

High Country News

May 9, 1988

Vol. 20 No. 9

A Paper for People who Care about the West

One Dollar

Two Forks Dam

David Denney



Sand-hill cranes fly over the Platte River in Nebraska

Push comes to shove

When the dust settles a year or so from now, it is likely that the struggle over the proposed Two Forks Dam on the Front Range of Colorado will rank with the fights to stop the damming of the Grand Canyon and to halt the construction of the huge coal-fired power plant once proposed for Utah's Kaiparowitz Plateau.

For the moment, however, the scope and significance of the struggle is not clear. Instead, there are only the sights and sounds of what has become -- with startling speed -- a national issue.

At the heart of this issue, in Colorado, Two Forks is being contested in public hearings filled with boisterous, standing-room-only crowds. At the moment, environmental and citizen groups on one side and water developers on the other are timing the release of comments and new developments to influence two major decision makers: Colorado Gov. Roy Romer and the Army Corps of Engineers. At stake is their approval, or disapproval, of the \$1 billion dam dissected at great length in the recently released environmental impact statement on the Denver metro area's water needs.

But Two Forks goes beyond Colorado. Physically, it will affect Nebraska and the Colorado River basin right down to southern California. Symbolically, it will affect the entire West, testing the primacy of water development as the concept around which the West is organized.

As a result, the fight has captured the attention of nearly everyone interested in water, environmental issues and public policy. It has generated comments from officials and hundreds of letters of support and protest from citizens. Leaders of national environmental groups have threatened protracted and expensive litigation, and Two Forks receives daily coverage in local and national media.

There is much for observers and commentators to chew on. It is one of the most intensely studied, thoroughly debated water projects in history. The current climactic fight is the result of more than a decade of carefully and elaborately orchestrated strategies developed by

both sides and now being tested in battle. To the public, Two Forks has suddenly burst into view; to those whose job or passion it is to follow Western issues, today's fury is simply a smoldering fire fanned into flames.

Two Forks has been a goal of the Denver city fathers for nearly a century, and has been proposed and shot down several times already. The current proposal, based on an eight-year, \$37-million EIS, is to build a dam at the confluence of the North and South Forks of the South Platte River in the foothills southwest of Denver. The 1.1 million acre-foot reservoir would be filled with water that now escapes downstream each spring into Nebraska as well by water diverted east, from the upper headwaters of the Colorado River, just a few miles away over the Continental Divide.

At a total cost, including interest payments and environmental mitigation, of \$1 billion, the project would provide the water Denver and 42 suburban entities say they need to secure their future into the middle of the next century.

However, the non-economic costs -- to rivers, recreation, wildlife, endangered species and the natural beauty of Colorado -- have set Colorado's environmental community against Front Range developers in a no-quarter, bitter fight. Environmentalists argue that not only is the project incredibly destructive, but also that it is unnecessary. The Environmental Caucus, which has followed the project since 1982 or so, has a plan for conservation and alternative sources that it says eliminates the need for Two Forks.

Colorado sits at the headwaters of the two major river basins involved -- the Platte and the Colorado -- and downstream of the Front Range sit hundreds of communities, from the Gulf of Mexico to the Gulf of California, which have little say in the fight, but will have to live with many of the consequences.

For all its fury, and for all of the physical impacts and benefits that will occur if the dam is constructed, Two Forks can be seen as proxy for a much larger debate. Two Forks will help decide how water in the West will be used in the future: to benefit large, dense urban areas, or to maintain the natural environment and a smaller, diverse population.

If Two Forks is built, it will mark the continuing strength of the urbanizing vision that has marked the West for the last four decades. If Two Forks is rejected, it will mark the end of an era, and announce the need for the West to march in a different direction.

This issue of *High Country News* is devoted to the Two Forks struggle. A regional perspective is provided by Colorado Springs writer Barry Noreen, who traveled to Kearny, Neb., to watch the annual migration of sandhill cranes. The cranes, together with endangered fish in Utah and farmers from Phoenix to Omaha, are said by environmentalists to be among the major potential victims of Two Forks.

HCN intern Tara Lumpkin reports on Wyoming's version of Two Forks, Casper's Deer Creek Dam, proposed for a tributary to the North Platte River. Like Two Forks, Deer Creek will provide Casper with municipal water. Also like Deer Creek, critics say it will harm endangered species and waste money. They claim there is enough water available from conservation and purchase of agricultural water to make it unnecessary.

Noreen and HCN staffer Steve Hinchman team up from opposite sides of the Divide to cover the war over Two Forks in Colorado. They report that Two Forks was severely wounded by public comment at the nine public hearings, which attracted a far larger and broader turnout than environmentalists had dared to hope.

Last, HCN publisher Ed Marston discusses the expectation of some Front Range leaders that Two Forks can turn the chaotic, polluted Denver metro area into a great city. Their hope is not simply based on the water Two Forks would provide, but also on the unity they believe will be forged in the struggle against the dam's opponents. Marston suggests that the public opposition created by the proposal may indeed create unity, but not of the kind Denver leaders expect.

--the staff

Two Forks stories

begin on page 8

Dear friends,



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Tom Bell
Editor Emeritus

Ed Marston
Publisher

Betsy Marston
Editor

Rocky Barker
Craig Bigler
Peter Carrels
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Pat Ford
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Regional Bureaus

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Last names only

The first evidence of our switch to a new computer is on your mailing labels: the first initial of your three-character first "name" is probably missing. That's serious, but it's the least serious error that could have afflicted us, and it will be solved by a survey we plan to send out soon.

The survey will ask how you wish your name to read on the label, when you first subscribed, how you came to subscribe, and other pieces of information. Because our Radio Shack computers couldn't handle all that data, it has been lost. Now that we own a more capacious electronic memory, we wish to recapture that history.

The loss of part of your first name came in transforming our 7,000-person list from our Radio Shack TRS-DOS format to one our Apple Macintosh SE computers could understand. A first effort aborted, and we were about to start typing the 7,000 names and addresses from scratch when Jesse Tarshis of Alpine Data in Montrose came successfully to the rescue.

A week later he saved our antique Radio Shack computers from the trash heap by successfully hooking them to the SE. That means we can continue to use the Radio Shacks as word processors without retyping the stories into the SEs. The final step, actual production of the paper with the Apples, awaits a bit more help from reader and computer consultant Susan Tweit.

Never enough spring

Montana Bureau chief Bruce Farling in Missoula writes about the weather in his region. He describes it as delightfully schizophrenic: 70 degrees one day, snow the next. "There is something perversely intriguing about four inches of heavy spring snow crushing my sprightly, but extremely stupid, daffodils.

"Around my place, the deer have been congregating in large numbers to nibble away at the greening wheatgrass and alfalfa. On my way out the door the other day, 35 of them went thundering by after brazenly cleaning up piles of hay meant for the dumbstruck, gawking herds of the neighbors.

"In the last few weeks, bluebirds, grosbeaks, black-capped chickadees, several redtail hawks, one rough-legged hawk and a handful of seasonal Forest Service comrades, on their way back to work, have checked in at my place.

"We can never have enough of spring."

Traveling

Speaking of spring-time visitors, Tom Gagnon of Winter Park, Colo., came through Paonia on his way to Durango on April 26. He had made the several hundred mile trip with the help of his thumb and helpful motorists. He talked to us about plans to connect his isolated Grand County to the Denver area with a tunnel under Berthoud Pass. Grand County is presently protected from Denver by the switchbacks and snowslides of Berthoud Pass.

HCN publisher Ed Marston travelled south and east, across Cochetopa Pass, into Colorado's San Luis

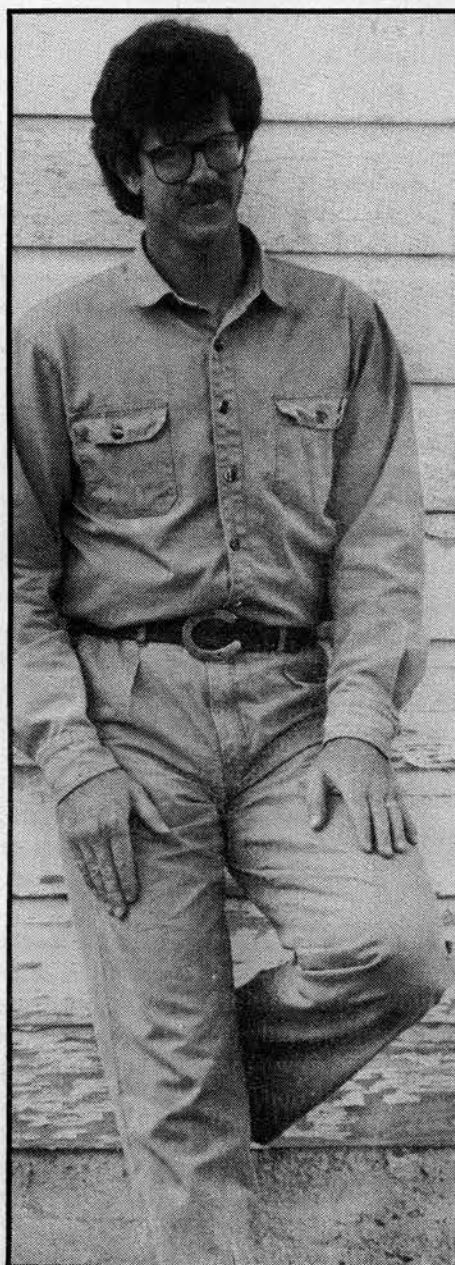
Valley on April 22 to talk to 28 Colorado College students taking an interdisciplinary course on the American Southwest.

CC, a private college based in Colorado Springs, uses the block system -- students take a single month-long course at a time. This one, taught by physicist Val Veirs and sociologist Devon Pena, took the students to visit Sandia and Los Alamos national laboratories, to the Laguna Indian Pueblo, to the home of solar energy pioneers Maria and Arnie Valdes in the San Luis Valley and to other places.

After touring the laboratories, pueblos and other Southwest sites, the class went to the CC campus in Crestone, part of the former Aspen Institute land, on the eastern edge of the San Luis Valley, to digest what they had seen and discuss the books they had read, including *Bless Me Ultima*, *The Milagro Beanfield War* and *The Bridge at Otowi Crossing*.

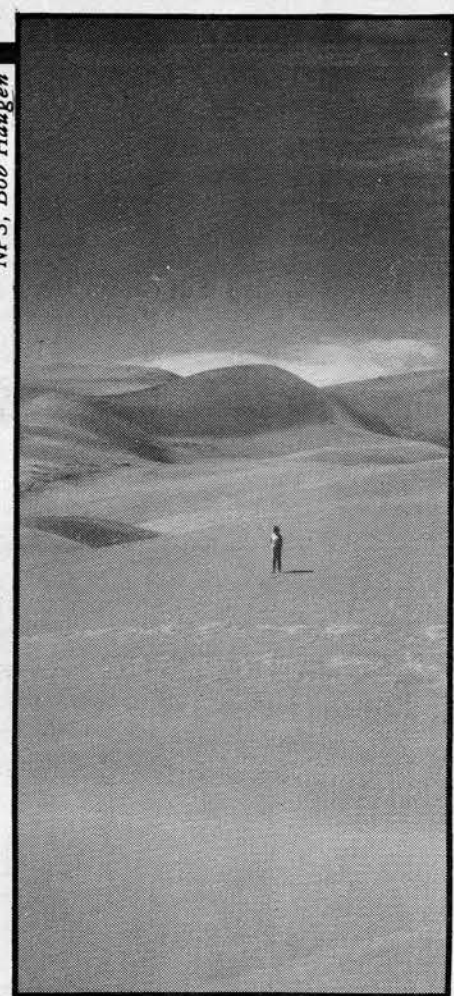
The Crestone campus is within a stone's throw of the Great Sand Dunes National Monument, which has towering dunes, a spring and early summer creek, and a foreground of 14,000-foot mountain peaks belonging to the Sangre de Cristo Range. The day of our visit was cold, and even huffing up the dunes and digging in the sand-covered snow cornices didn't provide much warmth. But in later spring, visitors plunk their lawnchairs down next to the creek, gaze up at the dunes and pretend they're at the shore. Later in the summer, when the creek disappears, they can pretend, without much imagination, that they're in the Sahara.

Editor Betsy Marston spent a few days recently in Jackson, Wyo., at a conference on how public agencies can "interpret controversy" for the public. She says more than one session was rich in the subject, about which we'll have a report in the next issue.



C.L. Rawlins

NPS, Bob Haugen



Unlikely beach in Colorado

Poetry in Paonia

Two regional writers will be in Paonia on Tuesday evening, May 17, to meet residents of western Colorado and to read from their works. They are C.L. Rawlins, a poet (and poetry editor of *High Country News*) and essayist, and Patricia McConnell, the author of a work of fiction about women in jails and prisons titled *Sing Soft, Sing Loud*, to be published by Atheneum in 1989.

Rawlins' first book, *A Ceremony on Bare Ground*, was honored by the Western States Arts Foundation after being chosen by Robert Penn Warren, Carolyn Kizer and Jonathan Galassi. He spent 1985-1986 at Stanford University as a Wallace Stegner Fellow. When not writing, Rawlins works as a range foreman, range rider and hydrologist. He is now conducting acid rain studies for the U.S. Forest Service.

McConnell has received two Creative Writing Fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, wrote one of the Ten Best PEN Short Stories of 1984, and in 1985 gave an invited reading at the Library of Congress. She lives in Moab, Utah, where she is exploring the Canyonlands on foot and writing a novel and a book of essays about life in Canyonlands.

The reading will begin at 7:30 p.m. at Ed and Betsy Marston's house on Lamborn Mesa, just south of Paonia. Call 527-4898 if you need directions.

--the staff

BARBS

If you build a better mouse, the world will beat a path to your door.

The U.S. has issued a patent to Harvard University for its creation of a higher form of life -- a new kind of mouse. The achievement was hailed in *The New York Times* as a "singularly historic event."

American ingenuity knows no bounds.

The soft drink industry sees the sun rising over a whole new market: pop for breakfast. You should soon be seeing Coca-Cola Company's new "Coke in the Morning" advertising campaigns in your area, according to *The New York Times*.

WESTERN ROUNDUP

Central Utah Project seeks wriggle room

The House Subcommittee on Water and Power Resources appeared in Salt Lake City April 18 determined to display a rare consensus between Utah environmentalists and dam builders on funding for the Central Utah Project. But brief, low-key testimony by the Ute Indians of Northwest Utah may prove to be the critical event of the hearings.

The occasion of the hearings was House Resolution 3408, a bill introduced by Rep. Wayne Owens, D-Utah. The already billion-dollar-plus CUP has again exhausted its funds; Owens' legislation eliminates parts of the project and provides \$550 million to finish what remains.

To gain environmentalist support, Owens and the Utah delegation have arranged a fragile compromise that should compensate for damage to fish and wildlife habitat within the CUP. That's a major change. Only 1 percent of the \$1 billion expended on the project thus far has gone to mitigate habitat destruction. The bill will leave more water in the streams of Uintah Basin, and it will establish the Central Utah Fish and Wildlife Commission. The new agency will receive \$15 million a year for environmental protection even after the CUP is complete.

But it was clear that the compromise between representatives of major environmental groups, the Central Utah Water Conservancy District, the delegation, and the state government is very fragile. Virtually every witness praised the bill in principle but went on to cite numerous objections and reservations. However, it was the testimony of Ute tribal chairman Lester Chapoose and tribal attorney Stephen Boyden that revealed how tenuous CUP itself is.

They had come to say that the environmentalists and bureaucrats are arguing over water that still belongs to the Utes. The make-up of the proposed commission confirms how readily both sides forget this. Owens' bill contains no provision for Ute membership even though most of the waters belong to the Utes and most of the riparian habitat is on the Ute reservation (HCN, 3/30/87).

The testimony of Chapoose and Boyden represents the first real Ute consensus on water matters and CUP in many years. It was forged on Feb. 10, when the Uintah and Ouray Tribal Business Committee approved a council resolution that set forth the tribe's basic demands. In a subsequent tribal referendum, 75 percent of Ute voters approved the resolution.

The resolution predictably asks for the fulfillment of promises earlier made to the tribe by the federal government and Utah. The Utes still expect the compensation for their water that they were promised almost a quarter of a century ago. The Utes want, for instance, storage capacity in the Uintah Basin and reaffirmation of Utah's recognition of Ute water rights. Chapoose dismissed as a token the \$2 million appropriated in Owens' bill to study yet again alternate storage facilities in the basin.

But the business committee resolution also contains new and significant twists. The Utes demand the

right to lease their water "to any person or entity" outside the Ute reservation. They are asking for \$100 million in compensation for the water they have been denied over the last twenty-three years. And finally, they asked for (and Owens' bill does provide) measures to mitigate the damage to fisheries and game habitat on the reservation.

These positions are potentially explosive because they threaten the fragile compromise that environmentalists, the state, and federal government are trying to forge at the expense of the Indians. If the Utes are successful in their demand for storage, Congress will have to fund major new dams -- the \$400 million Whiterocks Dam on the Whiterocks River, and the smaller Taskeech Dam below the confluence of the Lakefork and Yellowstone. A budget-conscious Congress will not be pleased with more expensive dams of dubious cost/benefit ratios nor with Ute demands for \$100 million in development funds. Environmentalists will be even less pleased.

