

8 Scottsdale (Az.) Daily Progress April 10, 1979

Congressional hearing

Audubon head hits CAP

WASHINGTON — The Central Arizona Project is "as large a social failure as it is an economic turkey," the president of the Maricopa Audubon Society told a congressional subcommittee today.

Robert Witzeman, president of the Maricopa Audubon Society, asked Congress to halt funding of the CAP until its "economic justification and the true water needs of central Arizona can be reassessed."

The project will not help family farms and most of the water will go to Arizona cities, Witzeman told the Senate and House Public Works Appropriations Subcommittees.

"Most of the CAP water would go to Arizona cities, contrary to the intent and purposes of the Reclamation Act which was to help small family farming," Witzeman said. "What little water will reach farmers will be misused because 73 percent of the crops grown in central Arizona are eligible for federal 'set-asides.'" he added.

Witzeman also presented the committee the findings in the report, "An Economic Analysis of the Central Arizona Project," prepared by Thomas Power, chairman of the University of Montana Economics Department.

The CAP is not a "reclamation" project, Witzeman told the committee. "As a result, billion of U.S. tax dollars will be spent so that some of the richest and fastest growing communities in the West can be provided with water they could provide more cheaply themselves," he said.

Witzeman said he disapproved of the "pork-barrel logic that leads billions of federal dollars to be spent on self-contradictory projects which not only do not provide any net benefits to the public, but cancel the benefits of other federal projects."

About 20 Arizona cities are due to get CAP water in the mid-to-late 1980s.

Coalition's drive could delay CAP

Tucson Citizen

Gannett News Service

WASHINGTON — A campaign to delay construction on water projects in the Colorado River Basin until after further study of a host of regional, national and international water issues continues to mount.

Charging mismanagement of the basin's water, a half-dozen environmentalists and representatives of taxpayer organizations announced formation of the Coalition for Responsible Management of the Colorado Basin to press for a review of whether the projects are needed and how river water is allocated among the states.

The review, which the coalition wants conducted by federal, state and local governments and private groups, could threaten massive water developments like the Central Arizona Project and further complicate efforts to get Colorado projects like the Savery-Pothook and Fruitland-Mesa started again. The Colorado projects have been halted by President Carter.

The coalition includes such organizations as the Audubon Society, National Wildlife Federation, Friends of the River of California and Citizens Concerned About the Project of Phoenix. The coalition claims members in all seven states in the river's basin.

Three other environmental groups — the Environmental Defense Fund, Wilderness Society and Trout Unlimited — already have filed suit in federal district court here to force the federal government to prepare a basinwide environmental statement on the effect of water projects along the 1,400-mile river.

The Interior Department agrees with the environmental groups that such a comprehensive statement is required under federal law, and is seeking authority from Congress to spend \$575,000 this year to begin the study that is expected to cost a total of \$4.15 million.

The new coalition wants to widen this environmental study to cover all possible

water issues in the basin, including energy development, Indian water rights, salinity of the river and U.S.-Mexican relations.

Water officials from states along the Colorado River as well as many members of Congress contend, as one said here last week, that the river and the projects "have been studied to death" and that further studies will only delay the projects. But members of the new coalition argue that past studies have just looked at projects individually without considering their effect on each other and on the entire river basin.

The Colorado River Basin "is a system, and it should be operated as a system," said Pat Porenteau, an attorney with the National Wildlife Federation.

The coalition said that Mexico and the seven states in the basin — Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada and California — are due 16.5 million acre-feet of water annually under agreements signed in 1922 and 1944, but there are only 13 to 15 million acre-feet available annually.

When projects like the Central Arizona Project are completed, the coalition said the demand actually will exceed the supply and cause problems, particularly for states like California which has been using up to double its entitlement because Arizona hasn't been using its full share. The coalition said such a problem might be avoided through more conservation and use of groundwater supplies. For example, Frank Welsh of the Citizens Concerned about the Project claimed there is enough water under Phoenix to meet the city's needs through a 100-year total drought.

