Dollars no longer flow uphill

By Ed Masten

About 150 people held a wake of sorts in Grand junction, Colorado, Aug. 1 through 3. It was a wake for large federal water projects, which friends and foes agree are dead. It was a wake of sorts because little time was spent mourning, or even grudgingly weeping. Most of the three-day conference was spent analyzing the legislation and vying for position in that future.

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

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

As the dam builders, for example, hailed the past as a Golden Age of Reclamation -- a time when America, as a whole generally and far-sightedly helped to build up the West's regional economy. Brigadier General Mark Sminkey, who heads the Army Corps of Engineers' Missouri River operations, mourned the passing of the era of consensus. The system of flood and navigation control dams on the Missouri, he said, were authorized 60 years ago when:

'People and property took precedence over fish and wildlife. Individuals made sacrifices for the good of the many. That is not to say that we would have done anything, just different from today.'

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

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

Muss) sold the group that 260 acres of cattle and fruit-raising land would be buried by the proposed Dominguez Reservoir, and no new agricultural land would be created.

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

The rancher said he wasn't against all reservoirs. But he urged that they be put in the high country, where lower evaporation could make more of the water, and water evaporation would be lower than in his hay, cotton-field area 60 miles from the Utah border.

The other fire at the conference was generated by Colorado's historic, continuing East Slope - West Slope water fight. About 80% of Colorado's population and 90% of the irrigated land is east of the Continental Divide, in the Missouri River drainage. But 10% of the state's water is west of the Divide, in the Colorado River drainage.

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

At this conference, the heat came mostly from the urban East Slope in the person of Robert Isaac, the mayor of Colorado Springs. He promised his luncheon audience that he would not be candid. And he was. Colorado Springs wishes to tunnel under the Continental Divide to take an additional 20,000 acre-feet of water yearly out of the Holy Cross Wilderness area in the Eagle River drainage.

His city's plans for the Homestake II project are opposed on an array of battlefields: administrative appeals to the U.S. Forest Service, which has approved the diversion; pleas to the Army Corps that is not issue a 461 permit; and court actions.

Isaac, during his talk, showed he is not pleased by the opposition. He said the Homestake II opponents were motivated by a "hunch" environmental concern about the land. He said the fact that the project would occupy only 6 acres out of 12,000 wilderness acres meant the environmental concern had been seen.

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

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

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

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

With the Army Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation on the program, there was the traditional recreation of the benefits of water projects. The lives and property saved from flooding, the millions of kilowatt-hours generated and barrels...
How do you move thirteen years of files, photos, business records and books from a small town in Wyoming to an even smaller town in Colorado? Routinely, by truck, car and mail. And how do you move a 13-year-old institution that has survived problems that have destroyed many other worthy publications covering the West?

That, it turns out, is much harder. The reason, we hope, is mostly behind us. But we confess it didn't seem easy, especially during the summer's hectic, often confusing transition, we wondered whether this issue would make it. Bits of paper, from bills to stories, had a way of hiding under or between other bits of paper. "Where are those stories?" was a question asked in many forms.

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

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

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

For a day or two, at a time, our activities had nothing to do with the purging out of a newspaper. We could as well have been thinking of two cherry-picking companies together, or merging an academic group with a professional society of biology teachers.

But every once in a while, nixed in with the xerography and paper changes, came reminders that this was indeed a newspaper. A high point was the visit of Kathy Bogdanovich of photographs. In addition to laying out a beautiful paper, Kathy found us a wonderful collection of black and white photos of the most breathtaking, most ugly and most interesting places in the West.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We are amazed, as we edit the stories, to see the many ties that link them. Don Snow's piece on the Bonneville transmission line, for example, explains how wildlife groups just convinced the Montana Power Company to set up a trust fund to pursue a priced steam. That story is related to the whooping crane story. Those few surviving cranes today because back in 1957 a wildlife group convinced or forced another electric utility to set up a trust fund to preserve crane habitat.