The leasing provisions may also cause concern among Utah officials. Most Ute land is terrible farm land. Few Utes are, or have ever been, successful farmers. Previous plans for the Utes to profit from their water have always involved renewed attempts to develop agricultural land on the reservation. Leasing their water will allow the Utes to gain badly needed income from their water without embarking on yet another round of agricultural failure on Indian reservations.

But leasing would force the state and the conservancy district to pay current municipal/industrial market prices for Ute water that they now stand to get for free. More significantly, the conservancy district may have to compete for the water. Although the Utes' ability to lease water will have to conform to state law, the leasing provision raises the specter of Indians selling water even to California.

But it may be risky to ignore the Utes. Bonneville Unit water within the CUP is, after all, Ute water; the promises to the tribe are longstanding. If Congress and the state fail to

cooperate, the CUP may well find its biggest legal challenge lies ahead. For even if the courts fail to enforce a breach of promise, the Utes are entitled to take their water back in 2005 unless the government has replaced it with water from other sources.

It is likely that a compromise will be reached. The Utes, in what is for the West a rare piece of interracial solidarity, have forged their own alliance. They are working with Uintah and Duchesne county commissioners to secure some water and benefits for the Uintah Basin, which has so far given up water and gotten little in return. Not so long ago, they were at each others' throats over a court decision giving the Utes governance and taxation powers on the reservation (HCN, 3/30/87).

The Utes apparently are also working with Wayne Owens. He appears to have tentative plans to introduce companion legislation to reaffirm Ute water rights under the earlier state water compact and to provide some means to fund part or all of the other Ute demands.

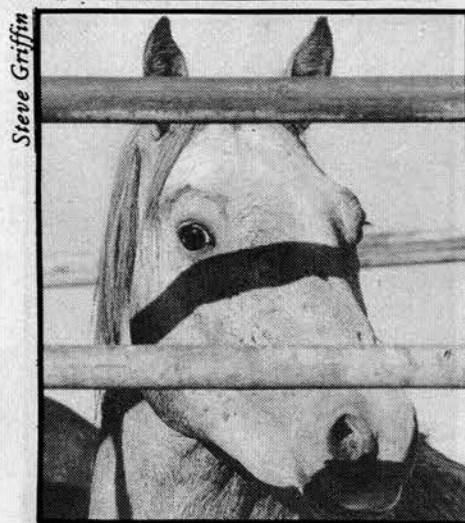
Funding these demands will be a critical issue. The Utes may very well be willing to compromise some of them, but major funds for lease payments and development are going to have to be steered toward the reservation. To secure these funds, Congress may have to tap projected increases in charges to subsidized federal power users. Environmentalists seek these same funds for their programs.

The long, expensive and often ludicrous saga of the CUP is not done yet. The hearings made clear that a project originally justified on the old basis of making the desert bloom has evolved into the promised economic salvation of the urban Wasatch Front. The plot of the CUP saga has changed, and the Utes may well be in a position to demand additional alterations in the story line.

--Richard White

The writer is professor of history at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City

HOTLINE



Humane alternative

The Bureau of Land Management has stopped a wild horse program that may have sent mustangs to the slaughter house. In 1985, BLM Director Robert Burford authorized large-scale, "no fee" adoptions. Since then, 14,900 wild horse have been given away in groups of 100 or more. But after a year of probation with an owner, wild horses could be sold; some horses ended up in rodeos, others as dog food. Recently, two ranchers taking advantage of large-scale adoption were investigated for illegally selling horses before the one-year probationary period was up. "Those cases are only one contributing factor" to discontinuing the program, says Joe Zilincar, public information officer for the BLM. He adds that the BLM has found better ways to get rid of the horses and points to a highly successful prison program pioneered in Colorado. Inmates halter-train wild horses and make them more adoptable. The BLM is also promoting its Adopt-A-Horse program back East, where horses are in greater demand. Zilincar says, "The humane emphasis behind the change is that we feel we have other options. We can make these animals adoptable at the full fee, and that's what we're going to be working on."

BARBS

Did they check the bathroom?

A 19-year-old Albuquerque man was reported missing, after a year, by his Los Alamos relatives, reports the Los Alamos Monitor.

Forest Service upholds ski area decision

In the latest development in a controversy spawned in 1969, a Forest Service official has denied environmentalists' appeal of a proposed ski resort in Colorado's San Juan National Forest.

Deputy regional forester Sid Hanks recently ruled that although an environmental impact statement for the East Fork ski area does not prescribe complete mitigation procedures, the project should proceed. National Wildlife Federation attorney Thomas Lustig, representing eight groups and five individuals, said all would appeal again, this time to Forest Service chief Dale Robertson, and if that appeal failed, they would go to court to stop the project (HCN, 3/2/87).

Environmentalists argued that elk migration routes and calving

areas would be disrupted if the ski resort is built, and that federal and state protected species, including lynxes, wolverines, grizzly bears, bald eagles and peregrine falcons could be harmed. They also cited the suitability of the area for reintroduction of the grizzly bear -- one was killed not far from the area in 1979.

In rejecting the appeal, Hanks said elk would be able to adapt to the loss of habitat over the 15-20 year construction span of the project and that no known endangered species use the area of the project year-round. He said grizzly reintroduction was not considered because of a 1982 Colorado Wildlife Commission resolution opposing it, and that if populations of grizzly, wolverine or lynx are subsequently discovered there will still be "adequate habitat"

left for them in areas adjacent to the development.

Lustig called the environmental impact statement "superficial," and said the company that wrote it, Winston Associates, had previously contracted with the project developer, Daniel McCarthy of Illinois. He said this represented an "intolerable conflict of interest," and the EIS might have been rushed to prevent McCarthy from losing money on private land he previously purchased adjacent to the national forest area slated to be developed. According to Lustig, the development would also set a bad precedent in coming within a few yards of the South San Juan wilderness.

Michael J. Robinson

HOTLINE



For the birds

Mexico, Canada and the United States have signed an agreement to protect migratory waterfowl and conserve their wetlands. Many birds that winter in Mexico stop in the U.S. during migration and nest in Canada, said Frank Dunkle, director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The agreement supplements one signed by the U.S. and Canada in 1986 that sought to protect ducks and other waterfowl. Mexico will present Canada and the U.S. with a list of wetlands and wintering sites it considers to be "priority areas" for migratory birds, then Canada and the U.S. will help Mexico's conservation efforts by responding with information on how to best support the birds. The three countries have also agreed to develop cohesive conservation plans for migratory birds and their habitats.

Wyoming declines to regulate leaking tanks

The Wyoming Legislature's involvement with taxation of Exxon's Shute Creek Project (HCN, 3/28/88), its struggle with Gov. Mike Sullivan over the state budget, and its need to rework the state's property tax structure proved deadly to environmental legislation introduced during the 20-day budget session which ended in mid-March.

The main disappointment was the death of a bill to create a state program for regulation of Underground Storage Tanks, or USTs. When it comes to leaking tanks, Wyoming is no different than New Jersey: 107 contaminated sites have been identified, with over 40 sites affecting municipal water, domestic wells or wastewater systems.

In 1987, a House committee killed an UST bill for fear that a Wyoming law would end up stricter than federal regulations. But now most of the federal regulations have been promulgated, and the bill sailed through its introduction (in a budget session, non-budget items require a two-thirds majority for introduction).

The bill, designed to give the state primacy, gave the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality authority to clean up contamination caused by unknown or resistant parties, established a fund to help tank owners meet the financial responsibility requirements of the federal program, and set up a fund to repay tank owners for cleanup costs in the event of a spill if they had followed the rules. Fees on tank owners and a one-cent increase in Wyoming's gasoline and diesel tax, currently among the lowest in the U.S., were to finance the plan.

The legislation was supported by environmental groups, the Wyoming Petroleum Association, the Wyoming Mining Association and the Independent Gasoline Retailer's Association.

With these diverse interests solidly behind it, and led by Rep. Dennis Tippetts, R-Fremont, the House passed the bill by 52-12, including the one-cent gas tax rise.

But in the Senate, the bill ran into a brick wall, otherwise known as the majority floor leader -- Sen. Russell Zimmer, R-Goshen/Niobrara. Ignoring over 100 phone calls and pleas from his fellow senators, he refused to schedule the bill for debate until time had run out.

Zimmer owns four underground storage tanks at his grain elevator business. He acknowledged the conflict, and said he would not have voted on the bill. But he did kill the bill by keeping it from a vote. Senate vice-president Diemer True, R-Natrona, a Casper trucker and oil man, helped stop the bill by filing numerous petty amendments that gave the impression of controversy.

Gov. Sullivan has promised to place USTs on the agenda if he calls a special session this year; otherwise, Wyoming tank owners will be on their own when they face federal regulators after July 1.

In other steps, the Legislature cut the Industrial Siting Administration's seven-member staff to three, citing lack of industrial development. Energy International, a coal gasification project near Rawlins, filed a permit application a month after the Legislature adjourned. It hopes to obtain a siting permit under the "fast-track"

permitting process in last year's Industrial Siting Act revisions.

Because of cutbacks, an independent staff analysis of the project will not be prepared for the local governments and the seven-member council which grants or denies siting permits. The director of the Siting Administration has resigned effective June 1, citing an inability to meet his responsibilities with current resources.

In other business, an effort to strengthen Wyoming's regulation of solid waste facilities, prompted by recent proposals for asbestos and hazardous waste dumps, was defeated. Several bills providing mineral severance tax reductions were offered, but failed to get the two-thirds vote necessary for introduction.

The \$70 million Sandstone Dam remains on hold, with \$2 million authorized for continuing studies. An additional \$5 million was designated for final design and land acquisition, but this funding was tied to an amendment prohibiting its expenditure until the Legislature approves the entire \$70 million for construction.

Several conflict of interest and financial disclosure bills failed introduction. The sole survivor, a bill defining conflicts of interest, passed the Senate but died in the House Rules Committee.

--Sarah Gorin

Sarah Gorin, a Laramie resident, spent this session, as she has several past sessions, in the Wyoming Legislature as a lobbyist for the Wyoming Chapter of the Sierra Club.

What is causing a 'toadal' eclipse?

In many Rocky Mountain ponds and lakes, something is mysteriously eliminating the native amphibians.

In northern Colorado and southern Wyoming, biologists for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have been unable to find the leopard frog and boreal toad in over 90 percent of their historical haunts.

With 40-50 percent declines, wood frogs and chorus frogs seemed numerous by comparison. According to records dating as far back as the early 1940s, much of the decline occurred within the last 15 years.

In the San Juan Mountains of New Mexico and the Wasatch Range of Utah, Cindy Carey, biology professor at the University of Colorado at Boulder, witnessed entire populations of the boreal toad disappear within the last three years.

As yet, nobody knows for sure why they are disappearing. Carey, who is studying the physiology of the boreal toad, thinks acid rain is the primary culprit. "We've had climatic extremes like dry and cold winters, early winters, and late springs, but acid rain has been the only factor that has occurred in a linear fashion with the decline of the toads."

Acid rain, as it's popularly called, is a generic term used to indicate deposition of atmospheric acids through either dry fallout of gases and particles or by rain and snow. These acids, primarily nitric acid and sulfuric acid, are produced indirectly through the burning of fossil fuels.

Studies in Colorado's Front Range seem to indicate that the acidity of most ponds does not yet directly threaten fish and amphibian survival. But pulses of high acidity are sometimes generated by spring snow-melts.

Steve Corn and Bruce Bury of the federal National Ecology Center in Ft. Collins, Colo., suspect heavy metals may contribute to the amphibians' decline. Lofted from industrial smokestacks and eroded from abandoned mines, heavy metals such as copper, zinc and iron inevitably pollute the amphibians' ponds and lakes. Although tolerable at low concentrations, these metals can become lethally toxic in acidic waters. Acidic water may also mobilize highly toxic aluminum from stream beds or watershed soils.

Eventually, Corn and Bury hope to expand their amphibian surveys beyond Colorado and Wyoming, while looking closely at heavy metals and other possible contaminants. Unfortunately, other studies that are needed remain unfunded.

Bury says, "I'm a realist. Amphibians aren't bald eagles, they're not game species. They're not going to attract the attention of these other species."

Jim Bennett, nongame wildlife program specialist for the Colorado Division of Wildlife, explains that when it comes to supporting amphibians, "There's need for our attention but there just isn't the interest.

There really has been no advocacy to change things."

The Rocky Mountain decline is not an isolated case. Populations of mid-western leopard frogs, once supplying over 9 million scientific research specimens annually, are now "damn scarce," as Robert McKinnell, a biologist at the University of Minnesota, puts it.

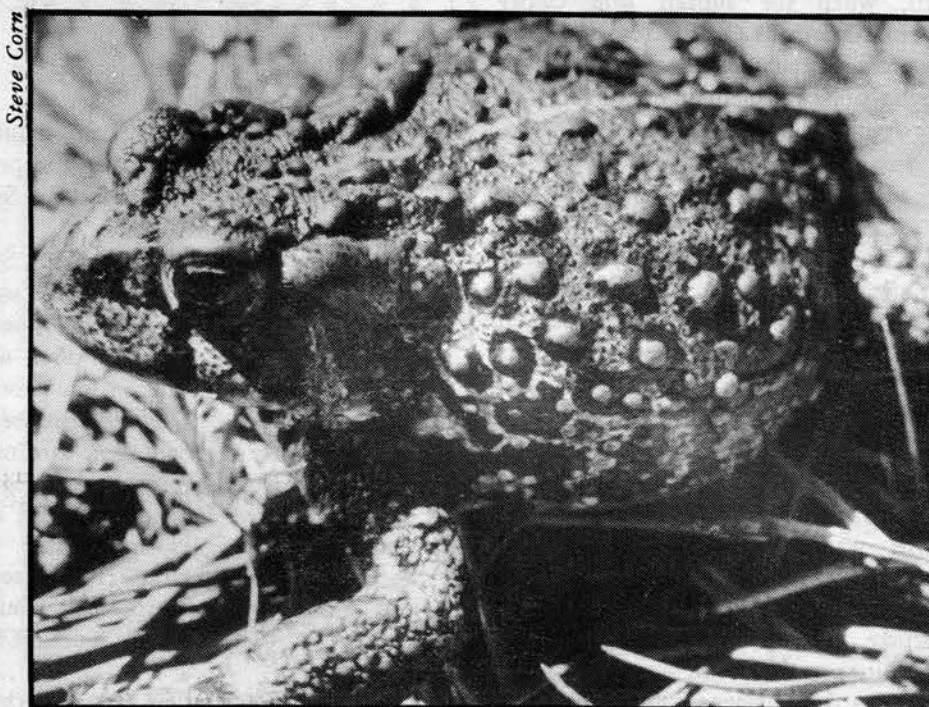
The Wyoming toad, common 30 years ago in the Laramie Plains of southeastern Wyoming, inexplicably crashed in 1975, and today its entire known population exists in a single lake. Biologists in the Pacific North-

west are concerned about dwindling populations of the Cascade frog.

Along with acid rain and heavy metals, other suspected hazards to toads include agricultural pesticides, disease, habitat destruction and competition from introduced bullfrogs.

Carey sees a portent in the recent plight of amphibians such as the boreal toad. "In my view they're a critical indicator species," she says. "They've been made extinct by their environment ... Something's killing them, and it's very widespread. What does that mean in terms of the future of other species, or people for that matter?"

--William Stolzenburg



Disappearing toad

A hungry mining town threatens a river

In many western Montana bar-rooms, mere mention of the Big Blackfoot River can stir lively discussion and maybe a few fights over tales of flyfishing and rainbow trout that come plump as hams. The Blackfoot is one of the state's most popular fishing holes, and its welfare is of no minor consequence to Montanans.

Norman Maclean, in his highly-acclaimed book, *A River Runs Through It*, said of the Blackfoot: "We regarded it as a family river, as a part of us, and I surrender it now only with great reluctance to dude ranches ..."

This type of possessiveness is running up against the lean economy of one Blackfoot River community, creating one of the most divisive controversies over mining that Montana has seen in years.

A proposal to mine gold near Lincoln, an upper-Blackfoot community, is pitting job-hungry locals against people who worry that the mine could pollute the river and harm the area's rural character. Sunshine Mining Co., which runs large mines in Idaho and Utah, wants to mine 3.5 miles west of Lincoln on a hillside overlooking the river. The open pit, only 300 feet from the river, would be accompanied by a cyanide heap-leaching operation another mile north. Sunshine officials say the mine would create 50 jobs and a \$1 million dollar annual payroll during its seven-year lifespan, and that it would extend "the heritage of Lincoln."

Conservationists worry that the heritage will be of the destructive boom and bust variety, with the possible degradation of the Blackfoot thrown in to boot.

The Blackfoot flows west from the Continental Divide, northwest of Helena, and pours into the Clark Fork just upstream of Missoula. On many summer weekends its banks brim with fishermen, while boats of all sorts are piloted through its rapids and pools.