The coalition said no one knows how much groundwater there is under basin states like California and Colorado, and added that this should be determined before the projects are completed. A study of groundwater supplies in northwestern Colorado is expected to start soon.

MAS testimony makes Phoenix Gazette front page!

The Phoenix Gazette

ON INSIDE PAGES

Page	Page
Comics B-4	Editorials A-6
Crossword A-5	Sports B5-8
Deaths C-2	Weather A-5

Complete Index on Page A-2

Vol. 99, No. 244

GAZETTE PHONE NUMBERS
PAGE A-2

PHOENIX, ARIZONA, SATURDAY AFTERNOON, JUNE 2, 1979
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20 CENTS

• FLOOD

(Concluded from Page A-1)

Valley users? "Setting aside a small percent of the project's capacity to tame the 100-year flood is worth it economically compared to both the value and cost of the water.

"Around \$1 million in average annual damages could be saved by reducing the 100-year flood plain from 195,000 cubic feet per second to 160,000 cfs — the Valley Forward Rio Salado concept."

• SRP can be compensated for water taken from project boundaries just as it is now compensated by the Roosevelt Irrigation District and Conservation District.

Witzeman declared ground water recharge would avoid any loss of water due to vacated flood control space.

"By drawing down on the six upstream reservoirs year around, evaporative losses and salinity problems could be reduced.

"Our Valley's water table would be augmented and electrical savings would occur from the reduced pump-lifts, especially during the peak summer demand periods."

In companion testimony, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service urged "consideration of nonstructural alternatives now being studied such as flood-plain zoning and management, ground water recharge and re-regulation of existing reservoirs."

An Orme Dam alternatives study to be completed in 1982 under direction of the U.S. Reclamation Bureau is under way.

WILDLIFE field supervisor Gilbert D. Metz also declared, "Inclusion of measures such as these . . . would minimize adverse environmental impacts and help ensure the conservation and enhancement of riparian habitat, important bald eagle nesting



AUDUBON PROPOSAL

Alternate To Orme Could Save Millions

By JOHN L. CARPENTER
Gazette Reporter

The Maricopa Audubon Society told a congressional subcommittee here today that Metro Phoenix could solve its flooding problems for less than \$40 million — a considerable saving over the estimated \$240 million cost of the Orme Dam.

The proposal would include building a channel around the airport, levees or relocation of two small communities downstream from Phoenix, better bridges, a better flood warning sys-

tem and use of gated portions of existing Salt River Project dams.

This was the testimony of Robert A. Witzeman, society president, who said "many of these measures are already under way, showing that this community is really willing to address its flood control problem now rather than waiting years to build a dam."

MORE THAN 40 persons representing several segments of the community testified Friday and today before the water resources subcommittee of the U.S. House Public Works

Committee. Panel members came at behest of Rep. John R. Rhodes, R-Ariz., House minority leader.

Friday Rhodes proposed development of a Rio Salado greenbelt down the Salt River bed, plus a water storage and flood control reservoir at the Orme Dam site — the confluence of the Salt and Verde rivers.

Witzeman made these points:

• SRP storage space could be used to hold back "damaging peak portions" of floodwater. With better upstream warning, the gated portions of the reservoirs would be usable to capture such peak flows.

• Does use of the gated storage area for flood control withhold water from

Turn to • FLOOD, Page A-4

← MAS makes the front page!

WATCH ON THE VERDE

the object was to guard the eaglet until it reached maturity

arizona □ July 15, 1979

by Susan Connolly and Ellen Quilty

photographs by Elsa Brett

We were at our homes in New York and Massachusetts experiencing the height of winter when the call came from Paul Lowes, a friend in Scottsdale. He asked if we would like to observe bald eagles in the desert for four months. He had watched the eagles the year before for the Audubon Society. We started packing immediately and soon were on our way.

We were shown our new homes for the next few months, about a mile below Bartlett Dam on the west side of the Verde River. The eagle nest was set into a rock wall over a bend in the river.

