

RESULTS OF THESE NEW APPROACHES

It is too early to have a valid evaluation of these recent developments in terms of their implications for further reorganization of resources functions.

The Water Resources Planning Act is only two years old, and we have not achieved national consensus.

The Water Resources Council and the President's Council on Recreation and Natural Beauty provide mechanisms for continuous attention to coordination problems in these areas where coordination problems are most pressing. They have already relieved the President and the Executive Office of a substantial burden of day-to-day coordination.

CONCLUSION

In summary, while several agencies are responsible for major natural resource functions, we are optimistic that the new approaches to coordination will overcome many of the long-standing problems.

Both the Water Resources Planning Act and the Outdoor Recreation Act reflect the recent tendency to rely on comprehensive plans as the major instrument for coordination in program areas where Federal agencies, and often State Governments as well, have common, related, or complementary functions. There is general agreement that comprehensive river basin plans are essential to sound development of water and related resources, and some experts in the field believe it does not much matter what Federal agency subsequently carries out the plan so long as actions conform to it.

With a Department of Natural Resources, the President and the Congress could look to a single Department head, rather than the group of Department heads composing the Water Resources Council, for leadership and policy recommendations geared to the national interest and objectives. The possibility of overlapping and duplication of work could be eliminated, and the machinery for interagency and intergovernmental coordination could be streamlined.

The principal differences in approach to the management of natural resources that problems of interagency and intergovernmental coordination can only be reduced—they cannot be eliminated—by reorganization.