Lincoln, the largest town in the sparsely populated drainage, has a population of 800 that has tried for 120 years to make a living ranching, mining and logging. Recently, new small businesses such as a beef jerky plant and river-related tourism have contributed to the town's economy.

At February public meetings in Lincoln and Missoula, Sunshine's boosters said worries about the mine were unfounded. "We're committed to doing things right and keeping a clean environment because we live here too," Gary Langley, director of the Montana Mining Association, told a crowd in Lincoln.

That meeting was attended by more than 300 people and resembled a pep rally. Conservationists were largely subdued. On the question of reclaiming the mine pit, one Sunshine supporter suggested, "We ought to fill the pit with environmentalists." The cheering brought the down the house.

Locals also carried placards reflecting the sentiment that non-residents concerned with the mine's effect on the environment were meddling in Lincoln's business. "If you don't live here, stay out," declared several placards at the meeting.

Though Dallas-based Sunshine had yet to invest much in the

community, at least one Lincoln business has capitalized heavily on the proposed mine. A local t-shirt shop outfitted dozens of mine supporters with hats, t-shirts and sweatshirts proclaiming, "Let the Sunshine in Lincoln!"

A second public meeting in Missoula was more acrimonious and brought to light some of the substantive issues surrounding the proposal.

Nearly 50 mine supporters made the 70-mile trip from Lincoln, flavoring the forum with jeers and catcalls when conservationists or technical experts questioned Sunshine's proposal. They hollered, "Go back to California," to several speakers, a reference to the mine's most vocal critics, Daryl and Sherrie Parker, who moved from California to Lincoln. The Parkers have started a group called Citizens Opposed to Sunshine Mining Operations, which now has 75 members.

Many of the mine critics at the Missoula meeting zeroed in on the heap-leach pad, a 20-acre facility where ore will be sprayed with cyanide to extract gold.

Both Arnold Silverman, a University of Montana geology professor, and Albert Engels, a Bitterroot Valley hydrologist who teaches at the Scripps Institute, challenged Sunshine's contention that its proposed leach-pad design will not leak cyanide. Sunshine spokesman Mark Hartmann said the pad will be lined with impermeable clay, a plastic liner and eight inches of crushed gravel -- more protection against leaks than the state requires. Silverman and Engels said their experience with cyanide indicates that Sunshine's design would fail.

Jim Jensen, director of the Montana Environmental Information Center, raised the most eyebrows when he produced documents to back his charge that Sunshine was "one of the West's most notorious and brazen violators of environmental laws."

Jensen revealed documents that showed Sunshine violated water-quality standards more than 80 times between 1983 and 1987 at its Kellogg, Idaho, mine. He added that another Sunshine mine, near Utah Lake in Utah, was ordered by the state in 1985 to stop using an illegally constructed, sub-standard tailings pond. According to Utah records, Jensen said, Sunshine threatened to shut the mine down over the incident, putting its employees out of work. After Sunshine's threat, the state lifted its cease-and-desist order, he said.

Jensen said a cyanide heap-leach mine operated by Pegasus Gold near

Zortman, Mont., has leaked into surface or groundwater on at least six separate occasions recently. He warned that Sunshine's mine could do the same. Kit Walther, head of the Hardrock Bureau of the Montana Department of State Lands, said Sunshine's or any company's performance elsewhere is not part of his department's review of an application for a mining permit.

To date, no one has called for denial of the permit. Instead, much of the controversy has focused on whether the proposal should be examined in an environmental impact statement. The decision rests with Walther's department. Conservationists and some Lincoln residents say an EIS is necessary to study in detail the environmental consequences of the mine. Mine boosters, including several state legislators, say the project is too small -- Sunshine says it will directly disturb about 100 acres -- to warrant an EIS. They add that the company has already demonstrated sufficient commitment to environmental protection, and that calls for an EIS are part of an environmentalist agenda to stop the project.

If an EIS is not prepared, the proposal will be judged on the merits of a preliminary environmental review, to be completed by the state 30 days after acceptance of Sunshine's permit application. Sunshine's first application was sent back to the company in mid-February because the state found the proposal deficient on 107 points -- many dealing with water quality protection and reclamation.

According to state law, the preliminary environmental review does not have to include public comment, while an EIS does. Additionally, the state pays for the preliminary review, while the mining company would pay for the EIS. Walther says his department will make a decision on the mine solely on technical merits, not on how much support or opposition the mine has.

Mine boosters say as long as the Hardrock Bureau monitors the mine, the Blackfoot will be protected. However, some conservationists argue that the bureau is already stretched to the limit in its attempts to keep up with the mining boom now sweeping Montana. As a result, they worry that problems at the mine could elude state inspectors.

Meanwhile, notoriety of a different sort could be coming to the Blackfoot. Robert Redford's film company is reportedly working on a screenplay of Maclean's three-part book with the main tale focused on fishing on the Blackfoot.

--Bruce Farling

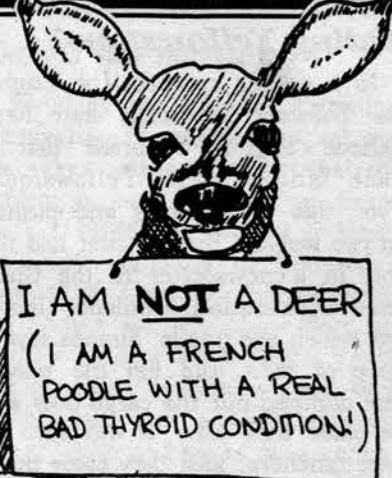
Timber firm can't force high cut

In a decision that significantly strengthens the federal government's discretion to restrict timber cutting in the national forests, a federal court rejected a timber industry demand that the Forest Service allow cutting in sensitive wildlife habitat in Wyoming's Bridger-Teton National Forest. In a lawsuit filed in January, Louisiana-Pacific Corporation and four other plaintiffs charged that the Bridger-Teton National Forest was not living up to the high cutting-levels of its 1979 Timber Management Plan. The court's April 18

decision denied L-P's motion for an injunction to increase timber-cutting, saying responsibility for closure of L-P's Dubois mill (*HCN*, 4/25/88) lay with the company. Judge Clarence Brimmer said L-P had failed to plan adequately for secure timber supplies. Thomas Lustig, who argued the case for the National Wildlife Federation, which intervened on the side of the Forest Service, said the decision "dispels the argument that the national forests must be managed for economic gain, public or private."

HOTLINE

San Juan Horseshoe



Right-to-shoot law

Colorado Governor Roy Romer recently allowed a bill to become law that makes interfering with hunting an offense meriting up to a \$500 fine (*HCN*, 4/11/88). Democrats complained that the bill was special-interest legislation sought by the National Rifle Association, and the American Civil Liberties Union said it was unconstitutional. The ACLU warned that even handing out anti-hunting pamphlets in front of a sporting goods store or rifle range would be against the law. Senate Minority Leader Ray Peterson said, "What it says is the whole state of Colorado is now owned by the hunters of the state. We had an amendment in there that said if you were watching birds or photographing wildlife, you were protected from harassment as well. That came out."



Falcons in Salt Lake

Once again a pair of endangered peregrine falcons are nesting atop the former Westin Hotel in Salt Lake City, Utah. Bob Walters, a biologist for the state, said it is probably the same couple that produced two males last year. This year four eggs have been laid that are expected to hatch in the middle of May -- but this time from a safer location. Walters said he and other staffers had to literally stop traffic last year to pick baby peregrines off the street after their flight paths were blocked by a building. A garden just south of the Mormon Church office will provide a safer first-time flying environment this year, he said.

BARBS

If that happens, who will fill the park with noise and fumes and emptied containers of two-cycle oil?

Snowmobilers are outraged over a \$10 entrance fee to be charged next season at Yellowstone National Park. One local outfitter said, "It's going to get to the point where people say 'to heck with Yellowstone,' and do something else."

6-High Country News -- May 9, 1988

HOTLINE

Seeding Yellowstone?

In a recent story in the *Casper Star Tribune*, Wyoming state Rep. Marlene Simons reported that a plane landed near Yellowstone, Wyo., this past winter and pushed out two wolves. Simons first told the story in a newsletter of the Utah-based organization, Outdoors Unlimited, which she heads. Simons says a group of men told her the wolves were dumped out the cargo door and the plane flew off. "It was seen by some ranchers, and they came down and reported it." According to the *Star Tribune*, Simons added, "Most of those things are not reported. It's like black-footed ferrets. If you had a black-footed ferret in your back yard, you wouldn't want anyone to know about it, because then you couldn't get rid of it." Simons is sure the released wolves were tracked down and killed. She also insists this was not just an isolated incident. "The Earth First! people have vowed they will plant wolves in Yellowstone." No one seems able to back up Simon's story. Larry Bourret of the Wyoming Farm Bureau in Laramie says the wolf drop-offs is all third-hand rumors, and a local radio station that supposedly received an anonymous phone call about the incident says it received no such call.



Diana Hacker

Saving 1.6 bears

After 20 years of controversy, Yellowstone National Park is closing its 310-site Fishing Bridge campground but retaining a 360-site recreational vehicle park. The move is designed to avert grizzly-human encounters and save an estimated 1.6 bears during the next 10 years. The final environmental impact statement also calls for closing a store, gas station, and auto repair shop, and retaining the visitor center and amphitheater. The final plan, which retains facilities because of pressure from the Wyoming congressional delegation, was modified from the draft by not recommending immediate replacement of Fishing Bridge campsites at other park locations (*HCN*, 3/28/88). That proposal garnered 33 percent of public support. But since 45 percent favored removal of most facilities without replacement elsewhere, the Park Service decided to defer replacing the campsites until other campgrounds throughout the park were consistently full, according to Christine Turk of the Park Service. The draft brought 2,905 comments, including 109 suggestions to remove all facilities at Fishing Bridge without replacement, an option not even listed. The Fishing Bridge campground and other buildings will be removed in stages, starting this year and lasting till 1991.

'Stumps suck!' trashes Forest Service office

An Earth First!-inspired protest in late-April provided great guerrilla theater for onlookers at the Forest Service's Northern Region headquarters in Missoula, Mont. It also resulted in a little jail time for three protesters.

Participating in Earth First!'s national day of protest against the Forest Service, Jake Kreilick and John Lilburn, both of Missoula, and Steven Leash of Troy, Mont., found themselves on the inside looking out of the Missoula County jail after being charged for littering on public property. The three men dumped a pile of assorted rubbish -- items that they complained are found too often on national forests -- next to the front door of the Forest Service office. In the pile were tree stumps, sawdust, cow patties and a huge, rusty chunk of road culvert. They were chased down by city police and charged with littering.

Leash and Kreilick were also charged with contempt of court and ordered to spend five days in jail for

wearing baseball caps into court. After a night in jail, the contempt charge was dropped and Kreilick and Leash were released. Lilburn, did not spend a night in jail because he didn't wear a hat. All three posted a \$1,500 bond.

The men's action was spurred on by more than 40 other chanting protesters, one of whom carried a sign saying "I'd rather be spiking." Several protesters said they represented a new radical environmental group called "Stumps Suck!" That group, in a letter in the March 20 *Earth First! Journal*, called Earth First!ers "wimps and sissies." The

new group said, "We have no further patience for milktoast (sic) wilderness proposals which speak in acres, not continents."

According to Earth First!, the national day of protest against the Forest Service was to commemorate John Muir's birthday on April 21, and to condemn the agency's road-building and logging policies. Dave Foreman, Earth First! co-founder, said there were 70 to 100 protests at Forest Service offices around the country. He said Missoula was the only place he knew of where there was an arrest.

--Bruce Farling

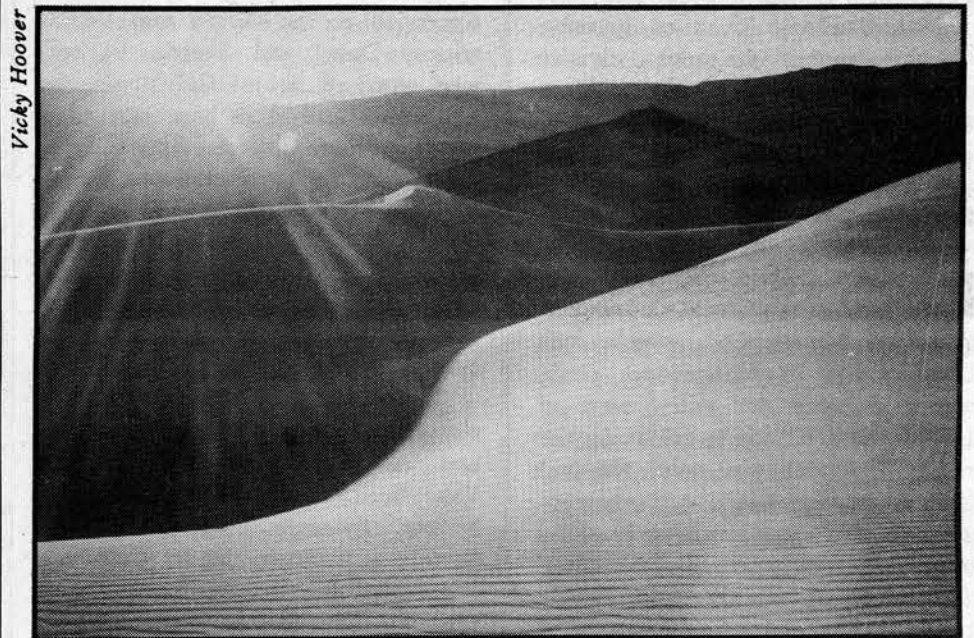
HOTLINE

No sanctuary

A proposed sanctuary for Yellowstone National Park's "problem" bears, this time in Jackson Hole, Wyo., was rejected 2-1 by Teton County Commissioners. A similar, larger bear sanctuary has been proposed in West Yellowstone, Wyo. (*HCN*, 2/15/88). Developer Maury Jones' preferred 10-acre site, six miles south of Jackson Hole, was in a district zoned for commercial uses such as restaurants; he asked approval for a sanctuary based on a "similar use" clause in Jackson's zoning regulations. But two commissioners refused to consider a bear pen similar to a restaurant, calling it "inappropriate" for the site, reports the *Jackson Hole News*.

Crowded wilderness

One of the most overcrowded areas in the West may gain relief thanks to a draft wilderness guide. In the Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness close to Aspen, Colo., the Forest Service proposes a camping limit in some areas, a ban on dogs, and an end to using the area as an advertising tool. Craig Maguire of the Forest Service is worried the draft won't be accepted because of the prohibition on dogs and points out that the ban is only an "educational" tool. He says the Forest Service hopes a temporary ban on dogs will make people realize that leash laws weren't so bad. If people comply with leash laws, the Forest Service is willing to allow dogs back in the area. Maguire says the draft will also end permits for commercial photography or filming to stop exploitation of the area. It also proposes a "merchant's guide" outlining where local businesses should send people who ask about the wilderness. In general, the purpose of the plan is to increase visitor information and promote non-wilderness over wilderness hikes to reduce crowding and harm to the area. A copy of the plan is available from the Taylor River District Office, 216 N. Colorado Avenue, Gunnison, CO 81230 (303)641-0471. Deadline for comments is May 23, 1988.



California dunes

Parks, wilderness sought for desert

The first big Bureau of Land Management wilderness bill has been proposed for California, and it may set a precedent for other Western states such as Utah and Arizona. Sen. Alan Cranston and Rep. Mel Levine, California Democrats, have introduced legislation to designate 4.5 million acres in 81 separate areas as wilderness. The bill would also upgrade Joshua Tree and Death Valley national monuments to park status, increase their acreage by 1.5 million acres and create a new Mojave National Park of 3 million acres out of the current BLM East Mojave National Scenic Area. The areas in question are all in southern California's vast desert. The bill has ignited the enthusiasm of California's environmentalists but is opposed by off-road vehicle interests who say it will close off

ORV access. The Sierra Club's Jeff Widen, however, says that ORV opposition is caused by a "perception problem," and that 500,000 acres of specially designated "open play areas" used by ORVs were excluded from the bill. According to Widen, wilderness boundaries were drawn to accommodate existing roads, and less than 1.5 percent of roads in the area would be closed. California's other senator, Republican Pete Wilson, has no position on the bill, but his Democratic opponent, Leo McCarthy, endorses it. The bill is expected to pass the Senate but may run into trouble in the House, where southern California Republicans are opposed. The Reagan administration also opposes the bill. For more information contact the Sierra Club at 3550 W. 6th St., #323, Los Angeles, CA 90020.

Wildcat well stopped in Montana

A three-year battle to stop a wildcat oil and gas well near Montana's North Fork Flathead River may be ending because of a court decision in March that ruled the well was illegally approved by a state agency.

Montana District Judge Michael Keedy said the Montana Department of State Lands erred in approving a test well for CENEX on the Coal Creek State Forest. Keedy said the agency did not adequately evaluate cumulative effects of development if exploratory wells in the area resulted in oil and gas production. The state based its decision on a 1976 environmental impact statement that largely copies a similar federal study later discarded by the Forest Service.

