
The Arkansas-White-Red Basins Inter-Agency Committee

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During the last century many Federal and State executive departments and agencies have successively been charged with responsibilities relating to the development, utilization, and conservation of the Nation's water resources. Progress in coordinating and integrating the activities of these agencies has been achieved both through statutory provisions and administrative actions. Federal inter-agency cooperation on matters concerning public health has been accomplished largely through administrative procedures.

For a number of years, inter-agency agreements have formed the basis for Public Health Service undertakings related to Federal development of water and land resources. The malaria surveys, reports on impounded water activities, and mosquito investigations in irrigated areas, exemplify Communicable Disease Center activities undertaken in accordance with such agreements reached with the Corps of Engineers and Bureau of Reclamation. Although much benefit has accrued as a result of efforts to incorporate public health considerations into planning for major water resources programs, many weaknesses have been evident in this agreement procedure for voluntary cooperation. While consultant services by CDC have been rendered to constructing agencies under various agreements, heretofore there has been a noticeable lack of provisions for integrated planning with interests such as Fish and Wildlife Service, Soil Conservation Service, National Park Service, Forest Service, and others. The establishment of the Arkansas-White-Red Basins Inter-Agency Committee (AWRBIAC) and participation by CDC in the work of that Committee, now make close coordination within these constituent agencies a reality. The potentialities of the AWRBIAC are great. A review of the steps leading

to its formation may add to a better understanding of its importance.

The need for comprehensive planning and development to meet national objectives and derive maximum benefits from our river systems and their watersheds long has been recognized. A forward step was taken on December 29, 1943, when an inter-agency agreement established the Federal Inter-Agency River Basin Committee (FIARBC). (Original members included the Departments of Agriculture, the Army, the Interior, and the Federal Power Commission. The Department of Commerce became a party to the agreement in 1946 and the Federal Security Agency in 1950).

The purpose of the agreement was to provide a means for constituent agencies "to cooperate more completely in the preparation of reports on multiple-purpose projects and to correlate the results to the greatest practicable extent." Of special interest to this group was the River and Harbor and Flood Control Acts of 1950, which, among other things, contained a special provision for a comprehensive survey of the Arkansas, White, and Red River Basins. (The Arkansas, White, and Red River Basins contain about 180,000,000 acres of land located in 8 States, namely: Louisiana, Arkansas, Missouri, Texas, Kansas, Colorado, Oklahoma, and New Mexico.)

Upon passage of this bill the President of the United States pointed out in separate letters to member agencies of the FIARBC that "It is essential that the Executive agencies organize their efforts to realize as far as possible under existing law, the potentialities of the broad-scale, integrated national resources study for the Arkansas, White, and Red River Basins authorized in H. R. 5472." For the purpose of conducting this survey, the President requested as a first step that the various agencies concerned "organize an inter-agency committee, formulate procedure, and map out a joint plan of investigation, indicating specifically the precise responsibilities of each and the

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prospective allocation of agency resources to the joint effort." The establishment of the field inter-agency committee requested by the President was directed by resolution of the FIARBC on June 12, 1950.

Representatives of the Communicable Disease Center attended the first meeting of the AWRBIAC* on July 28, 1950. There plans were laid with the FSA representative for CDC participation in Public Health Service phases of the comprehensive study. An agreement between Public Health Service Divisions provides that "The FSA representative on the field committee shall have responsibility for all PHS matters contained in the report of the AWRBIAC and shall have full responsibility for PHS work with the Committee," and "Liaison men will be designated by CDC, EHC, and the Sanitation Division to cooperate with the FSA representative."

Public Health Service interests as stated to the Committee by the FSA representative are: "(1) The prevention or reduction of pollution of inter-State waters and their tributaries and the improvement of surface and underground water, (2) the safeguarding of public and domestic water supplies, (3) the protection and proper management of water recreational facilities for the benefit of health and welfare, (4) safeguarding against property damage resulting from pollution and from the harmful effect of mosquitoes, and (5) public health aspects of

*Composed of same agencies as FIARBC.

flood control, drainage, and irrigation." It was further stated that "It is an objective of the Public Health Service to determine that no serious public health hazards be incorporated into water resources development projects."

In preparation for a comprehensive report, the Committee has designated the Public Health Service as the Chairman Agency for work groups to study and report on Pollution Abatement and Mosquito Control. The subjects for which work groups have been established are: (1) Navigation; (2) Flood Control, Water Flow Retardation, and Flood Forecasting; (3) Drainage; (4) Domestic and Industrial Water Supply; (5) Irrigation and Reclamation; (6) Hydroelectric Power Development and Utilization; (7) Agriculture, Soil Conservation, Forestry and Sediment Control; (8) Fish and Wildlife; (9) Recreation; (10) Pollution Abatement; (11) Land Resources Data; (12) Economic Base Survey; (13) Water Resources Data; (14) Mapping; (15) Mineral and Geology; (16) Mosquito Control and Allied Problems; (17) Description of Basin and Statistical Information; and (18) Benefits and Costs. The Communicable Disease Center, having primary interest in item 16 above, assigned a representative to the office of the FSA member on October 1, 1950 to carry out the study and prepare the Mosquito Control Report. In performing this function, this representative is assisted by other members of the work group, including interested Federal agencies and representatives of the eight States. Thus, coordination is achieved during the planning stages.

Foreign Visitors to CDC

During the month of September the following public health officers and trainees were visitors to CDC:

Miss Edith M. Radley, Missionary Nurse, United Church of Canada, Angola, Portuguese West Africa.

Kenneth H. Ave, District Sanitary Inspector, Department of Health, Hilo, Hawaii.

Robert Y. W. Lee, Supervisor, Rodent Control, Department of Health, Hilo, Hawaii.

Allan McDermott, Superintendent of Roads and Works, Jamaica Government, Montego Bay, Jamaica, B.W.I.

Walter J. Sczawinski, Sanitarian, Alaska Department of Health, Anchorage, Alaska.