For the past two years the Audubon Society has been hiring "guardians" to watch over eagle nests. The society is then reimbursed by the Forest Service. The Audubon also has had people go there to observe the effect of the environment on eagle life. The notes gathered by everyone eventually goes to the Forest Service and Audubon Society.

Arizona has the only desert nesting bald eagles in the world. There are only seven known pairs of the endangered species in the state.

It was February 3 when we began and the eagles were sitting on eggs about one week before our arrival. The patience involved in the incubation process had begun for us, as well as for the eagles. Because it takes four to five weeks from the start of incubation to the hatching, it was going to be a while before we saw any action on the nest.

Our daily routine became established quickly; easily and enjoyably. Rise and shine by 6:30 a.m., which became the favorite part of our day. We would breakfast on homemade tortillas and peanut butter with much coffee. By 7:30 we arrived at point one, which was the spot to view the birds. Since there were two of us, we split the job. One would watch the birds and record all their activity. This was accomplished with a 45-power spotting scope and binoculars. Meanwhile,

the other would walk an additional two miles, crossing two ridges to patrol the area from above. This allowed us to keep all vehicular or pedestrian traffic from the enclosed section. This acreage is set aside by the Forest Service to protect the birds during this precarious time.

The Forest Service had enclosed the area, putting a cable across a powerline road. We took names and addresses of people who violated the area and sent the names to the Forest Service and the Audubon Society.

Bald eagles are skittish and easily frightened during the nesting stage. They are known to abandon their nest and eggs if they are bothered prior to the hatching. For this reason it was imperative to keep everyone away from the area. By the end of February we had established ourselves with the area and the birds. They seemed to know that we were there for their protection and that it was all right.

Then came our first big discovery: some activity on the nest. After two days of indecision, we were sure there was at least one eaglet on the nest. After another week with the scope, we discovered that it was definitely just one bird. This was good news because when there are two, one is the runt and inevitably has trouble when getting ready for its maiden flight.

The growth of the eaglet seemed an incredibly fast process, as did the spring season change overtaking the desert. By about the third week the bird was fully visible, its head bobbing above the side of the nest. The adults were as conscientious as any parents. Feeding period, a demanding task, was handled by the adults taking turns foraging. We witnessed at this time actual diving into the river below the nest, and the bringing back of fish, the main staple of their diet. The rate of water released from the dam had a lot to do with fish accessibility. The release was so great during the middle of March that many small fish were seen floating



Ellen Quilty and boat base.

flowers began to fade the cactus began to show color. Beginning with the hedgehog and its vibrant magenta color, the desert soon blossomed into sundry shades of yellow. The prickly pear and stag-horn cholla shared this brilliance, and it just kept coming. As each species faded another would bloom to take its place.

At the same time the young bird was beginning to stabilize its growth, and the more important wing development really became evident. Many times a day we could watch the eaglet test its strength and stamina against the sometimes ferocious air currents that buffeted its domain.

By the end of the month it had become apparent that the young bird was more than ready to make its maiden flight. Even the adults seemed aware of this as they would spend most of the day perched near the nest, probably hoping that the young one would assert itself and fly. Sometimes it would be the adult who would initiate what we grew to know as practice sessions.

The adult would leave a perch, soaring around and above the nest, seemingly to let the student know how easy it really is. The student learned as quickly as it grew. Soon it was showing off by making small lift-off flights and landing on a perch below the nest, previously used only by the adults. This became a favorite

perch for the eaglet and it would spend hours on it just testing its wings against the updrafts from the river.

It takes twelve weeks for an eaglet to fledge, which is the period of growth and strengthening of the wings. Sometimes the eaglet will be early or late by a few days. Our young bird was ready and waiting and as its twelfth week approached we weren't disappointed. On May 14 at about 8 a.m., the eaglet got onto the edge of the nest and then, as if by magic, it just ascended to the ridge edge, about 25 feet above its nest. Neither of us could believe it. We had watched but were still amazed. We think maybe the young bird was, also.