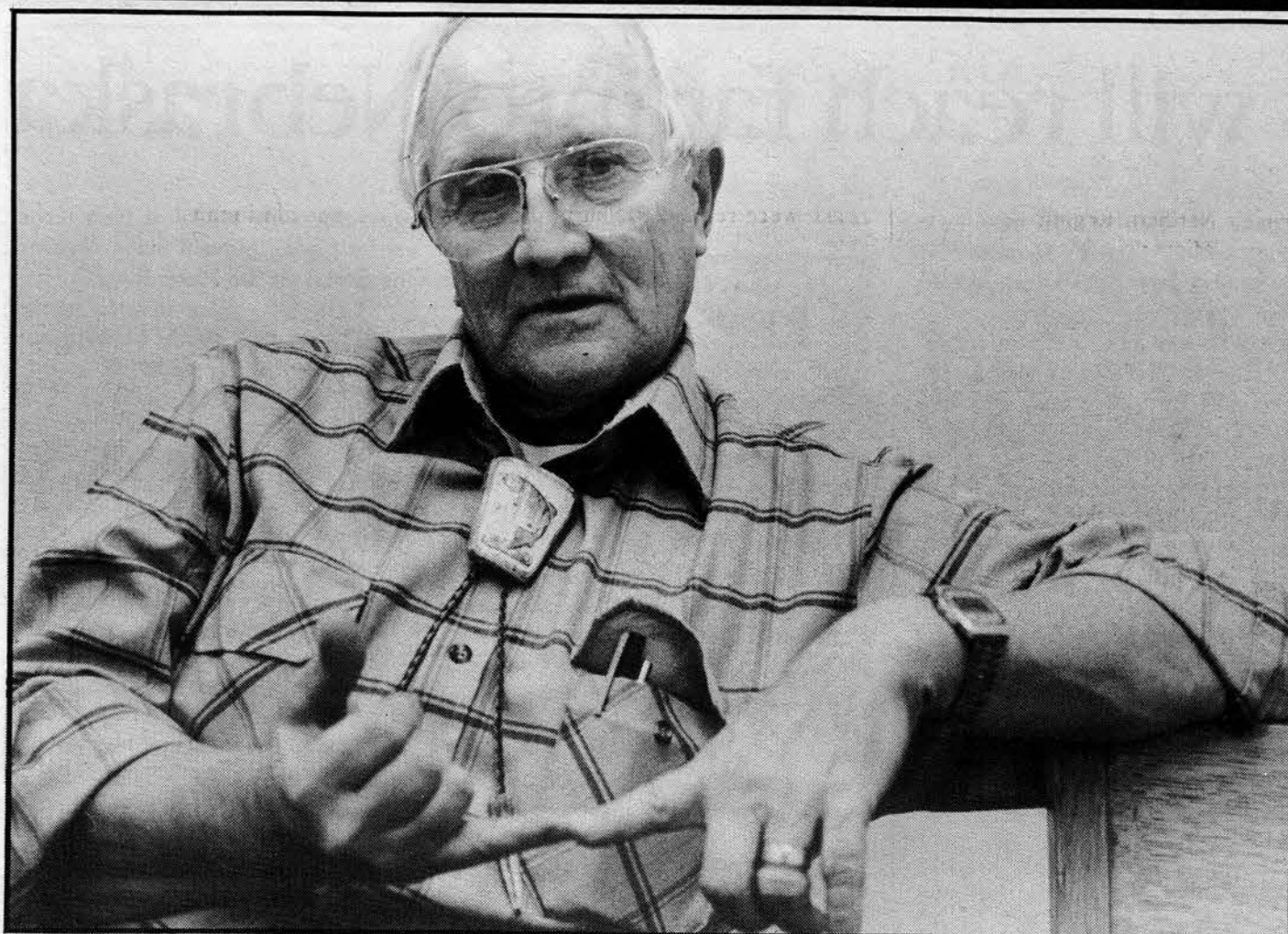
Keedy's decision was in response to a suit filed in 1985 by the North Fork Preservation Association. The

group contended that an EIS was needed to evaluate oil and gas development impacts on wildlife, recreation and property values. Though surrounded by Forest Service land on three sides, and Glacier National Park on the other, much of the land along the North Fork is private.

Keedy cited *Conner v. Burford*, a federal appellate court ruling stating that cumulative effects of development must be considered in leasing and exploration decisions.

The judge said although the *Conner* case involved federal land, its "facts are relevant in this cause of action, as the environmental ecosystems affected do not follow governmental jurisdictional boundaries."

--Bruce Farling



Gene Hawkes

Montana group takes on the gate lockers

As head of Montana's Public Land Access Association, Gene Hawkes isn't concerned much about his critics. He says he's working hard to make sure 13 million acres of public land in Montana stay open to hunters, fishermen and other outdoor recreationists. Those who take him to task say his campaign to build roads to every parcel of public land could have unfortunate environmental consequences.

Because Montana boasts the second largest number of outfitters per acre, Hawkes says, outfitters have become the root of the access problem. Local and out-of-state hunters must compete with landowners and dude ranchers who monopolize big game for wealthy clients.

"It's all a matter of economics," says Hawkes. "There is an unholy alliance made up of anyone who can profit from controlling public access."

Two years ago, Hawkes, a retired Gallatin National Forest supervisor, and a group of Bozeman-area sportsmen decided to fight what they perceived as a decline in access to public lands. They formed the non-profit access group, and went to work reopening or maintaining access to 150,000 acres of public land. The association is now involved in 20 conflicts throughout Montana.

One of Hawkes' critics is John Gatchell, director of the Montana Wilderness Association. Although access to public lands is a significant issue, Gatchell says, at least four prime elk-hunting areas near Helena have been ruined by "too much" public access.

What has been called Hawkes' confrontational manner has also gained him some criticism. Big Timber outfitter Ralph Holman says the group would be more effective without Hawkes because he comes into situations "with his chest out ready to start kicking people in the shins." That aggressive style doesn't help when Hawkes negotiates with a landowner, Holman says.

Another critic is Tom Heintz, a

fifth-generation Montanan and outfitter. He says opening more roads would encourage the timber industry to come in. "There are plenty of ways of getting to most of the public land," he says. "All it takes is a bit of work. It would be ridiculous to drive everywhere," Holman adds.

To Hawkes, the issue is not what happens once someone drives onto Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management land. "I'm concerned about getting to the boundaries," he says. Hawkes says he and other members of the association talk to sportsmen about their legal rights. Lee Fears, a retired outfitter and past president of Montana's Southeast Sportsmen Association, says communities need someone with Hawkes' federal experience to educate people about the legal hoops people have to jump through. He says Hawkes spends half his time telling hunters how to stop landowners from putting a gate across a road or how to petition county judges to make sure a county road is maintained.

The fate of a trail on the Windy Waters Ranch near the small town of Ennis will be his greatest test to date, Hawkes says. The circumstances are typical of what can happen when out-of-town investors buy land, he adds.

Now in court, the case involves successful New York businessman and Hunting World Inc. owner Robert M. Lee, who bought some

2,500 acres bordering the Beaverhead National Forest. Lee has put in a gate across a trail passing through his land that connected the Old Indian Trail with a Montana Power Company road. The Indian Trail gives access to the national forest and a primitive area.

After Hawkes found three witnesses who said the trail had been used for many decades, his group succeeded in getting a restraining order blocking Lee from closing his gate. Hawkes says that the gate gave Lee sole access to 19,000 acres of public land and an elk herd numbering 400.

A spokesman for Lee, foreman Dan Cummings, said Lee is a businessman who manufactures clothing and luggage and is in no way connected with the outfitting business. He says the gate is necessary because vandalism to a tractor eight years ago cost \$2,000.

Cummings also says Lee hunts solely with him and has no interest in leasing his land to outfitters. In addition, says Cummings, if Hawkes' group wants to get to the Beaverhead National Forest, the Old Indian Trail is not the only access to it.

A trial is set for this spring in district court to decide whether Lee can deny access to the trail. The Public Land Access Association is at Box 3902, Bozeman, MT 59772 (406/587-2736).

--Gus Wilmerding

Cisco, Utah, site still in news

It ain't over till it's over. Taking his cue from toxic waste incinerator opponents who claim not to be opposed to other forms of heavy industry, Dean Norris has requested that his Cisco, Utah, land be rezoned from agriculture to heavy industrial and commercial. Norris' Co-West Incineration Corp. now owns 190 acres. On April 22, his son Kevin presented the request to the Grand

County Planning Commission, declining to say what industries or operations might use the land. The planning commission voted to recommend the request be granted, with the exception of hazardous waste disposal, pending the outcome of a referendum election scheduled for Nov. 8. The Grand County Commission will consider the planning commission recommendation on May 17, at 7:30 p.m.

HOTLINE

Where's the money?

Wyoming has initiated a criminal investigation of uncollected oil and gas taxes after disclosures the problem is not confined to Exxon (HCN, 3/28/88) but may be endemic. Kip Crofts, director of Wyoming's Division of Criminal Investigation, says finding out why taxes were not paid is a "monumental task." Crofts says the state is understaffed with auditors and had a "self-reporting system" with no checks on accuracy. He is not sure whether the confusing tax system will be found at fault or whether there was criminal conduct on the part of oil and gas companies. In the meantime, several counties have hired independent auditors to learn how much they have lost in local revenues. The Pinedale Round-up reports Wyoming may have lost as much as \$414 million in uncollected taxes between 1981 and 1985.

Roadless areas spared

"Reprieve" is how conservationists are describing Forest Service Chief Dale Robertson's recent decision to halt new timber sales within 2.5 million roadless acres on national forests in Idaho, Montana and Washington. Nineteen environmental groups had requested the "stay" in new sales on the St. Joe, Coeur d'Alene, and Kaniksu national forests, pending resolution of their 500-plus page appeal. On April 14, Robertson announced the moratorium for roadless areas that had never been logged, but denied a request for a stay in logging of riparian, or stream-side, zones. Timber areas already sold to timber companies may still be logged even if they lie in roadless areas, he said. The Inland Empire Public Lands Council, one of the groups that appealed, says there are 750 million board-feet of public timber already sold but uncut enough to last the timber industry three to four years. The public lands council's John Osborn says that Republican Sen. James McClure's Idaho forest management bill, which conservationists oppose, is not moving in Congress, and that Robertson's stay may "provide a more serious incentive" to industry to support a wilderness bill.

Strychnine use is limited

In a broad ruling under the Endangered Species Act, a federal judge said strychnine may not be used above ground to kill rodents and other animals that destroy crops or livestock, unless the poison could be shown not to affect threatened and endangered species. The Great Falls Tribune says U.S. District Judge Diana Murphy sided with the Sierra Club, Defenders of Wildlife and Friends of Animals and their Environments in a ruling against the Environmental Protection Agency, which had registered strychnine for above-ground use. Around half a million pounds of strychnine-laced bait is used annually, mainly in the West, and is responsible for the documented deaths of five California condors, six peregrine falcons, 15 golden eagles, and 31 bald eagles, in addition to the species intended to be killed. The proscription on use of the poison will likely apply over most of the country, as endangered species range widely.

8-High Country News -- May 9, 1988

Two Forks will reach far into Nebraska

by Barry Noreen

KEARNEY, Neb. -- Sunrises in March are something special along the Platte River in Central Nebraska.

It is in late March that an estimated 500,000 sandhill cranes swoop into the area, using it as a staging area during their annual migration north from their winter homes in Mexico and Texas. At dawn, thousands of the birds flock together in the shallow waters of the Platte River, which meanders through Nebraska, two-feet deep and sometimes 500-yards wide.

At first light, cranes are a-flutter in the water on their stick legs. They take no nourishment from the river, foraging instead in corn stubble fields and looking for insects on land.

For the cranes, sandbars in the middle of the Platte offer only protection from predators. Old sandbars overgrown with trees and bushes won't suffice -- the birds want bare sandbars with a full view, and they like to be separated from the shore by somewhat deeper channels, which protect them like a moat.

Whether on dry land or in the water, sandhills don't allow humans to get closer than about 140 yards. Unknown to the birds, however, there is another, potentially greater threat to their existence some 400 miles upstream: Denver's proposed Two Forks water project.

Two Forks pits the one million wings along the Platte against a little more than a million acre-feet of water storage along the South Fork of the Platte River, about 29 miles southwest of Denver. Two Forks is unique in that it would siphon water from and damage environmental resources in river basins on both sides of the Continental Divide.

Water taken from the Upper Colorado River Basin to the west of the Continental Divide would flow through an existing tunnel into the South Fork of the Platte, and then pour into a dammed canyon. The Denver Water Department estimates that after construction is complete it would take 10 years to fill the reservoir.

A gold medal trout fishery on the Platte would be replaced with a reservoir whose water level would

fluctuate as much as 150 feet in a single season. Those fluctuations, even project supporters admit, would mean Two Forks Reservoir -- at times -- would have dubious recreational value. Boat ramps would have to be 400 feet long and the lake would have to be stocked with trout annually.

Meanwhile, downstream, lower flows in the Platte River could have alarming implications for the sandhill cranes, as well as for a trio of endangered bird species: the whooping crane, the interior least tern and the piping plover. The loss of scouring flows in the springtime would mean less new sediment carried downstream; lower flows would be less efficient in creating the bare sandbars on which the birds depend.

In only a few decades, existing sandbars would become islands, overgrown and unacceptable to the cranes. A U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service study put it this way: "Structural diversity would decrease as open river, islands sandbars, side channels and marshy backwaters become part of the stabilized flood plain. This would be considered a significant change for any reaches of the river system."

No one can predict how the sandhills would react to the substantial loss of their historic feeding grounds in Nebraska. If the birds' migratory route is superimposed on a map, it looks like an hourglass, fanning out to the north and south, with the narrowest of bottlenecks at the Platte, bringing 80 percent of the world's sandhill crane population together each spring and fall.

Sandhills are far from endangered but because they are accompanied by the endangered whoopers, the habitat issue is central to the Two Forks debate.

There are only about 200 whoopers in the world, with the largest flock of about 130 wintering in Texas. Spotting the whoopers is rare -- but there is disagreement over the reasons why.

The Fish and Wildlife Service study, completed in 1987, noted that whoopers have used other migratory routes in the past and concluded that the birds are a rare sight in Nebraska because it is not a preferred route.

Ed Pembleton, director of the Audubon Society's water resource program, said the whoopers' small numbers, not migratory routes, is the reason they are not often spotted. "Just because we don't see them every year doesn't mean they're not here." Whooper sightings, one of the more prized experiences for birders, were confirmed this year.

The Fish and Wildlife Service study, which is part of the Two Forks EIS, found that there would be "no jeopardy" to any of the endangered species. To mitigate the loss of habitat, the report recommended that metro Denver spend \$1 million acquiring land along the river; land that could be cleared and used by sandhills and whoopers.

But the logic of trying to replace lost water resources by clearing 221

acres of land near the river escapes project opponents. Audubon's Ken Strom, who manages a sanctuary near Kearney, called the proposed mitigation spending "a ridiculously small amount of money. You're talking about forever and \$1 million doesn't take you very far."

Although Two Forks is by far the largest project contemplated on the Platte, there are others. The Deer Creek project, planned by Casper, Wyo., would also divert water from the Platte Basin with a dam on the North Platte River. (See accompanying story.)

And for years, a project called Narrows has been on the drawing board for a site near Fort Morgan, Colo., also on the South Platte. In analyzing the cumulative impact of the projects on the Platte, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service found that in a year as dry as 1970 was, a 118-mile stretch of the river from Elm Creek, Neb., to Duncan would be dry during the month of June.

That stretch of the river has the prime crane habitat. Additionally, the loss of fish life in the river would doom the endangered least tern, which depends almost entirely on fish. Increased predation in such dry years also would sharply reduce the numbers of endangered piping plovers, the study found.

However, the Endangered Species Act allows for such indirect impacts to wildlife. And the bureaucracy has some sanitized language for what the layman would call dead birds: "Incidental take."

Incidental take due to Two Forks is supposed to be minimal, but even so, the Fish and Wildlife Service included provisions for the disposition of the birds' remains. This means "proper disposal" of "all

eggs, chicks or adults of least terns and/or piping plovers found dead or abandoned on the Platte River."

About 430 miles upriver, there would be no such parched conditions. Denver itself has plenty of water. But it owns water rights and a physical system that are seen as crucial by Denver's suburbs, which own an 80 percent share of the project.