PS

On September 17 in Denver, and again in Salt Lake City, High Country News will come out of its editorial closet for a party. And the party of the day is to welcome the paper to its new haunt. But all readers and would-be readers — wherever and whenever their haunts are — invited to attend, and to bring along anyone they like.

The Denver beer and wine reception will be held at the Meeting Hall (annex), Capitol Hill Community Center, 1290 Williams Street, on the edge of Denver's Cheesman Park. It will go from 7:30 P.M. to 9:30 P.M., and interesting people and good conversation is doubly inevitable. The charge is $1 per person.

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

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

Forest may close off bear haunts

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Among the seven possibilities she is reviewing are: limiting the public away from crucial grizzly habitat; adding educational systems to control and monitor human activity in grizzly areas; and closing areas where grizzly-human conflict is likely. "De rigueur in scoping statements, the alternative of making no management changes at all is also on the menu."

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

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

"Most of those opposed said in the same breadth that we ought to kill all the grizzlies," Brown said.

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

Shoshone National Forest
Claire Haug
P. O. Box 2100
Cody, Wyo. 82414

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

--Geoff O'Gara

Forest Service stands on principle

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

The agency finally garnered the paper's admiration by refusing to allow a wilderness preservation group permission to hold a Founding Day ceremony through Holy Cross. The paper wrote:

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

Mindless in Iowa

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

"Iowa: State of Minds"

Gov. Terry Branstad thought the slogan would promote high-tech economic development in Iowa. But the state's economy is still agricultural, and the governor didn't think it fit the ideas off Branches's agenda. But he was given plenty of alternatives to choose from:

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

Swan done into the slick

Interior Secretary James Watt has announced a new use and a catchy acronym for old offshore oil and gas Chevron platform, called REEFS -- Recreation, Environmental Enhancement and Fishing Site. Watt promises "aggressive movement" to turn the platforms into mobile swimming holes.

Message to Detroit:

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

Fires with sudden moves required

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

Another Watt job

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

State wants to reform Interior

Says the weekly Colorado Sun in an editorial: "It's time the Democratic presidential candidate"

President of the Sierra Club and Chairman of the New Mexico Wilderness Commission, among many other posts.

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

"I'll be asking all kinds of people for help on the project," Calkin said. "We're working on the proposal now.""

The goal, Calkin said, will be to prepare a new version of Interior's policy manual for submission to the 1984 Democratic presidential candidate.

--Bryan Walsh
Navajos, utility agree to talk

Most of the coal would have to be mined by underground methods. According to a spokesman for Navajo chairman Zab, his willingness to negotiate doesn't mean the tribe has changed its goals. Press secretary Ray Louis said need for land remains the centerpiece. He said the Paragon Ranch could not only provide land where the pastoral Navajos could live and raise livestock; it could also provide jobs at the power plant and possibly in the mines.

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

The Paragon Ranch is within the San Juan basin, where a national struggle has been raging over Interior's plans to lease about one billion tons of coal (HCN, 7/22/83). Opponents of the sale argue that leasing in today's economic climate is senseless for companies that get the coal at bargain prices. They say there is little incentive to lease now and that additional leasing will fuel speculation, rather than power plants.

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

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

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

The BLM has managed to stay neutral in the earlier tug of war between the Navajos and the utility. The start of negotiations has taken them off, but not for the moment. Under the terms of the agreement to negotiate, only the Navajos can come to the bargaining table. The utility stays mum.

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

Bryan Walsh

Idaho David' beats IRS 'Goliath'

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

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

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

On August 19, 1983, the National Office of the IRS agreed that CEQ should retain its tax-exempt status.

District agent Jan Murphy had declared that CEQ violated federal standards for a "full and fair" disclosure of all sides of public issues. He claimed that CEQ's publications "advocate the non-use of toxic herbicides" and that CEQ had "adopted the position that all toxic herbicides be banned."