For the remainder of the day it made short flights to different parts of the ridge, each time looking stronger than the time before. Its confidence seemed to increase and after a nap through the heat of the day, the eaglet returned to the cliff edge as if looking for the adults. They perched together, looking like attentive parents at their child's performance.

Eaglets learn quickly and strengthen quickly, so when we looked for the young bird after one week on its own, we could get no visual contact. Now only the transmitter would be useful in locating it, so our work was finished. □

CAP: Let's Not Waste State Taxes

You recently reprinted an editorial from *The Arizona Daily Star* which claimed "CAP critics are wrong" to suggest eliminating our state property tax by selling Los Angeles the CAP water she has used free for decades.

The groundwater overdraft problem "south of Chandler" is caused primarily by agriculture, which statewide consumes 89 percent of our water.

Arizona's cities and industries are being asked to repay 95 percent of this multi-billion-dollar project that will only temporarily solve half the problem which agriculture has caused. The Arizona Water Commission has recommended retiring agriculture to solve the other half. Guess who pays for that?

Using the commission's calculations, the entire overdraft can be solved with the income from only six years of selling California our water.

Our proposal was prefaced with the statement "virtually every study shows that central Arizona already has plenty of water for people and industry. Unfortunately, the editorial left out the last four words.

The editorial wisely noted that Maricopa County (Phoenix) has plenty of water. The 1977 Valley Bank report on Tucson's water needs confirms previous studies showing adequate water for the future needs of that city.

Their consulting engineers showed a supply sufficient for more than 100 years stored under the Avra Valley, and several hundred years under the Santa Cruz Valley. Their analysis does not include recharge, wastewater reuse, or CAP supplies.

We know of only one study that would support the statement that Tucson would have a shortage of water even if all the farms were paved. The Water Commission in their Phase II study using only surface water (72,000 acre-feet annually) so concluded — although several other studies show twice as much water recharges Tucson's aquifer.

Their Phase I study, however, shows more than 200 million acre-feet of underground water in Pima County — again enough for several hundred years of urban growth.

California at great energy cost will have to pump more water from northern California to make up for our CAP water. Our plan would prevent that energy waste as well as releasing the vast CAP energy requirement for other uses. Because Arizona plans to sell energy to California, this could eliminate one or more of our proposed nuclear units!

Contrary to the editorial, we know of no recent attempt by California's congressional delegation to scuttle CAP. In fact, Southern California's water spokesmen have testified in favor of CAP for the past several years.

Emphasis

A recent report shows that Arizonans will pay more than \$5 billion for the CAP — that's five times our entire state budget! Less than 20 percent of the CAP aqueduct has been funded to date.

Fortunately we need not repay any of that massive loan until the project is "substantially completed." Thus far, the CAP is a waste of our federal taxes — let's not make it a waste of state taxes as well.

→ SCOTT R. BURGE
President
Maricopa Audubon Society
FRANK WELSH
Executive Director
Citizens Concerned About The Project

ALL OUTDOORS

The Phoenix Gazette

Thurs., Aug. 9, 1979 D-5

Eagle Nest Sites Are Aided By Floodplain Fencing Plan

Temporary fencing of floodplains along the Salt and Verde Rivers will be done to aid nesting bald eagles, according to Dr. Robert Witzeman, conservation chairman of the Maricopa Audubon Society.

The plan was announced Wednesday by Witzeman following a conference last month with the Tonto National Forest and cattle growers.

"THE CONFERENCE focused on the present lack of young cottonwood trees and the dying out of large, old cottonwoods," Witzeman said. "These trees are critical for bald eagle nesting habitat."

Apparently the eating of the cottonwood seedlings and saplings along the rivers by cattle is believed to be the reason why there are insufficient new trees to replace the older ones.

Witzeman pointed out that the eagles are making a valiant stand on the few last remaining, undammed segments of streamside habitat on the Salt and Verde.

"LESS THAN A dozen pairs of bald eagles now nest in a vast seven-state region of the arid Southwest," said Witzeman. "Response of the cattlemen to this program has been positive, because the fenced enclosures are only for four or five years and consist of relatively small strips averaging some 10 acres in size."