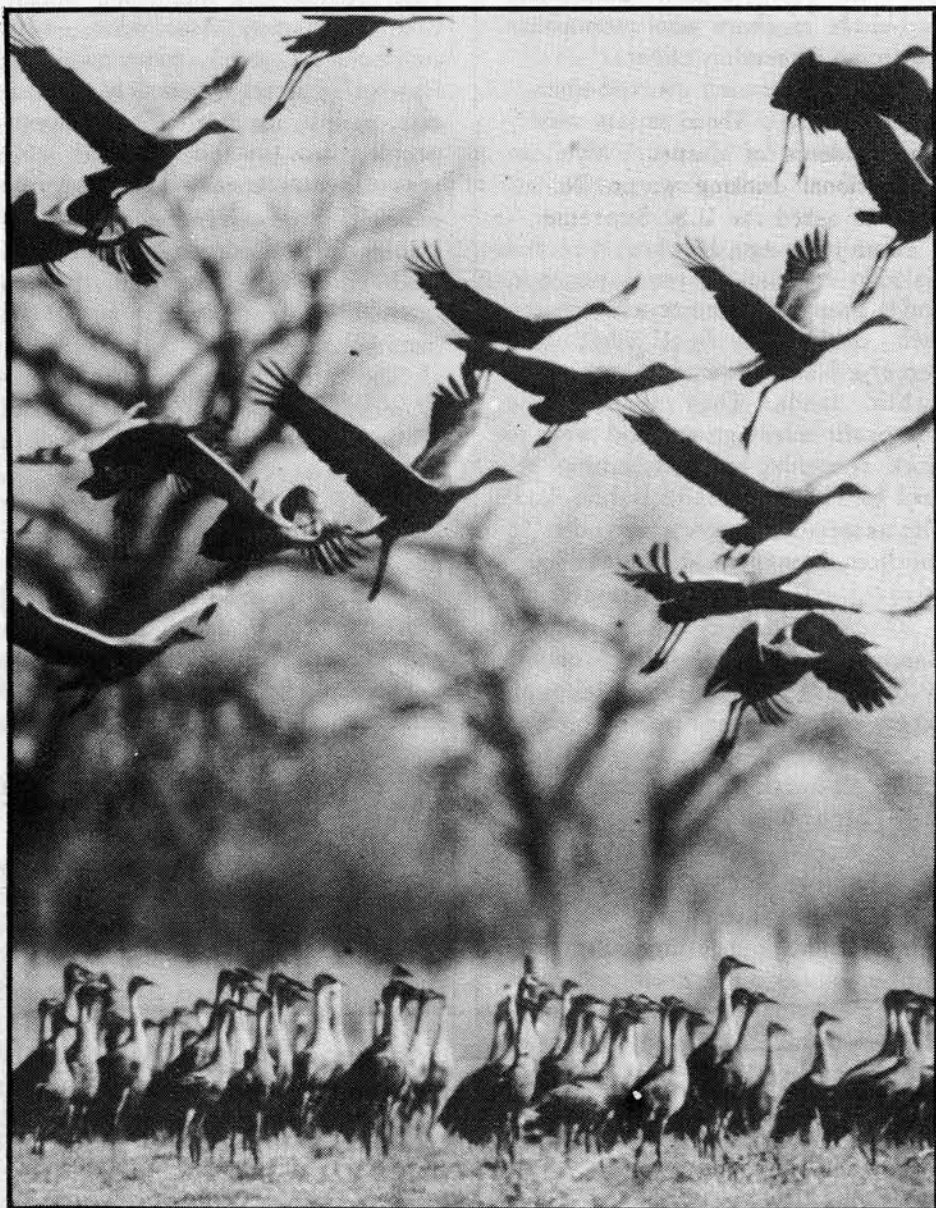
As project manager for Two Forks, the Denver Water Department's Steve Work has steered it through some troubled times, including a rejection of the environmental impact study by the Environmental Protection Agency in 1987. The revised EIS was released in March, and Work has shepherded the document through a series of volatile public meetings at which the projects and everyone associated with it have been vilified.

Work said the effect of the project on crane habitat will be "negligible." He criticized the use of the 1970 dry-year example, calling it "a piling on and compounding of worst-case scenarios."

Denver has no voice in the future of the Narrows project, but Work discounted the chances it ever will be built. Two Forks foes point out that Two Forks was considered dead and buried in 1972, when it was vetoed by Colorado Gov. John Vanderhoof.

Work acknowledged that even if Two Forks is built, it would not put an end to metro Denver's pursuit of West Slope water. And because water imported from one basin to another in Colorado can be used "to extinction," Two Forks would lower the level of the South Platte in the future, when Denver and its suburbs

David Denney



Cranes take wing

David Denney



Sand-hill cranes roosting on a sandbar in Nebraska

seek exchange decrees in water court, Work confirmed.

Those on both sides of the debate agree that the Platte now has only about 30 percent of its historic flow and that there is evidence the river once ran a mile wide in some stretches in Nebraska.

After all the administrative red tape and the considerable fire and

brimstone of the public meetings, the de-watering of the Platte ultimately will be left in the hands of one man -- Colorado Gov. Roy Romer. The Corps of Engineers has said it will not approve a construction permit over the objection of a governor.

In the end, the Two Forks saga could defy the stereotype that Republicans have less environmental

consciousness than Democrats. It was the Republican John Vanderhoof (also the last West Slope resident to be governor) who vetoed Two Forks 16 years ago. Dam opponents fear that it could be Romer, the Democrat elected on an economic development platform, who will ultimately give Two Forks a green light.

Romer has been noncommittal so

far, waiting for the public comment period on the EIS to run its course on May 25.

□

Barry Noreen is a reporter in Colorado Springs for the *Gazette-Telegraph*.

Casper, Wyoming, is attempting to build a mini-Two Forks

While most eyes are fixed on the huge bite Colorado's Two Forks would take out of the Platte River, Wyoming and Nebraska are feuding over a much smaller nick -- Deer Creek Reservoir. The 66,000 acre-foot dam would deplete the Platte River to supply the 57,000 residents of Casper, Wyo., with additional drinking water. Nebraska has asked the U.S. Supreme Court to stop the dam.

Legally, the case is narrow and straightforward: Does a 1945 decision by the U.S. Supreme Court apportioning the Platte between Wyoming and Nebraska allow Wyoming to build Deer Creek? Wyoming says yes; Nebraska says no.

As with Two Forks, Deer Creek raises issues that go beyond water rights. For conservationists, the issue is the endangered whooping crane's habitat on the Platte in central Nebraska. And, as with Two Forks, conservationists say the dam is unnecessary because Casper has alternative water supplies.

Carse Postmueller, the Audubon Society's Platte River coordinator, says the Platte has already lost 70 percent of its historic flow and that another dam is unnecessary. She says Casper could buy agricultural water rights from farmers, release water from a series of Bureau of Reclamation reservoirs upriver, or buy an abandoned Texaco refinery and its accompanying water rights.

As of now, these issues are not on the legal table. A special master who is hearing the case has rejected two attempts to broaden it. Nebraska

initially based its case only on the 1945 court decision. Later, its attorneys attempted to widen the case to consider the Endangered Species Act. The special master rejected that issue. Soon afterwards he also refused to allow environmental groups to intervene in the case, although he did grant them "friends of the court" status, or *amici curiae*.

In the West, where federal intervention in water matters through such laws as the Endangered Species Act is abhorred, Nebraska's officials have gone to some lengths to disassociate themselves from environmental concerns.

Mike Jess, director of Nebraska's Department of Water Resources, said, "Nebraska officials didn't all of a sudden jump into bed" with conservation groups.

Jess said he cares only about the little guys -- the irrigating farmers. He said Nebraska's fear is that Deer Creek and other depletions of the Platte River will eventually trigger enforcement of the Endangered Species Act, and that it will be Nebraska irrigators whose water will be taken to save the cranes.

"Where is the fairness?" he asked. "Farmers and irrigators in Nebraska and Wyoming seem to have to squeeze some water out of their operations to maintain habitat while Two Forks and Deer Creek just have to buy some land."

Because the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service issued "no jeopardy" opinions for Deer Creek and Two Forks, endangered species are not an immediate issue. With both

dams, project sponsors will have to buy land for whooping crane habitat but will not have to provide water -- at least for now.

Depletions by the proposed reservoirs could also be aggravated in the 1990s by an agricultural turn-around. David Bowman, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Platte River coordinator, said the recent comeback of whooping cranes is due to higher water flows in the Platte. He speculates those higher flows may be caused "in part by a downturn in the farm economy." Fewer crops are being planted, and less water is removed for irrigation. If the farm economy comes back, water use will increase, he said.

Although the special master will not consider the Endangered Species Act, wildlife and habitat concerns can be raised by the environmental groups as friends of the court. John VanDerwalker, executive director of the Platte River Whooping Crane Habitat Maintenance Trust, explained that National Audubon and others "can file briefs and participate as much as anyone else in the case; however, they are denied the right to appeal."

He said Audubon's role is to present scientific information. The groups believe the Fish and Wildlife Service abdicated its responsibilities under the Endangered Species Act when it ruled that Deer Creek wouldn't harm whooping cranes and their habitat. VanDerwalker said its "no jeopardy" opinion was a departure from previous policies and that he "doesn't believe their water

modelling was based on good solid information." Nor does VanDerwalker trust the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' environmental impact statement. He said, "The corps won't reveal what water model they used or how they conducted their tests. I believe their methods and information are inadequate." According to the corps' statement, Deer Creek would deplete the Platte by 6,400 to 9,600 acre-feet of water annually.

By next month, the corps will have decided if it will issue Deer Creek a permit. VanDerwalker said if the permit is issued, it is likely conservation groups will seek an injunction and take the agency to court.

Meanwhile, as Nebraska and Wyoming battle in court, the USFWS, Bureau of Reclamation, several conservation groups, state water groups, and the governments of Wyoming, Colorado, and Nebraska have gotten together to do a joint federal-state study on managing the Platte. But lawyers for both Nebraska and Wyoming have expressed dissatisfaction about the length of the study. It may not be available until next year. The study won't have an impact on the water rights lawsuit now before the Supreme Court, but the USFWS says it could be helpful in the future to endangered species.

--Tara Lumpkin,
Ed Marston

10-High Country News -- May 9, 1988

Dam opponents boil over at Conifer hearing

by Barry Noreen

Some came in flannel shirts and blue jeans, some in dresses and pearl necklaces. There were some who could not contain their anger and a couple who had to fight back tears. But there was also much laughter and cheering and nearly total unity.

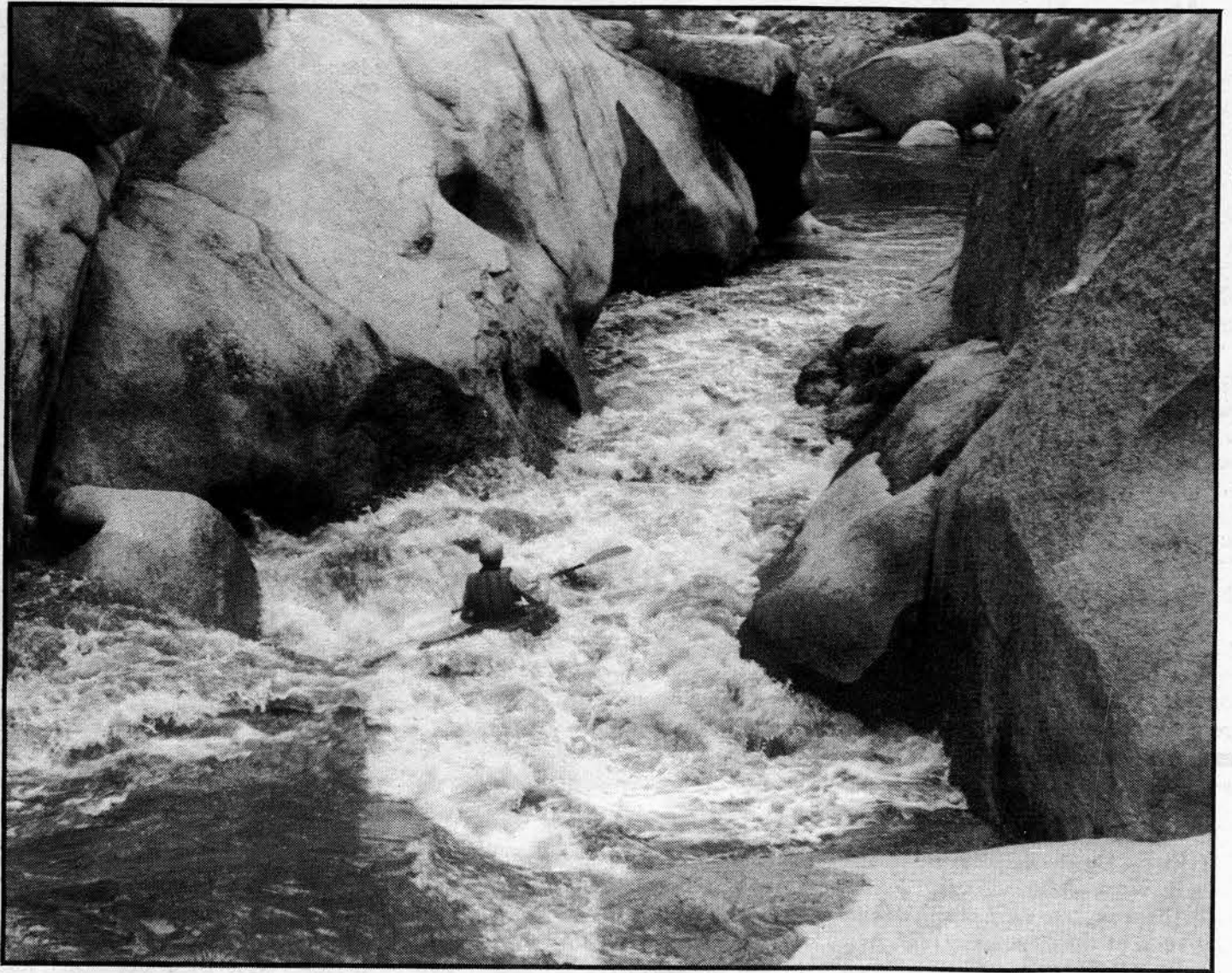
Standing-room-only crowds; people who traveled more than 50 miles for the privilege of waiting for hours, just so they could summarize their feelings in a three-minute address -- all generated by a collective anger at metropolitan Denver's proposed Two Forks water project.

Like an off-Broadway production opening in a small town before heading for the big city, hearings on the Two Forks environmental impact statement began in an elementary school gymnasium in the small town about 15 miles southwest of Denver.

Two Forks Reservoir would flood much of the South Platte River canyon near Conifer, wiping out 130 homes in the process. The canyon is widely used by Front Range fishermen and kayakers, but is also the backyard for Conifer and nearby Evergreen.

"No way can I justify destruction of the South Platte River for green lawns in metropolitan Denver," said Pamela Killebrew of Evergreen, whose next words were drowned out by a resounding standing ovation.

It was the first of many such cheers. In the face of the audience response, a panel consisting of representatives from the Bureau of Land Management, the Army Corps of Engineers, and the U.S. Forest Service, stoically sat in the glare of television cameras.



Kayaking the Platte River in eastern Colorado

Most of those who signed up to testify at the hearings appeared unaccustomed to protest, or if they were, it had been years since they stood up to be counted. "I've allowed some of my naive '60s idealism to permit me to speak tonight," said Bob McBride of Conifer, "and I'm nervous as hell."

McBride wept as he told the panel that Two Forks will alter the Platte "all the way down to the bird sanctuaries in Nebraska."

Carl Kaiser, retired Army officer from Evergreen, limped to the microphone with a cane, which he shook angrily as he decried a consciousness that has brought grav-

el pits, microwave towers with night lights and larger-than-life statues to the Front Range foothills. He said Two Forks is "cruel and sadistic and it's absolutely unacceptable from any moral standpoint. Now that's grassroots feeling. I don't think you can mitigate for that."

The few Two Forks supporters brave enough to speak were booed. Jim Ogilvie, a retired water engineer for the Bureau of Reclamation who listed the Green Mountain Reservoir and the Frying Pan-Arkansas project among his accomplishments, said there would have been no opposition to the dam if it had been proposed before the rise of the environmental

movement in the late 1960s. "The biggest problem with the 1.1 million acre-foot Two Forks is that it wasn't built soon enough."

Murmurs during Ogilvie's testimony boiled over into hissing and booing when he was finished.

Mildred Kaiser of Evergreen lampooned the lake to be created by the dam, citing passages of the EIS which acknowledge that there would be massive fluctuations of the lake's water level during the summer. "It's going to be 4,500 acres of mud flats, trash and dead fish. We are being sold a bill of goods. Frankly, my dear, I don't want a dam."

