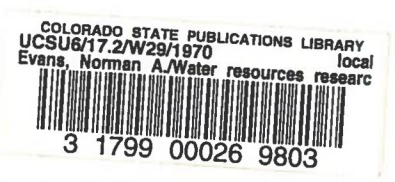


UCSU 6/17.2 / W 24/1718
Environmental resources center



Natural Resources POLICY Background PAPER

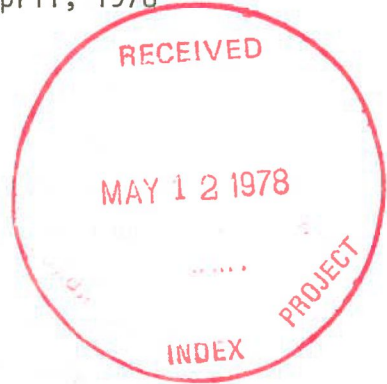
colorado state university
fort collins

April, 1978

FEDERAL WATER RECREATION IN COLORADO: COMPREHENSIVE VIEW AND ANALYSIS

Kharol E. Stefanec
Graduate Research Assistant

Department of Political Science
Colorado State University



There are presently 28 completed Federal reservoirs in Colorado which are 100 surface acres or larger. Colorado has an active interest in the existent and future large Federal reservoirs which do, or presumably will, afford outdoor recreation opportunities to the public. As such, the reservoirs do and will cost the Federal and non-Federal entities a great deal of money in terms of initial development and/or administration and maintenance. Until this time no document has adequately addressed the total picture in Colorado regarding large Federal reservoirs, their legislative authority, and development and operational commitments by the construction agency and the State and local entities which administer the areas after completion.

In recent years there have been scattered complaints and objections (mostly from non-Federal administering agencies) regarding the legal and financial arrangements under which Federal reservoirs are developed and transferred to a responsible state or local entity for recreation and wildlife administration.

Scattered objections and complaints are not sufficient grounds for serious assessment and policy evaluation. State policy makers can evaluate only on the basis of what now exists and what is likely to occur in the future for the State as a whole. It is this comprehensive overview, so necessary for broad policy decision making, which has not been previously addressed in Colorado.

The purpose of the Natural Resources Policy Background Papers is to provide early awareness of new information for public policy-making officials as it becomes available. The Papers are unedited preliminary drafts subject to revision, correction and even substantive changes when the study is completed. In many cases, the Papers are brief summaries.
No supporting documentation is provided, and interpretation of the information contained herein has not been attempted by the author. Anyone expecting to use the data is invited to consult the author concerning its proper interpretation. The Papers are not intended to suggest appropriate policy.
The user of information contained in these Papers should recognize the foregoing disclaimer of accuracy and completeness. They must be considered preliminary research results and treated accordingly.

This study has largely addressed itself in the development of a comprehensive overview by beginning at step one and confronting the vital questions of:

1. Exactly how many large reservoirs there are (completed), how many were expected to be (recently eliminated), and how many can actually be expected in the foreseeable future (authorized and potential)?

*Chapter IV shows that there are 28 completed Federal reservoirs of 100 surface acres or larger in Colorado; approximately 31 reservoirs of this size have been recently eliminated from consideration by the Federal construction agency; and approximately 29 Federal reservoirs are either now authorized (18) or not authorized, but potential (11). Four of the 18 authorized reservoirs are presently under construction.

2. What Federal legislative authority governs each existent and future reservoir's recreational development and use?

*In Colorado, there are five major Federal laws which govern many Federal reservoirs located in or, proposed for this State. Of the five, only one does not provide for recreation development and subsequent administration (i.e., Colorado-Big Thompson authorization). Regarding some current and most future projects, P.O. 89-72 is now the law of the land and specifically addresses the Federal and non-Federal arrangement for costs and administrative responsibilities of recreation at Federally constructed reservoirs. In addition to the five major laws, there are some miscellaneous pieces of authorizing legislation which apply to the oldest Federal reservoirs in Colorado - none of which provide for recreation (Chapter III).

3. Where do the administrative commitments lie (specifically and in general terms)?

*Out of the total 28 completed reservoirs, Colorado's Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation administers nine. The U.S. Forest Service and the National Park Service administer seven and five, respectively. Other agencies show only one or two at most. Of the 28 total, 13 are administered by Federal agencies and 15 are operated by non-Federal bodies (Chapter IV).

4. Regarding recreation and wildlife, what physical and/or administrative properties, attached to a reservoir itself or the administering entity, impact upon the recreational suitability of a Federal project?

*A reservoir's water elevation fluctuation due to irrigation or power generation is an important factor to be recognized in evaluating both water recreation potential and fish management success. Other physical factors such as shoreline slope or grade and water quality can be equally important. Administratively, the success of reservoir recreation may largely depend on the development of the reservoir's surrounding acreage. Poor development of health, safety, and/or recreational service facilities may contribute to low visitation or environmental damage where significant visitation occurs anyway. Such problems may in turn be due to the financial inability of an administering agency to properly develop and maintain the area (Chapter III).

5. Finally, in general terms, what (if any) are the tendencies associated with construction and administration costs of water projects - Federal and non-Federal?

*Chapter V shows that the basic tendency of project costs is that they almost always exceed their original feature authorizations. While an administering agency may contribute partial or all initial development funds -- O&M costs, which the agency bears alone, always exceed development shares in the long run. Related to this is the tendency for O&M costs to spiral over time.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternatives for Colorado regarding Federal reservoirs are abundant and only limited by the lack of concerted effort within the State to arrive at a decision. Should State political officials and concerned agency administrators determine that a problem does exist which merits resolution, the following list of alternatives may be worthy of scrupulous examination.

1. The Colorado Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation be reluctant to take on more reservoir responsibilities until a concerted political effort is made to seek a more favorable cost-sharing formula through an amendment to Public Law 89-72.
2. The DPOR consider "giving back" low visitation, high cost reservoirs. Begin a structured 1-2 year evaluation of all Federal reservoirs currently and potentially administered by the State to determine (1) which of the existing reservoirs should be transferred from the DPOR, (2) which of those potential sites the DPOR does not want to operate. A product of this effort would be clear concise guidelines for future determinations of reservoir commitments.

3. Encourage local governments and private organizations to administer Federal reservoirs.

Develop standards of development and maintenance to be enforced at Federal reservoirs not administered by a Federal agency.

4. The DPOR actively support a transfer from the Federal Government to the states all water planning and development authority (excluding interstate transfers) as proposed in President Carter's National Water Policy Options entitled "Block Grant."

"This option provides for grants to states as a replacement for the present federal direct water resources development programs and projects. Initially, each state would receive grant funds equivalent each year to the average annual federal water resources investment in that state for the past several years. Eventually grants would be distributed on a formula basis reflecting population, economic, and other factors related to water resources - related investment and expenditures in the states. The states would select the projects to be built and provide their own additional financing if necessary. . . (Federal Register, Vol. 42, No. 136 -- Friday, July 15, 1977).

ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES CENTER
Experiment Station
Colorado State University
Fort Collins, Colorado 80523
J. P. Jordan, Director
Publication

Penalty for private use \$300

POSTAGE PAID
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE
AGR-101



THIRD CLASS