

Delaware River—performed an active, although limited, basin function. Its concern was dominantly with upgrading the quality of the river for all-purpose use. It had to its credit, with virtually only a skeleton full-time staff, the creation of many quality standards reasonably and generally enforced by the participating States of Delaware, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania. This early commission had legislative sanction, limited authority, other than investigative and education, and an even more limited budget. Its basin coverage was some 12,000 square miles.

Increasing dissatisfaction, primarily with the rate of development of the Delaware River and Valley, led to the drafting in 1961 of a new interstate-Federal compact. It was submitted to the Congress of the United States and to the legislatures of the four States for approval and ratification. This was accomplished and a new regional agency is now in existence. Its central assignment is to administer comprehensively all aspects of water use and development in the valley and to promote sound practices of watershed management. Implicit in the creation of the agency was a strong affirmation of acceptance of local responsibility, no doubt accompanied by an equally strong intent to tap existing and future sources of Federal money. A mechanism is now available for determining policies and their implementation according to the desires of the people of the valley. Simultaneously, detailed provision is made for the coordination of existing Federal agency interests—some 25 in all. In the philosophy underlying the institution the Federal Government is a full voting partner, but not necessarily the sole arbiter of destiny or the source of all funds.

The Delaware River Basin Commission has relatively broad powers. Among other functions, it may—

Plan, design, acquire, construct, reconstruct, complete, own, improve, extend, develop, operate, and maintain any and all projects, facilities, properties, activities, and services determined by the commission to be necessary, convenient, or useful for the purposes of the compact.

Negotiate for such loans, services, or other aids as may be lawfully available from public or private sources to finance or assist in effectuating any of the purposes of the compact; and to receive and accept such aid upon such terms and conditions, and subject to such provisions for repayment, as may be required by Federal or State law or the commission may deem necessary or desirable.

From time to time, after public notice and hearing, fix, alter, and revise rates, rentals, charges, and tolls and classifications thereof, for the use of facilities which it may own or operate and for products and services rendered thereby, without regulation or control by any department, office, or agency of any signatory party.

The life and the activities of this commission have been too limited to assess, as yet, the accomplishments versus the hopes. In any event, the machinery for action, reflective of local, State, and Federal partnership, is now available. There is every reason to anticipate that successful development on a coordinated front should ensue over the near future. Total water management, with an appropriate major ingredient of pollution abatement, will undoubtedly be demonstrated as within the capabilities of a regional entity.