(Continued on page 11)

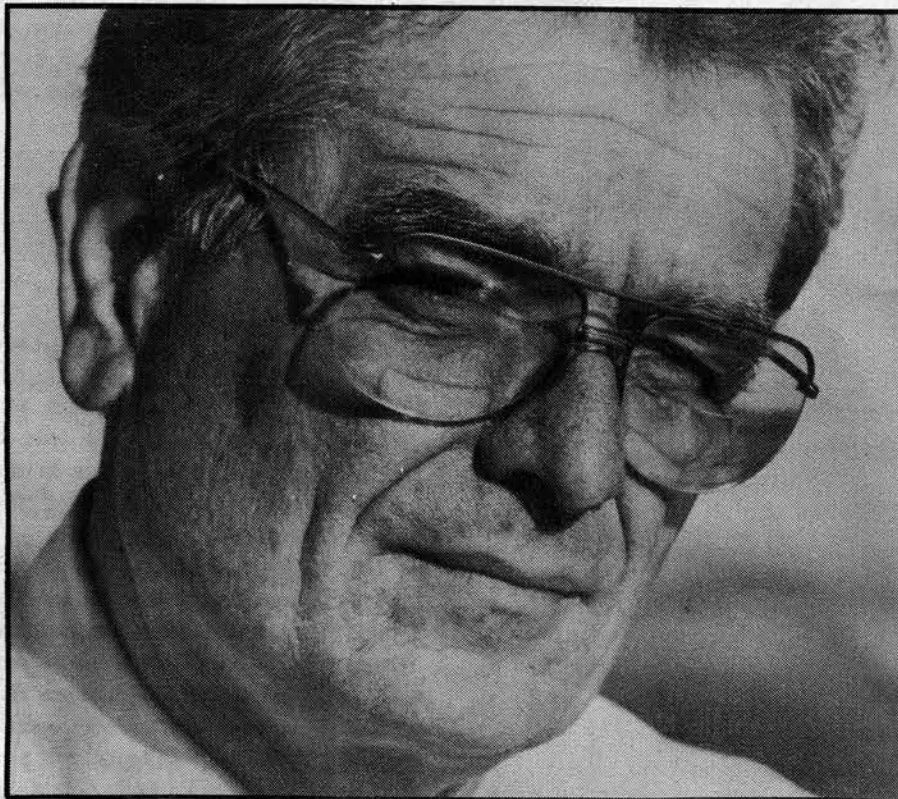
'Let it flow,' Romer is told at an impromptu gathering

In one of the more incongruous gatherings the Two Forks Dam controversy has spawned, Colorado Gov. Roy Romer met for an hour April 24 with about 75 Earth First!ers on a park lawn in Denver.

The meeting wasn't planned. After the crowd chanted "Hell no, let it flow!" and "Romer off the fence" outside the governor's mansion, Romer walked up, saying he had been at church where he had preached about Two Forks. "You should have been there," he told the crowd.

At a park across the street from the mansion, the governor outlined the steps he was considering before making a decision on the issue. The steps include assessing the need for the water and whether that need could be met without a dam at Two Forks. Romer also said he intended to hike the South Platte canyon twice before making his decision and would raft it if he had time.

Earth First!ers praised his pledge to see the canyon and said that



Colorado Gov. Roy Romer

conservation would eliminate the need for Two Forks or substitute dams suggested by the state's Environmental Caucus. They said Denver's ubiquitous Kentucky blue grass could be painlessly replaced with native blue grama grass to save water. "I don't see tourists taking pictures of Aurora lawns," said Resa Gordon. The group said wildlife mitigation is a fallacy, and David Lucas of Boulder presented Romer with over 3,000 signatures on a petition opposing Two Forks.

Romer said that while growth was not always best, he thought 1 to 1.25 percent growth was necessary to avoid hardship in the metroplex. He said he wanted the Denver Water Board and the environmental community to compromise on water for Denver. But Earth First!, which regards environmental compromise as capitulation, seems as likely to do that as Romer is to sit in front of a bulldozer.

--Michael J. Robinson

Hearings...

(Continued from page 10)

When the hearings moved to Denver April 15, the atmosphere was more formal, but the ratio of opponents and supporters of the project was about the same. Bob Free, mayor of Denver suburb Arvada, received an unintended standing ovation when he told the panel, "Without Two Forks, we're going to have a major problem. Without the water, the developers aren't going to come here at all."

One witness, quoting Edward Abbey, said the project backers keep their hearts in safe deposit boxes and are hypnotized by their pocket calculators. But by keeping faith with nature and spending time in the wilds, he said, "You'll outlive the bastards."

Moments later, National Wildlife Federation President Jay Hair added: "To paraphrase a previous speaker, we will not only outlive the bastards, we will out-sue them. This shouldn't be taken as an idle threat, but as a responsible promise."

Other officers of national environmental groups also flew to Denver from the East Coast for the hearings. Kent Olsen, president of American Rivers Inc., took the Forest Service to task for failing to consider the South Platte as a recreational river under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

Recreational river status would preclude construction of any dams along the river. Olsen noted that the South Platte was identified twice by other federal agencies in the '70s as a candidate for potential inclusion in the national rivers inventory.

On the eve of the hearings, whistleblowers told the *Rocky Mountain News*, a Denver daily, that U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Regional Director Galen Buterbaugh told government biologists that their Two Forks report concerning project impacts to endangered species would be negligible -- before their research even began.

Using the published report as ammunition, National Audubon Society President Peter Berle said the corps should investigate whether "the Endangered Species Act has

been violated and the service has made a mockery of the process." The Audubon Society is concerned about the potential loss of sandhill and whooping crane habitat along the Platte River in Nebraska, where reduced flows are expected because of Two Forks.

Marcia Hughes, attorney for the 42 Denver metropolitan entities that hold an 80 percent interest in Two Forks, lambasted Berle and his flock. "They haven't come up with any data; they're just going around wearing t-shirts."

After two meetings in Denver April 15, the EIS hearings were bound for equally partisan audiences in Frisco and Grand Junction on the West Slope. Two Forks supporters expecting a hostile reception weren't disappointed, but perhaps the biggest surprise of the hearings process came when the EIS show returned to Denver for a third meeting, at the Regency Hotel April 23.

For the first time, supporters of the project -- including several elected officials -- outnumbered opponents. But what might have been the lone triumph for Two Forks

backers was transformed into a stunning setback when Denver Mayor Federico Pena stepped to the podium to say a variety of conservation measures and alternative water projects suggested by the Colorado Environmental Caucus should be studied before Two Forks goes forward.

Pena's remarks hardly amounted to a ringing denunciation of the project, but the mayor could have bypassed the hearings completely, and chose not to do so. Rocky Smith, spokesman for the Colorado Environmental Coalition, later called Pena's appearance "one more lessening of the previously united front among elected officials" from the Denver area.

The Environmental Defense Fund's Dan Luecke said, "What I would say he did was keep the door open."

The key to that door is in the hands of Gov. Roy Romer, who has remained noncommittal about the project. But Luecke and other observers believe Pena's stand will make it harder for the governor to give the project a blanket approval.

Two Forks proposal has roused western Colorado

Speakers included ranchers, farmers, environmentalists, loggers, rafters, retirees, and business and political leaders, all unified on one point: wasting water is sacrilege in the arid West, and Denver is guilty of that waste.

John Baldus, vice-president of the Western Colorado Congress, said, "It is an outrage to ask western Coloradans to sacrifice present and future benefits of abundant clean water ... simply to help metro Denver citizens waste more water."

Groundwater hydrologist Lorrie Cahn said, "I am appalled by the amount of water used by the people of Denver." The environmental impact study estimates current water use is 187 gallons per person per day. Silver-haired residents far outnumbered young people at the meeting, and they let the corps know what Western water is worth.

"Having grown up on a ranch without running water, I can assure you I know the value of water," said one rancher. Other native western Coloradans told of hauling water by

hand or truck and raising a family of eight on less than 100 gallons a day. The group demanded water meters and conservation measures in Denver before building more water projects.

Others protested that while Denver secured water for its future, the West Slope would be left with pollution and a salty river. A Grand Junction resident said building Two Forks to capture excess spring runoff at the headwaters was analogous to "skimming cream off the top of the barrel and leaving the dregs for the rest of us."

Tim Carlson, a water engineer, noted that Two Forks would increase the salt load in the Colorado River by 101,000 tons per year. He said the corps study spent only 10 pages on salinity and dismissed the issue as insignificant. Based on the Bureau of Reclamation's ongoing Colorado River Salinity Control Project, Carlson estimated that removing Two Forks' salt load would cost over \$56 million. "That," he said, "is not insignificant."

Fruita rancher Ruth Hutchins

then raised that figure to \$256 million, saying that was the price the Bureau of Reclamation estimated it would have to pay to remove nearly the same amount of salt from Grand Valley irrigation projects.

William Ela, a board member of the Clifton Water District, said if Two Forks is built, the district's already low-quality water will become unusable: "This will totally destroy our water supply. We'll lose our entire investment."

Joining the complaints on salinity were the cities of Grand Junction and Fruita, the Mesa County and Rio Blanco county commissioners, the Mesa County Water Association, the city councils of Silt and Glenwood Springs, among others.

Henry Tiegan, a staff attorney for the Denver Water Board, was the sole speaker for the project. He said he came to Grand Junction because dam sponsors knew salinity would come under fire on the West Slope. Tiegan said the project was designed

(Continued on page 12)

by Steve Hinchman

Two Forks Dam has rural Coloradans up in arms. Denver's existing water diversions already take a good share of the flow of western Colorado rivers to the Front Range, and hundreds of angry residents showed up at public hearings to tell Denver "no more."

"The supporters of Two Forks are putting the profits of Eastern Slope land developers before the health and economic viability of the people of western Colorado," Grand Junction resident Rollin Bitting told a cheering full house in Grand Junction April 16 at the first of three West Slope hearings.

More than 60 people testified against the dam proposal before the Army Corps of Engineers and other officials at the four-hour hearing. Some had traveled 150 miles or more to be there.

"I've never seen the unity on the West Slope regarding any issue like I've seen today. We have unity that is unprecedented in West Slope politics," said Joe Skinner of the Mesa County Water Association.

Actually, the unity was not total. The Colorado River Water Conservation District -- an entity supported by taxes levied on 15 West Slope counties -- has cut its own deal with the Front Range. The arrangement essentially provides the river district with Denver money to build a reservoir on the West Slope. A big part of the agreement requires river district neutrality, even though the district is the legal entity charged with protecting West Slope water.



John Baldus testifies at the Two Forks hearing in Grand Junction, Colorado

12-High Country News --May 9, 1988

Rousing rural Colorado...

(Continued from page 11)

only to take water in the spring and early summer, when salt levels were at their lowest, and that the Corps had addressed salinity and found it insignificant. The crowd responded with laughter and disbelief.

Other speakers criticized the project for not only taking the region's water but also for harming the West Slope's chances for survival in a hard-hit economy. "Pressure on water over here is getting extreme," said Paonia blacksmith Bill Brunner. "All the growth in the state doesn't have to be in Denver."

Randy Corey, representing Silt and Glenwood Springs, also warned against Denver's plans for future growth.

"Unlimited growth must not be allowed to destroy the beauty of this state."

Carol Graham of Fruita brought down the house with her comment: "People do not come to visit Colorado to see big cities covered by clouds of brown smog and carpeted by acres of lush lawns and aqua blue swimming pools. They can see that at home in Detroit, Chicago or Pittsburgh."

Representatives of commercial rafting companies said without water the rivers and the state's rafting economy would dry up, and so would many small mountain towns.

Rebecca Frank, a member of the Colorado Wildlife Commission who said she was speaking for only herself, said the corps did not address cumulative impacts from the project on several species of endangered fish in the Colorado River.

Two members of the radical environmental group Earth First!, saying they represented endangered species and wild rivers that could not be present at the meeting, pledged to commit civil disobedience if the dam were built.

Toward the end, Mesa County Democratic Party members who had just finished their party caucus, drifted in to tell the corps that all 329 delegates voted unanimously to oppose the Two forks project.

The beating the Denver Water Board and the Metropolitan Water Providers took in Grand Junction was repeated at later hearings in Grand and Summit counties.

The two counties are located at the headwaters of the Colorado River where Denver wants to build new collection systems. Water would then flow through a tunnel under the Continental Divide to fill the Two Forks Reservoir.

Grand County, which would host the Williams Fork collection system, lies at the top of the watershed, but has more water rationing than Denver, with some of the county's streams reduced to mud puddles every summer when the Denver Water Department's canals divert water to city residents.

More than 280 people packed an April 18 hearing at the SilverCreek Resort near Granby. Fifty spoke, all against the project. Speakers criticized the Two Forks project from

David J. Cross



"Scraggyview" on the South Platte River would be flooded by the Two Forks Dam

several angles, with many saying that the area depends on fishing, rafting and hunting, which would dry up along with its rivers.

Outside of the meeting hung a banner reading, "Damn the DWB (Denver Water Board) Instead." When the supervisor of a nearby national forest asked for a show of hands of people opposed to Two Forks, the entire crowd jumped to its feet with whistles and catcalls.

There was a repeat performance the next day in Summit County, when 250 people jammed the Holiday Inn in Frisco. However, much of the comment there was directed not only at the Denver Water Board, but also at the four speakers who supported the Two Forks Dam.

Summit County Commissioner Don Peterson, Dillon Mayor Flo Raitano and Frisco Administrator Carl Stephanie all supported the project based on a 1985 agreement with the Denver Water Board. In that agreement, Denver promised to keep levels in Dillon Reservoir stable and pay mitigation costs. In return, Summit County would allow Denver access to water upstream of the reservoir and support Two Forks.

Critics said the three government entities had sold out the rest of the county and Western Slope. Trout Unlimited President and Frisco resident Nick Doperalski said, "If Dillon and Summit County put one more layer of pink on their rose-colored glasses they are going to go blind," reported the Summit County Journal. Doperalski said the agreement protects the lake but not snow-making needs or flows and water quality in the Blue River.

Others said no agreement could ever replace the Blue River once it was lost, and that they hoped Denver would choke on the water it was stealing.

The momentum of generations

Dan Luecke, a hydrologist with the Environmental Defense Fund in Boulder, Colo., who has been working on Two Forks for most of this decade, says the strong opposition to Two Forks is a reaction to the Denver Water Department's rigid adherence to a decades-old plan.

The agency, he says, remains committed to a large reservoir on the South Platte River even though Denver no longer needs the water the reservoir would yield. "We're dealing here with the momentum of generations."

Denver Mayor Federico Pena recognized from his first election five years ago that the department needed change, and he has appointed new board members with that goal in mind. But Luecke says, "Pena and his original appointees didn't realize how hard it would be to get control of the department." In the end, Luecke says, the board has come to get its information from the agency it sets policy for. As a result, it is marching in the agency's traditional direction.

But the Pena board's acquiescence to Two Forks, Luecke says, has not carried Pena with it. According to Luecke, Pena's testimony at an Army Corps hearing in Denver "endorsed the Environmental Caucus proposal" for conservation and other alternatives to Two Forks.

Luecke says the Denver hearing was the only one dominated by Two Forks proponents. "But that fact never made it to the papers" because of Pena's statement. "It seems to me that Pena and (Denver Water Board President Monte) Pascoe parted company on Two Forks. Pena opened his testimony with an en-

dorsement of the Environmental Caucus position."

The Denver Water Board, led by Pascoe, has said Two Forks is a path toward Denver metro cooperation. Luecke agrees that the Denver area needs to cooperate, but he says that permitting and building Two Forks won't do it.

"Denver keeps data on who comes to the emergency room at Denver General Hospital. They come from all over the metro area -- often without insurance. But only Aurora will help pay for Denver General. The other suburbs figure: We're facing our own financial problems. Why help solve Denver's problems? 'People don't like to cooperate here. There is no order. There is no planning. There is often a mean-spirited approach to government.'"

At the moment, predicted Luecke April 27, "I think there's less than a 50-50 chance the governor (Roy Romer) will endorse a Two Forks permit." The reasons are several: "It's a two-bit mitigation plan, the Mayor of Denver admits there's no need for it, and the Two Forks opposition has become a political movement. If Two Forks is permitted, that movement will grow. Officials in Denver and the suburbs will be defeated on the basis of Two Forks."

Luecke, who has been working on Two Forks with the Environmental Caucus coalition, says the group was surprised by the resistance to the project.

"I didn't think it was going to be this strong, this broad-based, this articulate. We'd done a lot of work, but we can't take the credit for the size and strength of the turnout."

--Ed Marston

ESSAY

In one way or another

Two Forks will unite Colorado

by Ed Marston

When Federico Pena first ran for mayor of Denver five years ago, his slogan was: Imagine a great city. Today, Pena and other leaders of the Denver metro area have a new task: To imagine a city at all.

Led by attorney Monte Pascoe, the metro area has attempted, since Pena's election, to create a city through the only governing tool the West has ever had: water.

During this period, an intense effort has been made to reshape the sprawling, brown-clouded, transit-less Front Range into a cohesive unit through the use of Denver's water system and the proposed \$1 billion Two Forks Reservoir. The result of the effort remains to be seen. But for the moment, it appears that water may no longer be the tool of choice for taking Colorado into the 21st century.

Those who live outside of this peculiar region probably think Westerners are kidding when they say water is everything. Two Forks proves that they are not kidding. Over the past five years, Two Forks has occupied center stage in Colorado. About \$37 million in public money has been spent on an environmental impact statement that looks at everything but the dam's astrological sign. Top officials -- governors, congressional delegations, Interior Department functionaries -- have been involved at every time-consuming, tedious step of the way.

The cliché is that things happen in the U.S. only when a crisis is at hand. Yet massive, expensive attention has been paid to Two Forks at a time when the main trouble in Colorado has been a surplus of water.

While there has been no drought, there is another crisis -- the economic one gripping Colorado and the rest of the West. Denver's office buildings are about 25 percent empty. Denver newspapers contain pages of fine-print listings for repossessed HUD homes.