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

The IRS National Office decision refined and applied the standard of "full and fair" disclosure of all sides of public issues. It held that a tax-exempt organization may advocate a particular position or viewpoint as long as it presents enough factual information to permit the public to form an independent opinion. The IRS held that CEQ's "publications and presentations are sufficiently dispassionate and factual."

The full and fair disclosure rule does not mean that exempt organizations present viewpoints opposing their own, the ruling board noted. CEQ supporters were jubilant. Regina Gormley, CEQ Board member, said, "It's a real victory for all tax-exempt environmental groups to breathe easier now."
Salt Lake Lake City may become Venice

A continuing inflow of water to the Great Salt Lake of Utah over the past few years has diminished its famous lagoon and caused the lake level to rise drastically. The rise of the lake has also raised the possibility of damages to the Great Salt Lake of Utah over the estimated $156 million in damages to lakeside businesses and property.

The potential for damage is magnified by the fluctuating level of the shoreline. Even a small rise causes the water to flow inland hundreds of feet. Rises of several feet can displace the shoreline by miles.

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

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

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

Because the causeway happens to act as a dam, water on the north end of the lake would lie 15 feet or more lower than water on the south side. The height difference is caused by the greater inflow of fresh water to the south. As a result of the imbalance, water on the north side is saltier than on the south side.

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

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

A $700,000 lake level control study is due out in November. But those on the south end of the lake don't want to wait. They favor an ice dam in the causeway-dam. They say a drop of six to fourteen inches would spare them additional damage when the lake climbs to a predicted high of 4,206 feet in 1984.

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

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

Wilderness magic eludes Idaho

When Idaho Repubican Sen. James McClure agreed to hear testimony on roadless areas of Idaho's 6.5 million acres of roadless wilderness, he said, "I wanted for a long time a wilderness area... or a middle ground." The Sierra Club didn't get the first part of the public's public hearings in Boise, Idaho Falls, Coeur d'Alene and Lewiston, 500 people expressed what McClure called "polarized... opposing viewpoints." That testimony will "make his job tougher," he concluded. The job for the Senator is to introduce an Idaho Wilderness legislation bill to the Senate before the end of 1983.

The two extremes McClure encountered at the hearings were represented by Wilderness proponents and the timber industry. Five conservation groups advocated wilderness for 2.2 million acres of roadless area they consider threatened by timber harvests or other developments.

The Forest Industry Council favored adding only 591,000 acres to Idaho's wilderness, which already includes 8.1 million acres. The council said no more designated wilderness should be added to Idaho's existing 8.1 million acres.

The state's Fish and Game spokesman suggested the addition of 591,000 acres of new wilderness. There were some off-beat theories at some hearings -- a walking tree and a two-legged carrot -- but testifiers ranged from loggers' wives and small sawmill representatives who feared bankruptcy without more timber to processors in recreation areas who feared the loss of their back country hiking and fishing.

What most everyone testifying shared was an economic grounding for their point of view. Timber industry spokesmen spoke about the economic value of the trees in straight-forward measurements of board-feet income. They also held out the promise of jobs for the state's two million unemployed. They also cited a report that those who use wilderness beef up the state's economy three times through the purchase of outdoor equipment.

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

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

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

One example of such an area, which was brought up continually at the Lewiston hearing, is at Great Burn, Cayuse Creek, and Kelly Creek. Located west of the Bitterroot, at the headwaters of the North Fork of the Clearwater River, it is included in a group of 10 roadless areas in the "Endangered Idaho Wilderness Core."

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

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

Hydropower sites are identified

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

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

So far, the Corps has begun an in-depth feasibility study on only three sites. The Corps has been working to develop a plan for the Columbia River Basin Hydropower Study, which will eventually lead to the development of additional sites.

## Hotline

Deatb results in $25 fines

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

The bite occurred when they were pushed or pulled into admiring their gait. Park Rangers and staff then held a review of the night's events and put them up to the Rock Creek drainage near Missoula. Rock Creek is one of a few sources that would threaten the areas' wildest characteristics.

The groups' negotiating clout came from a successful administrative appeal filed with the Forest Service.