Witzeman pointed out that bald eagles refuse to nest on Arizona's reservoirs. Many nest on both cliffs and trees, but apparently have more nesting success in trees. Because the eag-

les, refuse to nest near the lakes, the river habitat is critical.

Arizona eagles are smaller in size than bald eagles of the northern United States, have smaller eggs and begin their nesting cycle three months earlier to avoid summer desert temperatures. The Audubon Society has begun a program to protect the eagle nesting sites by hiring care-

takers to watch over the nest from February to mid-May. Purpose of the guards is to protect the nests from being bothered by people.

THE FOREST SERVICE aided the effort this year with financial help, but another nest needs to be guarded next season. In addition to the hiring of caretakers, additional funds will be used to publish a brochure on the eagle in Arizona.

Arizona's eagle nesting habitat to be protected

Small stands of cottonwoods and other riparian vegetation will be fenced off from cattle grazing along rivers and streams in three Arizona national forests as part of a Forest Service project to increase the nesting habitat of endangered southern bald eagles.

The plan calls for 35 fenced enclosures along the Salt and Verde rivers within the Tonto, Coconino and Prescott national forests.

The enclosures, averaging about 10 acres each, will protect young cottonwood trees from being eaten by cattle. The Audubon Society, according to conservation chairman Dr. Robert Witzeman, want the riparian, streamside vegetation restored to benefit wildlife, especially bald eagles that use mature trees for nests.

Witzeman said Arizona is the only state that now has a desert nesting population of bald eagles.

He said the current eagle population in the state is static with about eight to nine pairs of eagles nesting each year.

This summer, he said, six baby eagles were successfully raised to adulthood, most of them from nests in cottonwood trees.

The eagles need big, mature cottonwood trees beside a running stream or river for nest sites because most of their diet is made up of rough fish like carp or suckers that they are able to take in shallow water, said Witzeman.

Almost no fish are taken by eagles in lakes or reservoirs.

Because cattle will eat the tender shoots of young cottonwood trees and even straddle and prune saplings, there are few cottonwoods left to replace the older trees.

Witzeman said the old trees are dying out. Three cottonwood trees that held eagle nests collapsed in recent years, he said, one tree falling just one day after a young eaglet had flown from the nest.

Since most of the eagle nesting habitat is on national forests the government is responsible for protecting the eagles, he said.

If this protection is not done, said Witzeman, "We're prepared to take legal action against the Forest Service to preserve these endangered species."

Bruce Hronek, supervisor of the Tonto National Forest, said the \$800,-

000 restoration plan calls for long-range measures that includes fencing enclosures, planting and caring for cottonwood shoots, providing new river access routes for cattle, new cattle watering developments, reseeding and removing of junipers for better grazing.

Hronek said the Forest Service wants to improve the streamside vegetation of the entire river bottoms, not just the enclosures.

"These river bottoms are feeding, shelter and travel areas for a large number of wildlife. They're very precious," Hronek said.



Bob Thomas
Outdoor Editor

E-16 Sun., Aug. 19, '79

The Arizona Republic



January 1, 1979

The Maricopa Audubon Society

Dear

4619 East Arcadia Lane • Phoenix, Arizona 85018

I am asking that you please mail the enclosed Orme Dam New Year's greeting cards to any of the public officials listed below-- along with a brief note mentioning that there are better, less expensive ways of controlling floods than with Orme Dam:

