

Insane plan threatens the Missouri Basin

by Leif Johnson

The testimony excerpted here was presented by Mr. Johnson at a hearing conducted by the Army Corps of Engineers on Oct. 5 in St. Louis, Missouri. This was one of 15 public hearings being held throughout the Missouri Basin, on a proposal to increase the flow of the Missouri River in the spring, for the benefit of the interior least tern, the piping plover, and the pallid sturgeon. The proposal is the end product of a policy review that began in 1989 and has so far cost \$12 million. The plan involves reducing the flow of the river in the fall, thereby cutting navigation at the peak period between the fall harvest and the winter freeze.

We are discussing tonight whether the Corps of Army Engineers should simulate the pre-1960s spring-summer floods for the alleged benefit of two or three bird and fish species.

This is not . . . a question of saving wildlife. Any person genuinely concerned about wildlife would have moved heaven and earth to prevent the disastrous flood of 1993. The loss to both wildlife and trees has been incalculable. In Missouri, 15-25% of the wetlands were flooded out, a significant portion lying in the Missouri Basin, and estimates of tree die-off from the extended period of flooding are as high as 35 and 40%. Have the so-called environmentalists made a reckoning of the actual loss of waterfowl, fish, and fauna from that flood—a flood that could have been prevented, but whose preventive measures the environmentalists fought?

Had the Pick-Sloan Plan, authorized by Congress in 1944, not been blocked by the budget cutters and the environmentalists, there would have been no 1993 flood—at least on the Missouri River. Completion of the Pick-Sloan Missouri Basin Plan, and development of a companion plan for the Upper Mississippi, is the only bona fide purpose of this and other Corps hearings.

Why, then, are we discussing a plan to defeat the purpose of the upstream dams by simulating spring flooding? Why are we discussing a plan that defeats what taxpayers have spent billions to construct and which benefits one-sixth the land mass of the continental United States? Why does the Corps waste its time and money on hearings on an insane, arbitrary, and destructive proposal that has been almost unanimously rejected and denounced by residents and officials in every previous Corps hearing?

EPA secret directives

The reason is that proponents of the United Nations Biodiversity Treaty are not merely proposing to force “human occupants” out of the Missouri-Mississippi river basins, but are setting the stage for the a United Nations protectorate or “trusteeship” over the world’s river basins, coastal areas, high seas, forests, deserts, rangelands, and mountain ranges to allegedly protect the “ecosystems” of flora and fauna which the high priests of Gaia, the goddess of Mother Earth, deem endangered by the activities of mankind.

The reason we sit here today, taking the valuable time of the dedicated Corps personnel, is found in an internal working document of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) dated Aug. 5, 1993, which states that “the Executive branch should direct federal agencies to evaluate national policies on environmental protection and resource management [to] fulfill existing international obligations [e.g., the Convention on Biological Diversity, Agenda 21], [and] amend national policies to more effectively achieve international objectives.”

That EPA document calls upon federal agencies to “present recommendations to Congress for legislative changes necessary to ensure national laws are consistent with national policy for protecting ecosystems, [and] convene summits for negotiating change in regional economics as an essential means for managing sustainable ecosystems.” [See also *EIR*, Sept. 2, 1994, p. 32.]

It is important to remember what the term “ecosystems” means to the proponents of the Convention on Biological Diversity. In a memorandum written by Miguel Lovera and Simone Bilderbeek of the Netherlands Committee for the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, August 1994, they state: “There is not a square meter of Earth without biodiversity. . . . How can one imagine forests or agriculture without biodiversity? Forests, for example, are a component of biodiversity; . . . it can never be denied that they form an ecosystem and thus a component of biodiversity. For that reason, it is a denial of international law when global forests are being discussed without constant reference to the legally binding document which deals with this ecosystem.” . . .

The Corps of Army Engineers’ mandate for activities comes only from the Congress, and Congress has given the Corps no mandate to de-construct, in any fashion, including the one proposed, existing river improvements in the United States. Nor is the Convention on Biological Diversity binding upon the United States until ratified by the Senate of the United States. The Senate has not ratified that treaty. . . .

Therefore what the Corps proposes today is simply illegal under existing U.S. law. Because the simulation of spring flooding would endanger life and property, the Corps is exposing itself to legal action, and even possibly action to recover monies wasted in promulgating proposed regulations that it had no congressional mandate to prepare or issue.