

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

news release

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SECRETARY URGES INCREASING CAUTION IN NEW WATER PROJECTS

WASHINGTON--Interior Secretary Cecil D. Andrus said today that the Nation's dam building program is subject to the law of diminishing returns "and before any new barriers are constructed, we must weigh each proposal with a genuine process that considers all factors in an honest evaluation."

Keynoting the 41st Annual Meeting of the National Wildlife Federation, Andrus said: "Let me suggest that we may have developed the best of the hydro-electric sites, that we have built some of the best reclamation projects, and having done this, the law of diminishing returns requires that we proceed with ever increasing caution."

Andrus said that the Carter Administration seeks to work with the Congress to establish a water policy that will protect that vital resource.

The Secretary said in addition to the current review of water projects, another top priority in the Interior Department is the preservation of the scenic and wildlife values of Alaska.

"In the Lower 48, we have belatedly managed to set aside portions of our finest scenery and wildlife habitat in national parks and wildlife refuges, but too often it has been too little, too late," Andrus said. "In Alaska we have a chance to do it right the first time, and it is our last chance to do it right."

He urged that the Congress move forward with the work of deciding which lands should go to the various Federal systems--parks, wildlife refuges, national forests, wild and scenic rivers and multiple-use areas in the stewardship of the Bureau of Land Management.

Noting that the tone for a new national administration is usually established within the first 100 days, Andrus said that President Carter already has taken significant actions to demonstrate "a deep personal commitment to end the waste and misuse of America's natural resources."

The Secretary said he already has started to break up the oft-criticized "fiefdoms" within the Interior Department.

"At Interior we have begun to make sweeping institutional and policy changes to end what I see as the domination of the Department by mining, oil and other special interests," Andrus said.

Referring to the Department as a "place like a centipede with each little pair of feet scuttling off in its own direction," Andrus pledged that in the future policy would be made responsive to his philosophy and that of President Carter.

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