

FLOOD DAMAGE TO PROPERTY AND LIFE

Property damage and loss of life by flooding is a major water problem and has seriously plagued our watershed sixteen times in the past three decades. The need for reservoir flood-water control was dramatized fully during the tragic flood of June 16, 1964 when seven people drowned, and over \$5 million in property damage occurred. Again on September 7, 1965, the Big Papio Creek rampaged causing over \$500,000 in property damage. The total effect of damage from these recent flooding events as well as a Standard Project Flood have been carefully evaluated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the losses from a standard project-size flood run into staggering proportions. Rapid urbanization in our cities of Omaha, Milliard, Ralston, Papillion, and Bellevue has placed new demands on our creek channels; and flooding of floodplain property has become as frequent as 5 out of the past 8 years. A cloud burst in the center of the Papio Watershed, such as we experienced in June of 1964, would leave thousands homeless, endanger numerous lives, and cause complete ruin to many farm, commercial, and industrial businesses. Present population in the Papio Basin is about 425,000. Population projections for the basin show the present population to double by the year 2000.

RECOMMENDED PLAN

A system of 21 flood control reservoirs distributed throughout the watershed is the most effective means of providing the necessary flood flow reductions and flood control benefits. Together, the 21 dams and reservoirs would regulate flows originating from 188 square miles or 47 percent of the Papillion Creek drainage basin. When installed, the reservoirs would provide an average annual flood-damage reduction of \$1.6 million over a 100-year project economic life. The economic feasibility of the multipurpose plan of improvement yields a high benefit-cost ratio of 2.0. It combines recreation and water quality features with the flood control function, and all have a widespread regional affect throughout the Omaha-Metropolitan area.

The reservoirs would afford the opportunity to develop a major water recreation-oriented program around the 4,400 acres of lake surface in the conservation sediment-reserve zones of the reservoirs. Outdoor and water-based recreation opportunities are now inadequate to serve the growing population of the metropolitan area. Not only is this project economically justified locally, but its purposes and benefits will help this nation's economic and social goals as well.

LOCAL SUPPORT

On August 30, 1966, the Papio Watershed Board adopted a resolution accepting the Corps of Engineers' Flood Control Plan as the most effective and economical plan for flood damage prevention and for multiple use of our water resource. It was our recommendation to the sponsoring County Governing Boards that they accept the Plan and direct the Papio Watershed Board to secure early Congressional authorization for project design and construction. We have been directed by the sponsoring County Governing Boards to serve as their local representatives in providing information and counsel as needed to the citizens and landowners affected or inconvenienced by the purchase of land and construction of the flood control works.

Due to the proximity of key reservoir sites near the rapidly urbanizing areas of Omaha and its suburbs, we feel that advance acquisition of project lands will be required to preserve the needed reservoir sites against incompatible developments. We urge that, following authorization, funds be appropriated to enable the Corps to make site investigations and project designs to accurately define the lands required and subsequently make advance acquisition of lands for sites nearest the urban fringe.

LOCAL COOPERATION

Local interest and support for this much-needed project are very high. The Papio Watershed Office has received over 50 letters and 500 signatures on petitions of support for the flood control plan from cities, counties, corporations, civic groups, and others. Local officials and civic leaders have long been working toward a comprehensive basin-wide solution of the flood and erosion problems since the serious basin-wide floods in 1944. In 1954, the Papio Watershed Steering Committee requested planning help from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S.D.A., Soil Conservation Service; and planning priority was established in April, 1955. In the meantime, local tax funds were pooled to begin channel clearing and maintenance on the Big Papio through Omaha. Since 1964, over