If using that lever, the three would have won over the trust agreement with Montana Power, which said they would not proceed with the line until days afterward.

Bonneville Power Administration wants to complete a massive 300-kilowatt power line running from the Colstrip power plants near Billings, Montana, westward across the state to Spokane, Washington (HCN, 7/22/83).

Bonneville can proceed thanks to a $1.65 million conservation trust fund created by the Montana Power Company, the principal owner of Colstrip. The money will be used to protect fish and wildlife in the Rock Creek drainage near Missoula. Rock Creek, Montana, was to be studied on a scale as yet unmatched.

Thirty three appellates had little choice but to negotiate.

If they would have continued with the appeal, they might have lost everything,” said the source. “The line would have crossed Rock Creek at the lowest elevation, and new roads in the drainage would have been built. Most of the five RARE II areas are of marginal wilderness; some of the others would have probably been lost, anyway.”

The marketplace has taken a large chunk out of another resource boom. The 1980s was one of the most successful decades in history for the energy industry, with prices soaring to record levels. Over $1 trillion was spent on new energy projects during that time. However, the boom came to an end in the mid-1980s when oil prices plummeted, leading to widespread layoffs and closures of energy-related businesses.

The loss of the energy boom had a significant impact on the economy of the region. Many people who had worked in the industry were left without jobs, and the communities that had been built around the energy companies began to shrink. In addition, the collapse of the energy market led to a decline in the prices of other related products, such as steel and chemicals.

The effects of the energy boom and subsequent bust are still being felt today. Many communities are struggling to find new sources of income and reinvent themselves in the face of continued low energy prices. However, some experts believe that the experience of the 1980s could help prepare the region for future challenges by teaching lessons about the importance of diversifying economies and building resilient communities.

Snow

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

A search was underway for the remains of a ten-year-old boy who was struck by a truck in a national park. The boy and his parents, who were visiting from Nebraska, were killed in a head-on collision on August 6 when they were traveling on the St. Maries River.
Mountain-lopping plan protested

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

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

The plan proposed by Earth Sciences of Golden, Colorado, would tear down the top 2,000 feet of the 12,800-foot high red-colored peak that provides a striking backdrop for Lake City. Earth Sciences geologists believe the mountain contains the largest deposit of alunite in the world — about 1.5 billion tons. In a 104-year project with a price tag of $1.5 billion, the company is proposing to strip-mine 12,500 tons of ore a day and ship it off the mountain in pneumatic tubes where it would be processed at a $340 million plant as-much-as-the-crow-flies miles to the west.

The ore would be processed into aluminum with potash as a by-product. The United States now imports 50 percent of its aluminum, 80 percent of its potash and 70 percent of the total aluminum needed in this country.

Even though Lake City was founded on mining 106 years ago, the majority of the town's population is drawn from underground mining. An estimated 60 million tons of low-grade ore would mean certain death for the community. Lake City has already been Karl schnattled. The residents agree they don't want Lake City to turn into a museum of industry over the past five decades since the last mining bust. Residents say they 100 percent of the total aluminum needed in this country.

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

Bloom said the only "unmitigable" factor of the project would be on the surface. Besides losing the top of the mountain, an access road would scar the mountainside. He also cited concerns over the release of the mining water quality around Lake City. Bloom called those fears "unfounded" because of federal standards that would require close monitoring of both.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mark McKinney, president of Earth Sciences, predicts that because of all the permits required the proposal faces, it will be ten years before production could begin.

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

"We want to hold the line on this project, make sure the mountain stays the way it is. Our group has the resources and the people to make this happen."

Nancy Lohmer

Lake City summer resident Henry Ohiemeyer. "We come here for that lifestyle. We would have stayed in Dallas if we would have wanted the drume of machines and lots of people around."

People like Ohiemeyer now swell Lake City's year-round population of 400 to 4000 in the summer months.