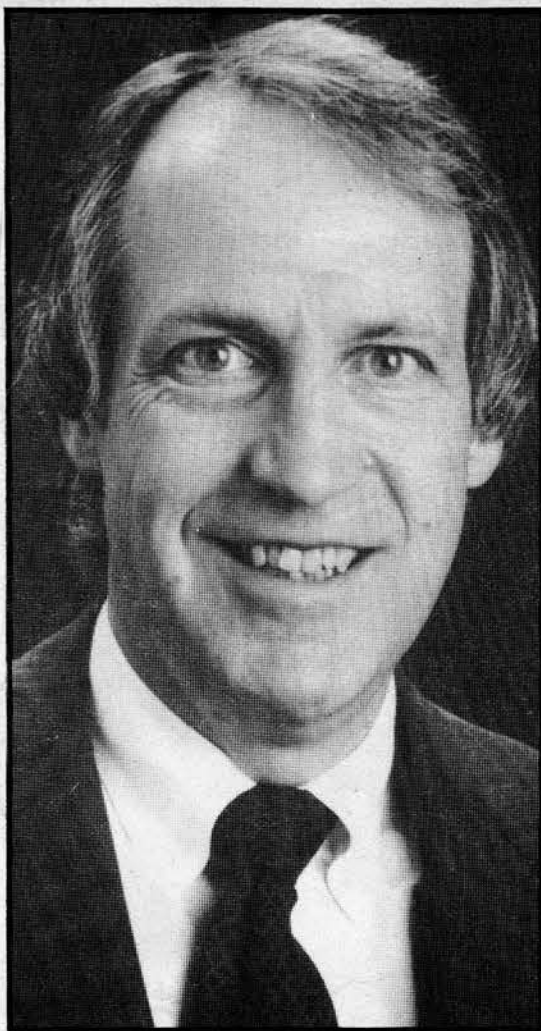
It is hard to argue that this is a temporary setback. The yeast that has made the Front Range rise since the end of World War II seems to have run out of gas. Denver may look like the center of a metro area, but it has never transcended its rural roots. It has thrived on agriculture and energy and mineral extraction in the rural multi-state region around it, as well as on water development and other methods of pumping federal dollars into the region.

These economies are not dead, but they are no longer expanding. If Denver metro is to fill itself up again, and then begin to grow, it needs a different vision than that of BTUs and federal pork.

Just look at who is leading the charge for Two Forks. It is not industrialists or entrepreneurs worried that their workers will have no housing or that their factories will run dry. The Two Forks effort is led mainly by developers -- people who apparently believe residential and commercial construction is economic development. They appear to have adapted to the suburbs that old plains saying: Rain follows the plow.

Moreover, Denver metro is at war with its one bright, sustainable economy: recreation and retirement, or R'n R. That economy depends on well-watered mountains west of Denver, but for decades Denver and its suburbs have been dewatering those mountains, drying up ranches and mountain streams. Two Forks continues the trend.

Given this, the fact that Two Forks is a major Front Range priority needs some explaining. It may be that we will someday understand that the Denver area's leaders are incredibly far-seeing and capable. An ordinary leadership, one not so far-seeing, would worry about shifting the economic base, cleaning up the air, getting the sprawl under control, and combining or at least coordinating the hundreds of individual government units. But Denver leaders, seeing beyond those problems, imagine a still greater



Monte Pascoe, head of the Denver Water Board

city, or at least a larger one, and worry about watering it.

The trouble with the theory that the metro leaders may be seeing farther than the rest of us is a fact that has emerged from the \$37 million EIS: Physically, the metro area already has enough water to meet its needs well into the 21st century. The Environmental Caucus, the group that has played the role of technological-statistical truth squad within this EIS process, has shown that the water is already there, on the Front Range -- underground, in farmers' ditches, as wasted municipal water, and in the reservoirs of nearby cities that have oversupplied themselves with drinking water.

Why, then, given available water and serious problems confronting the metro area, have the best and the brightest on all sides of the development question focused almost exclusively on Two Forks?

The answer has to do with how the West is governed, with what is possible and impossible in this arid region in the closing years of the 20th century. From the outside, to a casual observer, Two Forks is inexplicable. From the inside, Two Forks is the only solution to the Denver metro area's, and the West's, dilemma that existing leadership can conceive of. Understand Two Forks, and understand the West.

Denver is a core city, held tight by (once) expanding suburbs. The city and county of Denver is locked up by the Poundstone Amendment, which forbids it from annexing land. So the center of the Denver metro area has been immobilized by its neighbors, and appears to be stuck at 500,000 people.

But because of its expansionist, yeasty past, Denver still provides many of the services needed by the sprawling suburbs around it. The major service, from a Two Forks perspective, is a water system that stretches beneath the Continental Divide and has tendrils throughout the metro area. The value of this concrete system to the metro area is heightened by the experience and expertise of the Denver Water Department, the political savvy of the governing Denver Water Board, and by yet undeveloped water rights which reach far into western

Colorado. The Denver water system supplies many suburbanites today, and it has the potential to supply many more in the future.

Denver has other legacies from the days when it ruled the Front Range: Denver General Hospital, a good central library, several museums, welfare and charitable operations, as well as the fear and distrust of its suburbs, which have felt eclipsed and even bullied for decades.

Denver complains that the suburbs are getting a free ride by taking advantage of its services. But the suburbs are bitter against the city on many counts, including that of water. Denver, which has far more water than it can use, sells taps to the suburbs, but always with the proviso that it may shut off the supply of new water at any time. The city maintains that, despite its surplus and lack of growth, it will someday need a considerable amount of water. The suburbs resent the short leash they are held on -- they are sure they will be the ones to grow -- and some say that Denver overcharges them for the water it does sell.

In the humid East, meaningful negotiations might have started in the metro area when Denver closed its library, which served the state, to all but its residents. Or when worsening air pollution came to be seen as a metro-wide problem that only united action could solve.

But this being the West, Denver and 42 suburban entities -- some of them counties, some of them cities, and some of them water companies -- could come together in a substantive way only to build a \$1 billion reservoir which Denver does not need, and which the suburbs probably don't need either.

The metro-wide South Platte participation agreement brought metro Denver together to share a South Platte River storage facility. In addition to contracting for 20 percent of the space in the reservoir, Denver became point man on the project and has run the EIS process on behalf of the other entities, known collectively as the Water Providers.

Led by Denver Water Board member and former mayoral candidate Monte Pascoe, Denver's strategy was to use the ornate, expensive, time-consuming Two Forks process to draw the suburbs into metro-wide cooperation against the suburbs' will.

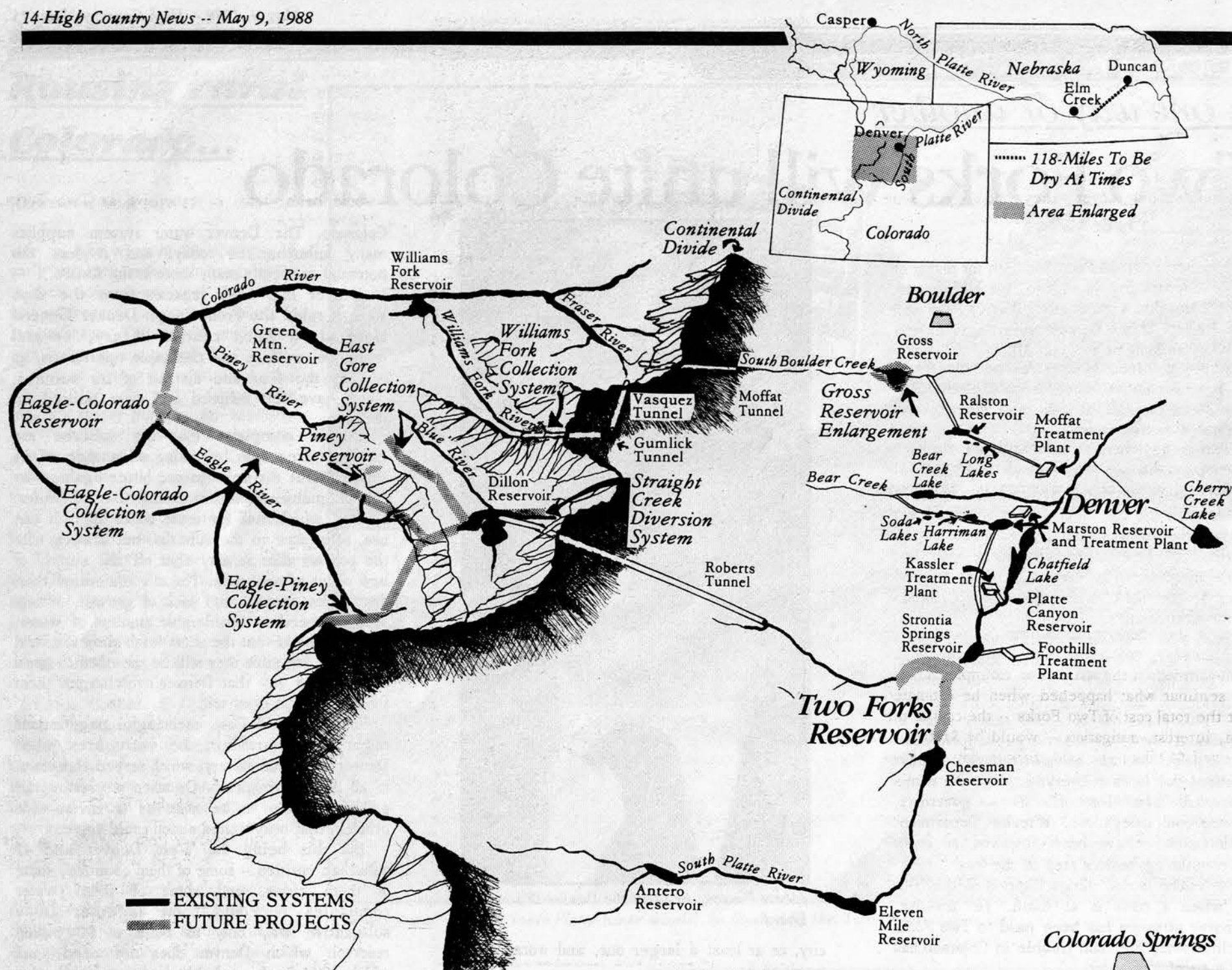
It is not hard to guess that there must have been a certain amount of cynicism, and perhaps some desperation, on both sides of this deal. Denver would have been less intent on building a reservoir -- and might even have guessed that the study would lead to a conclusion that none was needed. The Water Providers would have gone into it totally uninterested in helping to fund the Denver hospital and other welfare and cultural facilities, but very enthusiastic about the new reservoir the developers told them was necessary.

Denver, it seemed, thought that through the Two Forks process, metro cooperation would be achieved. Denver has the most far-seeing leadership in Colorado, and it apparently concluded that any loss of its dominance over water supplies would be made up for by a wider sharing of metro burdens and more cooperation on transportation, air quality, the siting of development, and the like. Denver had hoped that unity would be achieved by the time it came to permit Two Forks. But timetables have slipped, and now Denver, in the person of Pascoe, is saying that first a permit is necessary to secure cooperation. Someday, one imagines, a Denver representative will say: We have to build Two Forks to achieve cooperation.

But it oversimplifies a complex situation to assume that there has been no movement on metro cooperation. The progress was visible at a day-long seminar held on Two Forks at the University of Colorado Law School in Boulder on April 16. There, suburban Jefferson County

(Continued on page 14)

14-High Country News -- May 9, 1988



The Denver metro area and its present and proposed plumbing. Two Forks Reservoir would catch spring runoff from the Platte River basin. Two Forks would also catch West Slope water from new and existing transmountain diversions. The water would reach Two Forks via the existing Roberts Tunnel.

Two Forks would be the Front Range's first large reservoir east of

the Divide. At 1.1 million acre-feet, it would allow Denver to drain Dillon Reservoir, a major recreation facility for Summit County. Denver has agreed to keep Dillon high, and to use Two Forks as the bathtub. In return, Summit County officials support Two Forks. The East Gore and the Eagle-Colorado collection systems are proposed diversions for which Two Forks sets the stage.

Not shown is the Northern Colorado Water Conservation District's agricultural and municipal diversions (Colorado-Big Thompson and Windy Gap) from the West Slope via Shadow Mountain Reservoir and a tunnel. The Northern district begins north of Boulder. Also not shown are diversions to the Colorado Springs area -- it takes water from the Arkansas River drainage via the Fry-

pan-Arkansas project and from the Eagle River drainage through the Divide via the Homestake I project. A Homestake II diversion is planned, and is being strongly opposed by Vail, which is in the Eagle drainage.

In Colorado, 94 percent of all consumed water goes to agriculture, with four percent going to municipal use.

Two Forks will unite...

(Continued from page 13)

Commissioner Rich Ferdinandsen, who described himself as Republican and conservative, said there was a clear need for metro-wide cooperation. Included among his reasons is the chaos that has everybody from counties to developers to tiny districts in the water supply business. Because cities are no longer the sole sources of water, they have lost the ability to direct growth. Instead, growth has been leapfrog -- wherever a developer could sink a well or hook onto a water main or canal across his or her property, there would be built a subdivision, office park or shopping mall.

Ferdinandsen said he wanted to impose order on metro growth by bringing together metro governments to set rules that would let growth proceed more rationally. "Southern California," which uses the Colorado River water that Colorado, Utah and Wyoming let flow downstream, "has very aggressive growth and annexation policies. If we can't reorganize, we'll lose our position as the major city in the West."

Moreover, "If we don't solve the water problems, we won't solve transit, air quality, and so on. We need a general restructuring. The problem is one of institutional arrangements."

Both Pascoe and Ferdinandsen emphasized to the audience of 100 or so that cooperation on Two Forks underlay all progress. Ferdinandsen said a Two Forks permit with a lifetime, or shelf life, of 25 years would be a useful "bargaining chip between Denver and the suburbs." Without

that carrot, he said, there would be "detrimental" competition among many different entities, all seeking to compete and lock up their own sources of water.

Pascoe put it differently. He said that the Environmental Caucus' alternative to Two Forks is a destructive one. "It says, let's go back to the entrepreneurship system -- no large supply; let everyone scramble."

Pascoe also said, "Environmentalists think cooperation will come out of chaos. I don't think so. Denver will hold on to its water. Aurora will do the same. The cities will scramble for agricultural and West Slope water. The environmentalists are like the 1914 statesmen: the ones that wanted a short war to tidy up the map of Europe."

Pascoe argued that sound public policy requires Two Forks, or at least a Two Forks permit. The public policy argument may make special sense to Colorado Gov. Roy Romer, whose crucial opinion will be delivered on May 20. Romer has already said he will not try to second guess the EIS's findings, but will base his judgement on the political and public policy considerations that were beyond the scope of the EIS.

For rural Colorado, there is a chilling aspect to this talk of metro unity based on dams. Barbara Green, representing a group of West Slope ski counties, told the seminar that the negotiations lock out the West Slope. "You say that if the water goes to California, Denver won't be a great city. If it all goes to Nebraska, it won't be a great city, either," because the mountains -- which she said were Denver's major attraction -- would be ruined.

She continued, "The fact that water is being used to solve Denver metro problems is a result of the fact that Colorado has no statewide water plan."

It is the lack of a statewide water plan that started what might be called the Two Forks process. Back in 1982, then Gov. Richard Lamm called together water, West Slope and environmental interests into something he called the Metropolitan Water Roundtable. The hope was that unity and understanding, as well as a consensus about the development of the state's remaining share of the Platte and Colorado rivers, would come out of this gathering of knights.

To some extent, it worked. The metro-wide agreement, as well as an agreement between Denver and the West Slope's water protection body, the Colorado River Water Conservation District, were helped along by the Roundtable meetings. In addition, the Roundtable helped put the Environmental Caucus into the Two Forks process, and provided them with funds from Denver and its partners to birdog the work. (HCN, 12/22/86).

If any process should have worked, it was this one. There were good people and there was all the money and time anyone could ask. Moreover, the federal government, in the body of the Army Corps of Engineers, was there to oversee the technical work and provide a presence that was somewhat detached. If not agreement on every point, at least one could hope for a measure of understanding and good will.

The very opposite has happened. Several months ago (HCN, 10/12/87) I described a debate between Environmental Caucus representatives Dan Luecke and Bob Weaver, and Water Providers representatives Marcia Hughes and Bob McWhinnie. At the time, I assumed that the irritability and anger they displayed were particular to Hughes and McWhinnie.

At the April 16 meeting in Boulder, it became clear that anger is endemic to those still in the process. It was most striking with Monte Pascoe. If, several years ago, someone had said that Pascoe would be president of the Denver Water Board, environmentalists and other good government types would have guessed that the metro area's problems would be on their way to being solved.

Pascoe is a liberal and open-minded person. He ran a high-minded campaign for mayor of Denver, he was Lamm's head of the Department of Natural Resources, and even in these final laps of the Two Forks EIS race, he remains calm and mannerly.

But there is no doubt that he is, as he said at the seminar, somewhat "tender" and that, beneath the surface, he is furious with the environmental opponents of Two Forks. He holds them responsible for distorting his arguments, and thereby making it hard for him to be open-minded on the issue. For example, he told the seminar what happened when he estimated that the total cost of Two Forks -- the cost of the dam, interest, mitigation -- would be \$1 billion. He used \$1 billion, he said, rather than the \$400 million construction cost other proponents used, because he wanted to be as accurate as possible.

So what happened? Some environmentalists treated the \$1 billion as if it were the construction cost, he said, and added on interest and mitigation, to come up with a much higher figure.

