

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

news release

For Release January 8, 1979

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METHODS FOR RESERVING INSTREAM FLOWS IN 13 WESTERN STATES EXPLORED BY INTERIOR DEPARTMENT PUBLICATIONS

The most promising methods of reserving instream flows for the benefit of fish and wildlife through governmental and institutional actions have been identified and evaluated in a series of reports for 13 Western States under a study announced today by Lynn A. Greenwalt, Director of the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This study is independent of the instream flow task force work which was organized as part of the President's Water Policy Initiative of July 1978.

Through its Western Water Allocation Project, the Service has identified the existing laws, procedures, and methods for reserving the flows of Western streams and rivers to protect fish and wildlife.

The 13 Western States included in this series of reports are California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota.

These reports are designed to be used as planning tools for fish and wildlife and water resource development agencies and environmental groups. They were produced under Service contracts with two consulting firms.

"Diversion of water from streams and rivers is one of the greatest threats to fish and wildlife in the water-short West," Greenwalt said. In the allocation of water under Western State law in the past, fish and wildlife have generally been given little or no consideration. Water is frequently allocated to higher priority uses until a stream is reduced to a trickle and is unable to maintain a viable fish habitat.

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"Over the years numerous projects have been constructed to irrigate land, provide flood protection, generate electric power, and provide supplies of domestic and industrial water. All have caused major impacts on fish and wildlife in the West, and competition for the limited remaining water is expected to be intense during the next 10 years, primarily because of increased demands from energy development and land reclamation."

The Fish and Wildlife Service has produced separate reports for each of the 13 States because of the variety of laws regarding instream flows, as well as the differing State traditions concerning water rights and their past experiences in reserving instream flows for fish and wildlife.

Each of the reports is divided into three main sections--a guide to help the reader select the most appropriate strategy for reserving instream flow in any particular situation from among the various procedures and actions available in each State, a summary evaluation of the effectiveness of the strategy in the particular State, and a detailed narrative description of the procedures for implementing the strategy and an example of its use in the State.

Copies of these reports may be obtained from the Technical Information Officer, Western Energy and Land Use Team, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2625 Redwing Road, Fort Collins, Colorado 80526. Each of the 13 reports is entitled "Instream Flow Strategies for . . . (State)." When requesting reports, specific States should be identified.

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