have been circulating around the state.

Company officials say that the utility owns too much real estate in Butte to allow an immediate exit. But that expensive ball and chain could be overcome by the problem MPC has attracting top-notch professionals to Butte. And with good reason: the mining center is a Western study in urban decay.

As the mile-wide Berkeley Pit expanded over the last quarter century, whole neighborhoods downtown had to be relocated or destroyed. The arc of the pit kept cutting toward the heart of the city until it reached within three blocks of downtown businesses. Thankfully for the few remaining Butte Finns, the Helsinki Club was spared. You can still buy a drink and a sauna there.

Even neighborhoods spared by the growing pit weren't home free. Portions of the 2,600-mile labyrinth of tunnels beneath the city -- long ago abandoned when copper veins petered out and the company opened the porphyry ores of the Berkeley Pit -- began to collapse, sometimes swallowing up houses, garages, whole backyards. That plus the decay of abandoned and unkempt houses means Butte is not exactly the young professional's dream.

There is little hope for a non-mining economic future in Butte. Last year a community organization in Anaconda pushed to turn their town into Montana's Las Vegas, with casinos and neon nightlife. But the state's voters have rejected even modest relaxation of Montana gambling laws. And unlike picturesque high-mountain mining towns elsewhere in the Rockies, Butte offers little to urban-weary tourists.

It always has been and still wants to be a mining town, where a strong payroll created from primary productivity supports thousands of hard-working families. Today, while the big Phelps Dodge copper mine in Morenci, Arizona, reopens following heated labor disputes, the Butte miners find themselves with nothing but time on their hands, families to feed, a modest severance check, and for some, a midmorning poker game at the M&M. It's just like the old grey guy at the bar says: "If you dig a hole, you eventually reach the bottom."