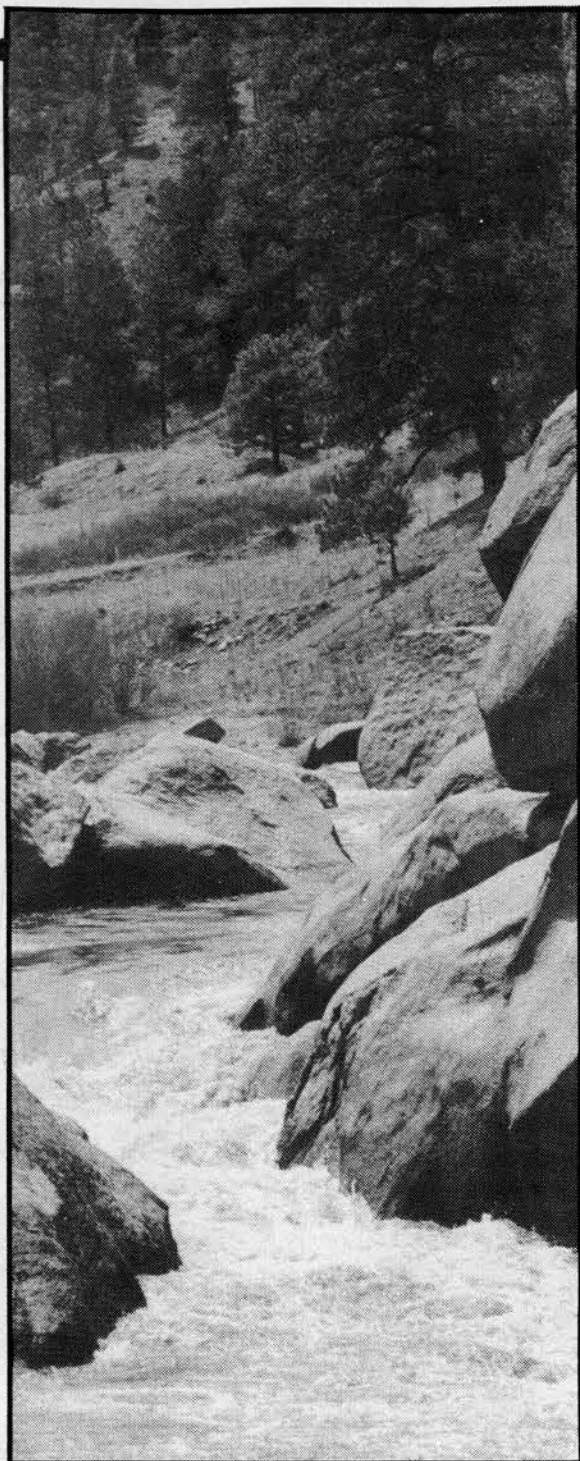
It is the same, he said, with the water partners' request for a 25-year-long permit for Two Forks. They want the 25 years, he said, so they can see whether conservation, water trades, and the like can put off the need for Two Forks. According to Pascoe, environmentalists take this flexible and reasonable position and distort it so it says: "If they want a 25-year permit, it means they don't need Two Forks at all."

Pascoe is also angry over the charges that the Two Forks backers subverted the Fish and Wildlife Service into issuing a politically, rather than a biologically, based "no jeopardy" decision on endangered species.

And he let his outrage show at the seminar. He not only extravagantly praised the Denver Water Department staff, but he made a point of identifying with the last Denver Water Board generation -- the generation Pascoe and his fellow board members were hailed as being a great improvement on. Ignoring the immense local work it took to bring the leaders of the major environmental groups into the Two Forks fray, he described Audubon and others as practically panting to sue so that they would have another "trophy" to hang on their walls back in Washington. And ignoring the fact that the bait of a \$1 billion dam is needed to bring metro Denver together at a table to discuss common concerns, he said the environmental movement was a divided one, with whom the water interests could not negotiate because environmentalists lack discipline. That has been the effect of the Two Forks process on one of its most admirable participants.

The presentation for the Environmental Caucus was given by Lee Rozaklis, and he was relatively unemotional. The main points of the caucus position are, first, that the EIS overstates the growth likely to come to the Front Range, and second, that water is available without any construction to meet the growth that will occur. A good chunk of the available water resides up in "Northern" -- in the agricultural region to the north of Denver metro.

Northern, aka the Northern Colorado Water Conservation District, did what many other utilities did in the 1970s -- it overexpanded. To keep the cities in its region -- Fort Collins, Greeley, Estes Park, et al, -- from dipping into the agricultural water provided by the Colorado-Big Thompson diversion from the West Slope, Northern built its Windy Gap municipal water



South Platte River

project, which also diverts water from the West Slope. The result is that these cities now have about 30,000 acre-feet, enough for 120,000 or so people, more water than they need or will need in any foreseeable future.

That 30,000 acre-feet, which could easily be put into the metro area's water system, plays a major role in the Environmental Caucus' estimate that the Front Range already has all the water it needs to 2030 or so.

Pascoe had anticipated this point during his morning presentation, and he looked at Greg Hobbs and said, "We're not going to get any of your water, are we Greg?" Greg agreed with Pascoe that Northern water wasn't likely to flow south.

Hobbs is Northern's attorney -- a heart-and-soul attorney. Despite a cold which, he feared would reduce his effectiveness, his talk left the impression that Moses came down off the mountain without an eleventh commandment -- Thou Shalt Not Mess With Northern's Water -- only because he had run out of stone tablet.

Hobbs made it clear that Northern was reasonable -- that it might lease some water on a short-term basis. But he also made it clear that the 30,000 acre-feet of Windy Gap water would be forever reserved for the future of the Northern district, and that the far-seeing pioneers who had established Northern 50 years ago would not look kindly on any attempt to sell out the district's water. The Northern region, he said, had a distinct economy and way of life based on that economy, and it would be blasphemous to sell out that way of life in the abstract name of metro unity.

Hobbs didn't come before the group as the representative of powerless farmers asking big-city slickers to respect his rural constituents. He used the suburb of Thornton as an example of what happens to the kneecaps of people who mess with Northern's water.

Thornton, sensing two years ago that Two Forks might be expensive, or a goner, or both, chose to go its own way. It bought shares in an irrigation company in Northern's district at a cost estimated at half of Two Forks.

Hobbs on April 16 did his best to disabuse Thornton of the idea that it had gotten a

bargain. Thornton, he said, thought it had bought 22,000 acre-feet. Hobbs estimated that once the water court heard Northern's objections, it would grant the city no more than 12,000 acre-feet. Even without counting in the incredible expense of litigation, Thornton's water would be at least as expensive as Two Forks, Hobbs indicated.

To an outsider, Hobbs' promise of extensive, expensive litigation might be seen as destructive. But it wasn't taken as such at the meeting. Pascoe didn't ask his question of Hobbs -- "We're not going to get any of your water?" -- to point out malevolence. Pascoe was simply pointing to Hobbs and Northern as historic, unalterable forces. One might better ask the Colorado River to double its flow as ask Northern to share water.

It is the environmentalists whom Pascoe appears to hold responsible. When they put down 30,000 acre-feet of Northern water as available to the Metro area, they are, in the view of the people guiding the Two Forks process, either incredibly naive or monkeywrenchers. There is no way in heaven or in hell that that 30,000 acre-feet of water will come flowing out of Northern, say those in the know.

The reason is not only the sacredness of water; it is also the political structure of the state. In Colorado, as in the rest of the West, small political entities -- so long as they can afford to hire good attorneys -- have incredible autonomy. If you want real power in the West, for example, don't run for governor or the legislature -- become a county commissioner, or the manager of a water district that has an actual project.

There was an observer from Wyoming at the University of Colorado forum who remarked on how enlightened she found the discussion. How could she say that, I asked, when everyone was swearing that water transfers wouldn't happen? "That's true," she replied. "But at least people are talking about transferring water from agriculture to cities. In Wyoming, that wouldn't be allowed."

In one sense, the joke is on the environmentalists. They chose to be rational truth-seekers in the EIS process, but rationality cannot function when the ground rules say that local water owners will not be rolled over, when real cooperation is forbidden, and when the only thing people will come together to do is build water projects.

But the joke is also on the Denver Water Board and the 42 water providers. For if County Commissioner Rich Ferdinandsen is correct, then the Denver metro area is caught in the same trap as the environmentalists. While the independence and orneriness of individual units of government may make the environmentalists' water sharing and conservation proposals silly, based as it is on cooperation and perhaps even some initial sacrifice, those same revered Western characteristics may also make Two Forks silly.

For what Ferdinandsen said was that without much stronger metro cooperation, the water consortium did not have the power to push Two Forks through. Without unity, they could not impose their will on the State Legislature and get it to fund Two Forks through a statewide tax.

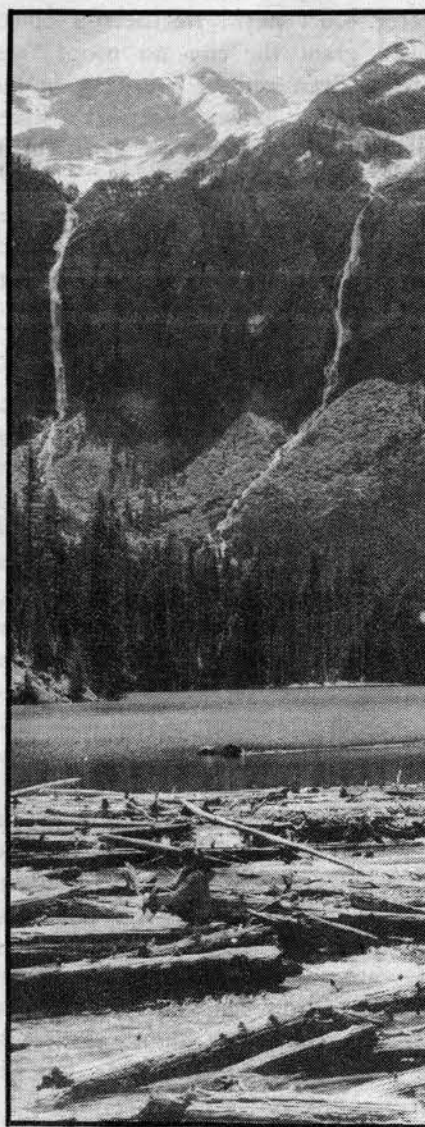
The joke is that if they could cooperate -- if Pascoe could no longer look over at Hobbs, secure in the knowledge that Hobbs will refuse to share water -- then need for Two Forks would disappear.

The would-be dam builders may survive this inherent contradiction, but at the moment things are running against them. The outpouring against Two Forks in recent public hearings and national publicity on the project have been felt even in the well-insulated chambers where water decisions are made. Short of a severe drought, it appears that project proponents have lost the public war. Despite *Denver Post* articles that painted the South Platte Canyon as little more than a trashed-out picnic spot with an over-rated fishery, people turned out in very large numbers throughout Colorado and in Nebraska to protest the project.

It may be that environmentalists in Colorado and Nebraska have become incredibly well

(Continued on page 16)

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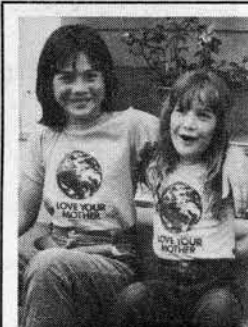
Jack Boucher, NPS archives

AN INDEPENDENT GRIZ REPORT
Earth First! grizzly expert Doug Peacock has edited a new tabloid on the biology, history and politics of *Ursus Horribilis*, the grizzly bear. The 16-page *Independent Grizzly Bear Report*, written by experts in the field with no ties to government agencies, examines why the great bear is no better off now in the lower 48 states than it was when first listed as "threatened" in 1975. Tony Povilis, director of the Campaign for Yellowstone's Bears, in Boulder, Colo., writes that grizzly management is itself responsible for the decline of the bear. He says government "control actions" have taken the place of hunting in causing bear deaths. The report recommends protection and restoration to their natural state of vast roadless areas for the bear's recovery, and emphasizes that the best grizzly habitat, open country, is already gone. Areas suggested for reintroduction include New Mexico's Gila Wilderness, Arizona's Blue Range, Colorado's South San Juan and Weminuche mountains, Utah's High Uintas, Wyoming's Wind River and Gros Ventre, and Idaho's Selway-Bitterroot and River of No Return wildernesses. Peacock offers tips on hiking in bear country, which include

walking quietly into the wind in order to notice bears first, and never singing country and western. Peacock is reputed to have spent more time with wild grizzlies than anyone alive today in the 48 contiguous states, and says he has been charged by grizzlies nearly 30 times. The tabloid is available free from Earth First!, Box 5871, Tucson, AZ 85703.

PROSE AND POETRY IN MOAB

The elegant language of the land around Moab, Utah, will have some competition from *High Country News* poetry editor Chip Rawlins May 15. Rawlins will read selections from his prose and poetry as part of an all-day seminar on language and landscape sponsored by the Canyonlands Field Institute. The seminar costs \$30 and offers 12 participants a leisurely walk in Arches National Park, writing exercises, and time for consultations with Rawlins. The poetry reading at Pack Creek Ranch, where Rawlins once worked as a packer and backcountry guide, costs \$5 and starts at 8:30 p.m. Dinner at the ranch is also available. Contact CFI, P.O. Box 68, Moab, UT 84523 (801/259-7750).



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Two Forks will unite...

(Continued from page 15)

organized, or it may be that their efforts were supplemented by unorganized, spontaneous public concern, or it may be, as proponents said, that their supporters are all hard-working wage slaves who can't get away to attend public meetings. Whatever the truth, the project is in deep trouble with the public.

Cov. Romer and his staff could deliver the coup de grace to Two Forks in his May 20 decision, since the Corps of Army Engineers has said it would pay great attention to Romer's recommendations, but it will be difficult for him to do so. His main thrust is immediate economic development, and to build the airport, construct new roads and clean up the Front Range's air, he, like Denver, needs the political support of those who back Two Forks.

Romer's problem is Colorado's, and the West's, problem. To a large extent, it is historic. In the West's early decades, water was all that mattered, whether the activity was mining, agriculture, industry or town building. Today, education, the environment, social reform and land use planning matter far more than new supplies of water. But our institutions and our psyches have been set up to deal only with water. At best, we deal with these other problems last, or in terms of water.

Even environmentalists and other social and political reformers are forced to follow a water agenda. If Two Forks is defeated, for example, that will simply mark the beginning of the real fight, not, as many think, the end

This mono-mania is no secret. Colorado State Engineer Jeris A. Danielson deplored it, sort of, in his talk at CU. He pointed out that there are "no less than 388 special districts on the Front Range that furnish water." Statewide, Colorado has 56 conservation and conservancy districts, most formed to sponsor federal projects, of which there are only a few.

But these special districts do have a purpose, Danielson said. They levy taxes, fight each other, and they prevent cooperation.

In line with the West's policy of lodging power at the bottom, Danielson, as the state's top water official, has little influence over water. But he can gather the data detailing enormous overlap, duplication and waste in Colorado's grassroots water establishment.

Is there a resolution to this paralysis? The Two Forks proponents would say that the only practical solution is to achieve some measure of unity by wasting \$1 billion on a unneeded dam. If the price of Two Forks is mitigated trashing of the environment and unmitigated wasting of taxpayer dollars, that is the price of a great city.

But the clue to another direction is offered by the oft-stated competition with Los Angeles -- a competition L.A. must laugh at. The *L.A. Times*, for example, recently recognized that Denver is not L.A., and sold the *Denver Post*. For L.A. has had something that Denver lacks -- a consensus about a way of life. Those who live in L.A. appear to put economic efficiency and great concentrations of people and production above other things. They have chosen to accept, at least until now, levels of congestion and pollution that the Denver metro area may not be willing to stomach.

Despite the preachments of developers and of bankers holding liens on empty office buildings and shopping malls, the Denver metro is

and shopping malls, the Denver metro area is not a Los Angeles. It is a Midwest city -- more like Kansas City, let's say, or Minneapolis. Denverites may not wish to imagine a great city -- they may be more interested in imagining a modest, livable city. And they may be ungovernable until a leadership comes along that shares their modest vision of the future.

It seems that Denver's leadership is confronting, on Two Forks, an inherent contradiction. To continue to push Two Forks puts the state's leadership -- which really means only the governor -- at odds with the wishes of most Front Range residents and all rural Colorado residents. But not to push for Two Forks would put Romer in opposition to the Front Range political establishment, with the possible exception of the only visible reformer -- Denver Mayor Pena.

If Romer does put Two Forks on the gubernatorial iron lung by endorsing it, then a large split has been created between the state's visible leadership and the people. Two Forks, coming out of nowhere, has the potential to galvanize Colorado for the first time since the successful campaign to reject the Winter Olympics achieved a similar unity in the early 1970s. Two Forks is especially potent as a tool for unity because past Denver water projects have mainly damaged the West Slope. Two Forks will harm both Denver and the West Slope, creating a common cause.

Those who are pushing so hard for this \$1 billion dollar dam may yet create the cohesive, governable state they say they seek.

□

Ed Marston is publisher of *High Country News*.