
ENERGY RESOURCES AND NATIONAL POLICY

REPORT OF THE
ENERGY RESOURCES COMMITTEE
TO THE
NATIONAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

NATIONAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE
JANUARY 1939

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

To the Congress of the United States:

In accordance with my request of March 15, 1938, the National Resources Committee, in consultation with the other Federal agencies concerned, has prepared a comprehensive study of our energy resources, which I present herewith for your consideration.

This report represents the joint effort of many specialists both within and outside the Federal Government. It suggests policies, investigations, and legislation necessary to carry forward a broad national program for the prudent utilization and conservation of the Nation's energy resources.

Our resources of coal, oil, gas, and water power provide the energy to turn the wheels of industry, to service our homes, and to aid in national defense. We now use more energy per capita than any other people, and our scientists tell us there will be a progressively increasing demand for energy for all purposes.

Our energy resources are not inexhaustible, yet we are permitting waste in their use and production. In some instances, to achieve apparent economies today future generations will be forced to carry the burden of unnecessarily high costs and to substitute inferior fuels for particular purposes. National policies concerning these vital resources must recognize the availability of all of them; the location of each with respect to its markets; the costs of transporting them; the technological developments which will increase the efficiency of their production and use; the use of the lower grade coals; and the relationships between the increased use of energy and the general economic development of the country.

In the past the Federal Government and the States have undertaken various measures to conserve our heritage in these resources. In general, however, each of these efforts has been directed toward the problems in a single field: Toward the protection of the public interest in the power of flowing water in the Nation's rivers; toward the relief of economic and human distress in the mining of coal; or toward the correction of demoralizing and wasteful practices and conditions in the industries producing oil and natural gas. It is time now to take a larger view: To recognize—more fully than has been possible or perhaps needful in the past—that each of our great natural resources of energy affects the others.

It is difficult in the long run to envisage a national coal policy, or a national petroleum policy, or a national water-power policy without also in time a national policy directed toward all of these energy producers—that is, a national energy resources policy. Such a broader and integrated policy toward the problems of coal, petroleum, natural gas, and water power cannot be evolved overnight.

The widening interest and responsibility on the part of the Federal Government for the conservation and wise use of the Nation's energy resources raises many perplexing questions of policy determination. Clearly, there must be adequate and continuing planning and provision for studies which will reflect the best technical experience available, as well as full consideration for both regional and group interests.

Some Federal legislation affecting the energy resources will expire at the end of this fiscal year, other legislation at the end of a few more years. This report sets forth a useful frame of reference for legislative programs affecting these resources and illustrates another approach to the systematic husbandry of our natural resources. Specific recommendations are advanced for solution of the most pressing problems.

In order to facilitate its use by the Congress, I recommend that this report be printed together with the supporting staff reports and illustrations, when these are available in final form, in conformity with similar reports prepared by the National Resources Committee.

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT.

THE WHITE HOUSE,
February 15, 1939.

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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

NATIONAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE
INTERIOR BUILDING
WASHINGTON

January 28, 1939.

The PRESIDENT,
The White House.

MY DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

We have the honor to transmit a report on the energy resources of the Nation with recommendations for their prudent utilization and conservation in relation to each other and to the national economic structure.

In accordance with your request, the report has been prepared in consultation with all other interested agencies of the Government. It includes supporting papers by specialists from both inside and outside the Government, assembled and summarized by a staff under the direction of Dr. Ralph J. Watkins.

The findings and recommendations, in which we concur, point the way to a national policy for the prudent conservation and wise use of our energy resources.

Sincerely yours,

HAROLD L. ICKES
Secretary of the Interior, Chairman

HARRY H. WOODRING,
Secretary of War.
H. A. WALLACE,
Secretary of Agriculture.
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NOTE

Attention is directed to the fact that since this report was completed, the National Bituminous Coal Commission has been abolished under the President's Reorganization Plan No. 2 and its powers, duties, and functions transferred to the Secretary of the Interior. Also, the Connally Act regulating interstate and foreign commerce in petroleum, which would have expired on June 30, 1939, has been extended for an indefinite period by the Congress.

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NOTE

The publication of these staff reports does not imply that the National Resources Committee or the Energy Resources Committee concurs in the recommendations contained herein. The views and opinions expressed are those of each of the authors responsible for preparing the individual reports.

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