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According to the BLM's analysis of Earth Science's proposal, a moderate reduction in air quality would occur and water quality could possibly be decreased. The report
Timber fencing is a dying craft. The accumulated knowledge of farmers from America's colonial times onward included an array of techniques to fit many different purposes and landscapes. A litany of types: stake-and-rider, buck-and-pole, riggut, log-and-block, post-and-rail, worm. Using basic tools and local materials, the expanding agricultural empire fenced livestock in or out, protected crops, enclosed pastures and marked boundaries. A farm's or ranch's fence was its signature.

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

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

"Bob Warr done it," he said.

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

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

"Huh? Who?"

"Bob Warr."

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

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

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

Timber fences are another story. A well-built buck-and-pole fence, as it settles and weathers, becomes part of the landscape. To build one requires a knowledge of wood, axemanship, applied physics and a canny eye for the land.

You have to judge where the deep drifts collect in winter or the ground is soft in spring. If you throw one up in a hurry, it will fall down just as quickly.

A poor fence can be worse than none. It won't hold the stock and will take more work to maintain than it's worth. On a recent ride, I saw a fence built by a private contractor for the BLM. From a distance, it looked all right; close inspection revealed trouble: the notches were rrouble; the notches were too short and they make a fence more work than it should be. Notches should be clean and angled to drain water or the wood rots. Spikes should be driven to work with the pull of gravity and the weight of snow, and braces set with a keen eye for stress and slope. If the rails are too far apart, itchy cows will nib and knock the fence down, or the calves will slip through.

A good fence can be written by none. It won't bend under snowload or their own weight; too short and they make a fence more work than it should be. Notches should be clean and angled to drain water or the wood rots. Spikes should be driven to work with the pull of gravity and the weight of snow, and braces set with a keen eye for stress and slope. If the rails are too far apart, itchy cows will rub and knock the fence down, or the calves will slip through.

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

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

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

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

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

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A poor fence can be written by none. It won't hold the stock and will take more work to maintain than it's worth. On a recent ride, I saw a fence built by a private contractor for the BLM. From a distance, it looked all right; close inspection revealed trouble: the notches were chainedawed at the perfect angle to collect water and start rot working around the joints. The spikes weren't spikes — they were skinny little nails. The braces, up hill and down, were set at the same spacing and angle, insuring that the fence will some day fold like an accordion and flop like a dead sheep.
The fence had weathered a single winter and already rails had fallen and bucks twisted with the movement of snowdrifts. It was more an extended problem than a fence, built from a general idea of fences rather than from any specific knowledge. The apparent object was to slap up something that resembled a fence, collect the money and run. The result is several miles of headache.

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

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

C.L. Rawlins is a cowboy and poet from Boulder, Wyoming
Toxic hot potato comes to rest in

By Carol Jones

Although not perfect, the new law was considered a large improvement over the previous state law. The new law was promulgated by the June 1982 shutdown of Colorado's only operating hazardous waste facility, the Lowry Landfill, located just east of Denver in Arapahoe County, which had been owned by the city of Denver since the 1950s. It operated under permits from Arapahoe County.

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

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

Miller said, "It was just a hole and bury chemicals with trash..." an estimated 100 million gallons of hazardous waste was dumped in Section 6 of Lowry between 1957 and 1980.

The all-purpose dump was outlawed in 1976, when Browning-Ferris Industries, Inc., of Houston, Texas, asked to locate a landfill near the town. But when BFI, which is the second largest chemical waste disposal company in the country, was turned down before the Adams County commissioners for a permit, they were turned down.

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

Industry is pleased, citizen and environmental groups are talking of lawsuits, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Colorado Department of Health are concerned. But in early 1983, EPA's in-betweeness is especially important because BFI needs a major permit for its site.

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

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

And second, it said that if counties failed to come up with hazardous waste landfill sites by the middle of 1983, Denver would select the landfills for them. (HCN, 5/27/83). That was the stick.

