

Along Nature's Trail

By Ken McLeod

This column will continue the water policy statement of the Outdoor Writers Association which has been written in 27 paragraphs. The water policy committee would have preferred a much shorter statement if it had been possible to write it. However, members do not feel so badly since the President's Water Policy Commission used four big fat volumes to present its story. The OWAA water policy statement has been submitted to all members of the writers group and will be submitted to the national convention of that organization next week at Missoula, Mont.

J. Hammond Brown of the Baltimore News-Post and President of the Outdoor Writers Association of America stated, when he submitted the policy statements to the membership for consideration, comprehensive, yet at the same time concise approach to the important problem of 'Water Use Policy' so far presented to the American people. It has already attracted much attention nationally.

The statement continues:

20. The citizenry must be told the whole truth concerning great constructional projects which will be paid for, directly or indirectly by the citizens. Presentations of projects to the public and their representing officials that hide, distort, misrepresent or in any way mislead, cannot be tolerated. Overplaying "benefits" of a project, glossing over losses, underestimating costs to get initial approval with ultimate costs multiplying unreasonably, so far as possible keeping serious errors from general public knowledge, as has happened in actions of some public agencies, indicates either gross incompetence or lack of forthright honesty with the public and cannot be tolerated. The public is vitally concerned with what is done with and to the water resource to be misled or treated evasively by their servants dealing with our water wealth.

21. The robbing of one river basin of water by out-of-basin diversions to another drainage should not be approved except where thorough complete studies show that such a diversion shall produce benefits over the years of the future of greater value to the community at large than if the water resource continues to follow its original, natural line of transit. It is against the public interest to design and construct great trans-basin diversions for immediate needs, because of political pressures and related campaigning for such a diversion, where future needs and demands on water in the natural basin will return more to the state, region and nation in the future. It is the rankest opportunism to promote trans-basin diversion for political bureau aggrandizement, local demands of immediacy if there is reasonable question that if the water were to remain in the natural basin, within a few years it will serve equal or greater values. Mere "engineering feasibility" or the outcry of water-short areas that have over-built in relation to water supply in their natural drainage, are no justification for robbing a natural stream basin of its water wealth and the potentials of the community within it to use that water in producing values of high level in the future.

22. No swamp or marsh area should be drained until there is a comprehensive study of its value as a natural facility for maintaining water levels, acting as an equalizing facility in stream flow, and its productive capacity in wildlife and other values if retained in its natural state.

23. The ground water resource is estimated to be several times the quantity of surface water of all types and there must be more emphasis on conservation of this portion of the water wealth. The need for instituting necessary conservation measures bearing on ground water and its uses is immediate and mandatory.

24. Willful pollution of water by anyone constitutes destruction of wealth belonging to all, a theft from the community treasury. Pollution of water are inescapable. Integrity of pure spring water cannot be maintained as water is put in service. The governing precept must be to insist that those who make any use whatsoever of water resources return any unconsumed water to the general "water bank account" in such a condition that all possible additional uses may be protected and maintained farther along the line of transit. Minimizing pollution is a high level of enlightened self interest.

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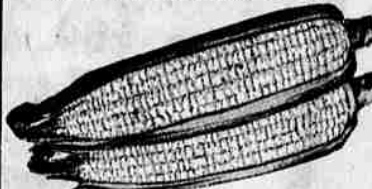
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