

NATIONAL RESOURCES BOARD

**A Report on National Planning and Public Works
in Relation to Natural Resources and including
Land Use and Water Resources
with
Finding and Recommendations**

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DECEMBER 1, 1934

**Submitted to the President in Accordance with
Executive Order No. 6777, June 30, 1934**

NATIONAL RESOURCES BOARD

INTERIOR BUILDING

WASHINGTON

November 28, 1934.

The PRESIDENT,
The White House,
Washington, D. C.

MY DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

We have the honor to transmit herewith the report of the National Resources Board with the supporting documents used in its preparation.

This report carries this significance: That it is the first attempt in our national history to make an inventory of our national assets and of the problems related thereto. Moreover, for the first time it draws together the foresight of the various planning agencies of the Federal Government and suggests a method for future cooperation.

The members of the Board have not all had an opportunity to give full consideration to all of the points involved. However, they unanimously agree in principle and desire to indicate to you their belief in the great importance of this study and of initiating steps toward the accomplishment of the broad program therein outlined.

Very respectfully yours,

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HENRY A. WALLACE
Secretary of Agriculture
DANIEL C. ROPER
Secretary of Commerce
FRANCES PERKINS
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Federal Emergency Relief Administrator
FREDERIC A. DELANO
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FOREWORD

The natural resources of America are the heritage of the whole Nation and should be conserved and utilized for the benefit of all of our people. Our national democracy is built upon the principle that the gains of our civilization are essentially mass gains and should be administered for the benefit of the many rather than the few; our priceless resources of soil, water, minerals are for the service of the American people, for the promotion of the welfare and well-being of all citizens. The present study of our natural resources is carried through in this spirit and with a desire to make this principle a living fact in America.

Unfortunately this principle has not always been followed even when declared; on the contrary, there has been tragic waste and loss of resources and human labor, and widespread spoliation and misuse of the natural wealth of the many by the few.

The conservation movement begun a quarter of a century ago marked the beginning of an organized national effort to protect and develop these assets; and this national policy was aided in many instances by the individual States. To some extent the shameful waste of timber, oil, soil, and minerals has been halted, although with terrible exceptions where ignorance, inattention, or greed has devastated our heritage almost beyond belief.

This report of the President's National Resources Board brings together, for the first time in our history, exhaustive studies by highly competent inquirers of land use, water use, minerals, and related public works in their relation to each other and to national planning. The report lays the basis of a comprehensive long-range national policy for the conservation and development of our fabulous natural resources. If the recommendations contained herein are put into effect, it is believed that they will end the untold waste of our national domain now, and will measurably enrich and enlarge these national treasures as time goes on.

An examination of the reports upon land, water, minerals, and public works, respectively, shows the importance of considering these special factors in their relations to one another, and to economic and governmental problems as well. Water policies and land policies cannot be planned except as taken together, and evidently minerals cannot be considered apart from land in a planning program. Erosion is a problem of land and water; afforestation is likewise a problem of land and water; flood control is related to navigation

and also to land cultivation systems. Water pollution is closely related to industrial development, as well as to sanitation, urban and rural. Reclamation policies are inseparable from the agricultural policy of the Nation, while the recreation policies discussed in relation to land and water are appropriate to any comprehensive plan for social welfare.

It is the special purpose of the National Resources Board to bring together these and other social interests, sets of data, and principles of action, and to consider them from the over-all position of national policy. In so doing, we should guard against too narrow a view of the possibilities of natural resources development, attractive as they are. The economic crisis in the United States was not caused by erosion, serious as its inroads are on our soil assets; nor is unemployment due chiefly to lack of adequate flood control, calamitous as the consequences of floods are in many instances. It is too much to suppose that the proper development of our drainage basins will of itself solve the problems of the perplexed body politic.

The problems centering around land and water cannot be solved in these terms alone, but require for their practical and successful treatment a full consideration of the broader but closely related aspects of agriculture, industry, labor, transportation and communication, health, education, public finance, governmental organization.

Finally, human resources and human values are more significant than the land, water, and minerals on which men are dependent. The application of engineering and technological knowledge to the reorganization of the natural resources of the Nation is not an end in itself, but is to be conceived as a means of progressively decreasing the burdens imposed upon labor, raising the standard of living, and enhancing the well-being of the masses of the people. It follows that the social directives back of such technical programs should be developed by persons competent by training and point of view to appraise the human values involved.

A *continuous national planning* agency was recommended by the National Planning Board of the Public Works Administration in its report last June. By Executive order, on June 30, 1934, the President established the National Resources Board as successor to the National Planning Board and the Committee on National Land Problems, consisting of the Secretary of the Interior, Secretary of Agriculture and the Admin-

istrator of Federal Emergency Relief. Thus the new Board represented a consolidation of previously existing agencies and a continuation of earlier activities.

As its first task, the National Resources Board was directed to prepare a report on land and water resources to be presented to the President by December 1, 1934. In this emergency undertaking the Board had the aid of two technical committees, one upon land planning, the other upon water planning. It is significant that, after careful study of the special problems assigned to them, both of these committees presented reports reiterating the need of a permanent planning organization.

State and regional planning has been assisted by the National Resources Board through continuation of assignment of consultants to State planning agencies. Largely as a result of the suggestions and stimulation supplied by the National Planning Board and the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, 42 State planning boards have been set up by the governors of the respective States and are actively functioning today.

Public works planning was studied intensively by the National Planning Board and a series of researches was arranged and carried to completion. From these data, long-range policies have been developed and are now available for consideration in connection with legislation for the continuation of the Public Works Administration.

Water planning was given a new importance and broader interpretation through the work of the Missis-

issippi Valley Committee of the Public Works Administration and the President's Committee on Water Flow. Since a large proportion of the construction bill of the Federal Government is paid out for projects related to water—power, dams, navigation improvements, flood control, etc.—it is particularly appropriate that a water program should be prepared at this time as a sample of public-works planning. For this work, the former Mississippi Valley Committee has become the water planning committee of the National Resources Board.

Land planning studies have similarly been carried on continuously over many years, but new efforts were beginning to bear fruit in the Committee on National Land Problems and the Agricultural Adjustment Administration when the National Resources Board was organized. Through the land planning committee, previously set up by the National Planning Board, this work has been coordinated and a restatement of new and old policies is now submitted.

Mineral planning studies were begun by the planning committee for mineral policy upon its appointment by the President last April and have been continued with assistance from the National Resources Board. The preliminary findings of the committee are summarized in the following pages.

These matters are treated in this report in accordance with the following table of contents.

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