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

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

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

The closing did not end the problems at Lowry. Still responsible for the site, Chemical Waste was fined $48,650 in January, 1983, for evaporation ponds. In May, 1983, the EPA levied a $105,650 fine against the firm because once again the burial pit flooded, with water flowing onto the site. The EPA even found the pumping system disconnected. (HCN, 6/10/83).

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

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

The regional need, coupled with its local gravity, brought Last Chance into the picture. The Colorado Geological Survey had conducted a study in 1980 to find optimal landfill sites. The agency decided that the Pierre shale formation in eastern Colorado and the Mancos shale formation in western Colorado would do best. The Pierre shale is near the right underlying shale. Both the Colorado Health Department and the EPA have long lists of criteria. If a site looked possible, and a waste disposal company was interested, studies were done of the site. Environmental and citizen groups would then often counter with their own studies showing just how awful the site was.

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

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

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

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

Pressure from industry translated into pressure from the Colorado Legislature on the counties. Cecil Wilson, the legislative director of the Colorado Public Interest Research Group (CPIRG), said the new state law "pits the counties against industry. It forces the counties to either come up with landfill sites by mid-1983 or lose the right to make that decision."
The issue is so hot on the local level that it is difficult for the commissioners to choose a site. But if they don't, the state will come in and choose a site for them.

With that in mind, the site turned at the Adams County commissioners meeting on Aug. 13, 1983. A year after rejecting BFI's Last Chance application, the commissioners unanimously approved the same site for use as a hazardous waste dump. The site was also blessed by the Aurora city government and the Colorado Health Department.

Citizen group spokesman Pam Whelden, who lives three miles from the Last Chance site, had no blessing. She said the commissioners "sold us out. The burial of hazardous wastes doesn't work. Most everyone agrees to some extent."

One of the highest placed critics of landfill disposal is Hugh Kaufman, assistant director of the hazardous waste control division of the EPA in Washington, D.C. Kaufman is best known for starting the investigation that led to the resignation of the EPA head Anne Gorsuch Burford.

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

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

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

BFI attorney Spaanstra said that assuming maximum operation, the Last Chance should operate for about 40 years. BFI must monitor the site for 50 years following closure; then responsibility shifts to the state.

On a related subject, Welch said Colorado had made large strides in cutting down on the amount of waste. He said that three or four years ago, Colorado was generating about 500,000 tons per year. But as a result of the passing of the federal RCRA law and changing attitudes on disposal, the state now generates only 30,000 to 50,000 tons per year.

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

Jody Breman, program director with Greenpeace in Denver, strongly disagrees that a landfill has a rule to play. She advocates an above-ground system that could be easily monitored and constructed to withstand natural disasters. Wastes would be stored above-ground with the idea that they would someday be recycled into useful or harmless substances. "It will be years before industry takes the steps toward alternatives," Greenpeace recommends the disposal of hazardous waste on ground under the alternatives are feasible.

Berman backs up the Greenpeace no-landfill proposal with a study of 10 years' experience with hazardous waste landfills. The work was done by K.W. Brown and Associates of College Station, Texas.
of oil not imported, the barges floated on the Missouri... to the major Colorado (and Montana, and South Dakota, and Wyoming) water debate: the 'use it or lose it' question.

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

By comparison, the Colorado Lawmakers were a few years ago appropriating $30 million for the Water Resource Development Authority. None has been added, and some water resource money is being used this strained budget year to pay the state's operating expenses.

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

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

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

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

Danielson, who in theory administers the state's water, had other tasks for the Legislature. He lacks, he said, the power to administer the river and stream basins in a rational way. "The Appropriation Doctrine [first in time, first in right] served us well. But we have 900 reservoirs on the South Platte. And none are managed as a system. We see water carried over, then we dig in one reservoir while another ditch company runs out of water in July."

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

"We thought the fast breeder reactor would be operating in 1983." In that heady time, he said, it was assumed electricity would be free, financed by plutonium the breeder would produce. The lower basin desert would be blooming; and the upper basin would be making energy and keeping the water flowing.

That vision has vanished, and today Barbour is an economist with private industry, pursuing a different, smaller, but more dispersed strategy.

"The action is moving to the states, to water districts, to private groups. It's moving toward management, rehabilitation, conservation, and small hydro utilizing of dams."

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

"Water policy is repeating the same mistakes made with energy. They're assuming we need more water, rather than efficient use of existing water." In that, Lovins, with his always amazing collection of statistics and colorful phrases, painted a bleak picture of existing agriculture. He said farmers were staggering under an immense debt -- $100 billion, with $12 of debt for each $1 of annual income.

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

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

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

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

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

But the water establishment, fearing the permanent loss of water, urges construction of dams to save it for future need. It sees the dams as Colorado's only way to save the water.

Weaver said, "Environmentalists are divided over the "use or lose it" issue. "Some think it's great to let the water flow downstream; to let California develop" while Colorado enjoys 'free' in streams through an underlying economy to use the water, and the state grew, they'd read.'

"It's not uncommon for some Colorado farmers to apply 6 or 8 feet of water to crops needing 14 inches. Towns use 500 gallons per person per day," California lawyers," he said, know of this waste and use it as an argument to reduce Colorado's water rights. "So over-development and wasteful use may not work."

"We need to try more creative uses. But there's only option is more dams. To them, compact entitlements justify everything."

Weaver argued that without the underlying economy to use the water, dams do nothing. "The only feasible solution is a political one -- an interstate agreement on leasing."

Such a suggestion created a stir at last year's Gunston Water meeting. Weaver engineer Ben Harding suggested that Colorado lease its water to California for a decade or two. The idea, Weaver said, is that the water will be available when Colorado reaches the point where its economy can use it.

Weaver also tried to put the present water problems into an historic perspective. "The irony is that water policies have been so successful that water decisions now involve many more interests."

"But," he said, "the additional interests are disenfranchised when it comes to water decisions. Fishermen, bird watchers, rafting companies and others may use water. But they don't, can't, own any. So they lack a say in how it's a used. Their interests are not recognized and legitimized on the federal level," through the endangered species act, the clean water act, and the like. But the water establishment, he said, remains "hostile to the other interests."

In the past, he indicated, that hostility may have been warranted by conservationists' knee-jerk opposition to all water projects. But over the years, "The environmental community has come to recognize the need to see them fulfilled in an environmentally sensitive way."

As part of that effort, Weaver said, he and other environmentalists have "learned to speak the language of economics. The talk has changed." They have neglected their responsibility to educate the public on environmental values. "And the water development interests are more likely to do us a favor than before."

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

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The “Oxford of Rocks” is searching for a president to replace retiring Dr. Guy T. McBride. He will be replaced in the fall. Interested parties should write to the Oxford of Rocks at Box V, Paonia, Colorado 81428. It is a day school located in a mining town with a population of approximately 1,500.

MINING LAW REFORM

The top environmental law experts on mining from around the west will gather at Crested Butte, Colorado on Saturday, October 1, to discuss mining law reform. The event will feature general sessions and a variety of presentations. More information can be obtained by contacting Dr. John F. Thompson at the University of Colorado, Boulder.

WATER COST SHARING

The subject of state and local cost sharing in water projects is to be discussed by the Water Resources Association on Monday, August 28 in Denver, Colorado. For more information, write to Dave alcohol, 213 South Park Hill, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20024. Or call 202/484-0610.

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Nuking the media

The Wall Street Journal ran an amusing story on its front page two weeks ago. Titled "High Technology Age Causes New Problems in Coverage By Media," the lengthy article apparently gave excellent insights into the nation's media. The story was an attempt to review the quality of the media coverage of the 1979 Three Mile Island nuclear occurrence. In his research, Journal writer Daniel Machalaba came up with so much material that we covered the social interactions in the Hill Street Blues police station. The major difference is that the Puffy-ed Journal story would probably do a better job than the Journal did on its TMI-media story. The story the Journal searched for, and failed to find, can only be understood by starting from the fundamental but ignored fact that journalists are human beings. And human beings don't like to be betrayed, even when they participate in their own betrayal. Nor do they like to be tricked in writing stories and editorials which are not true.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- E.M.
Tough Butte falls on tough times

by Don Snow

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

In the backroom poker parlor, a game is getting fierce. Five players hunch around a table while spectators mill in and out. The winner so far is in his 50s, skinny as a drill, wearing a new suit, a dozen stubbed out cigarettes has that air of the conman. Mining, after all, is just like the old grey guy at the bar says: 'If you dig a hole, you eventually reach the bottom...'

Winners have made long shots here. Montana's silver and molybdenum, and its copper. Montana's biggest town, its political power center, the hub of its natural resources. The antique green dome atop the state capitol building reminded Marcus Daly, U.S. senator from Montana, of San Francisco's Port of the Barbary. With San Francisco his fortune was made. Marcus Daly, the richest copper mine owner in the world, was really boss in the Treasure State. Montana passed a new state constitutional amendment in 1910, giving Montana's mostly rural citizens of who control of the copper mines gave way to corporate domination when the Anaconda Copper Company bought out the Anaconda mines in 1899 and placed them under hold of the Anaconda Copper Company.

Annexation proceedings stripped Standard Oil of its copper holdings in 1913, but by then out-of-state domination of Montana copper was a well-established fact. The Anaconda Copper Mining Company, a control company, Butte, and Montana politics until the early 1970s when Montana passed a new constitution and Anaconda began a long slide into financial decline, walking along with its problems at the Atlantic Richfield Company.

Along the way, Butte became one of the West's most colorful towns, true mining pot where immigrants from a dozen European and Asian countries came together to redden their hands in copper. Ethnic ghettos sprouted in Butte: Chinatown and Finnish-Danish, Dublin Gulch and the Slavic neighborhood. Cornshells, known as Coonty, were imported from England. These undistinguished masters of mental mining helped dig out thousands of miles of tunnels beneath the homes and businessness of rowdy Butte.

By 1915, the Anaconda Company owned one of the world's greatest mining empires. Anaconda is now the production of copper, zinc and molybdenum, is opened a new aluminum smelter in Columbia Falls, Montana while it busy explores for chromite in Nevada and uranium in New Mexico. It owned 400,000 acres of Montana timberlands, and seven of the state's largest newspapers. The psyche green dome atop the state capitol building reminded Montana's mostly rural citizens of who was really boss in the Treasure State. And what the treasure was.

Today that once-great copper empire reaps in the belly of a whale called ARCO. Like several other copper giants, Anaconda is now owned by a multinational oil company with apparently great attention, greater need for large tax write-offs. Some 20 years ago Anaconda announced closure of the Washoe Smelter in Anaconda and the old copper refinery at Great Falls. Fifteen hundred workers lost their jobs. Announcing plans to sink $2 billion into improving its Montana copper operations, ARCO decided instead to ship its tailings pond is leaking sulfuric acid and toxic metals into the creek. ARCO announced that all Butte mining operations would cease at the end of June. This summer, the East Pit ore concentrator closed on schedule, throwing another thousand workers out on the streets. Anaconda officials complained they were losing a million dollars a week on the Butte operations, producing copper at a dollar a pound for a market that paid 70 cents. The company claims it owns a 20-year reserve of copper at the East Pit, but can't make it economically in today's market.

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

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

Now the final thread of hope for mine-related jobs in Butte hangs from Sen. Max Baucus' (D.-Mont.) effort to skim a million dollars from Montana's abandoned-mine reclamation fund, established by the 1977 federal Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act, to pay for pollution control along Silver Bow Creek near Butte. A company-owned tailings pond is leaking sulfuric acid and toxic metals into the creek. Reclamation might help Butte hang onto what it's still got. The biggest employer in Butte today, with 1,300 workers, is the Montana Power Company's central offices. Recently rumors that MPC might move to a more desirable city have been circulating around the state.

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

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

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

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

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