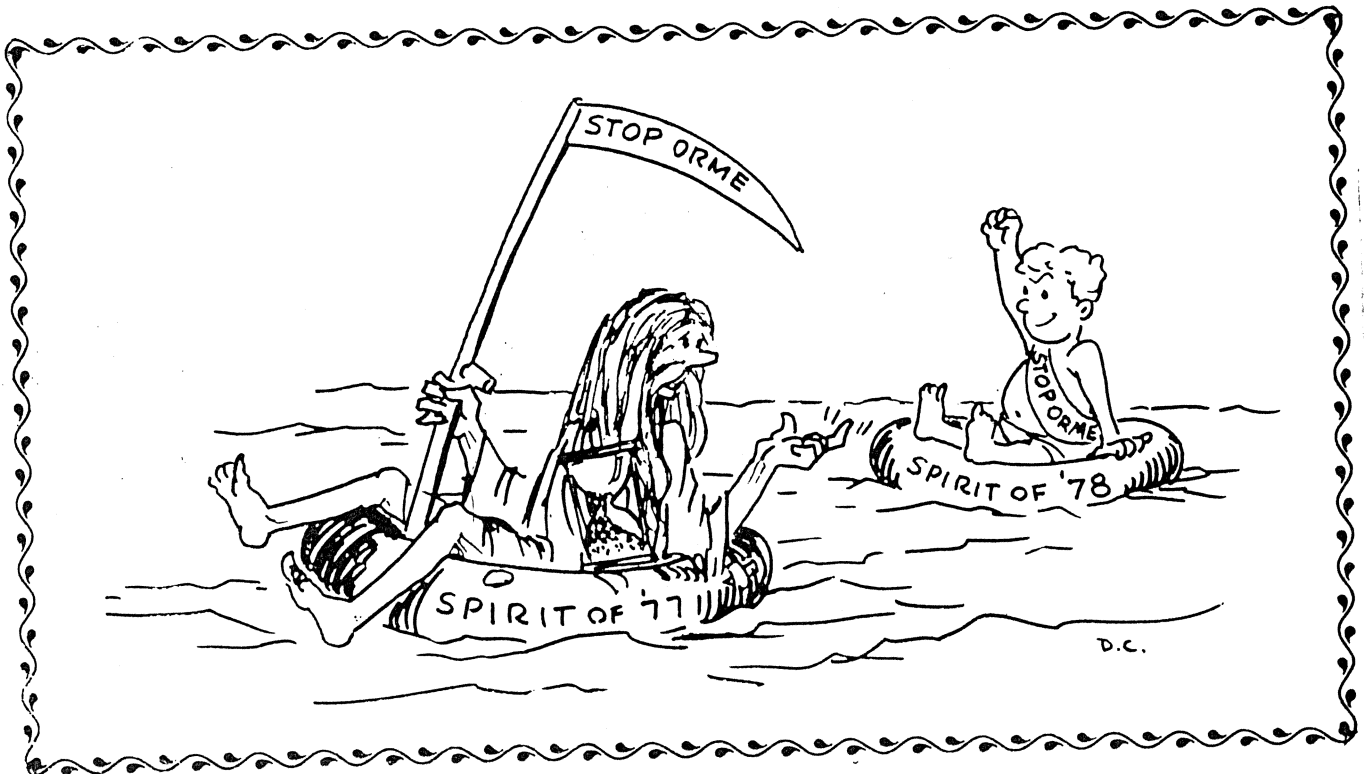
- President Jimmy Carter, The White House, Wash., D.C. 20500
- Governor Bruce Babbitt, Arizona State Capitol, Phx., 85007
- Senator Dennis DeConcini or Barry Goldwater
Senate Office Bldg., Washington, D.C. 20510
- Representative John Rhodes, Eldon Rudd, Bob Stump, or Morris Udall
House Office Bldg. Washington, D.C. 20515
- Mayor Margaret Hance, City of Phoenix, 251 W. Washington, Phx. 85003
- Cecil Andrus, Secretary of Interior, Interior Bldg., Washington, D.C. 20240

Because it is a New Year's greeting card please keep your message warm, friendly, factual and brief.

With sincerest thanks

Bob

Bob Witzeman, President



**Here are the words to our New Year's
card thanks to Sue and Bill Ahearn**

Auld Orme Dam

(Sung to the tune of "Auld Lang Syne".)

*With apologies to
Robert Burns*

*Sung with a
salty flavor*

Shouldn't Auld Orme Dam be forgot,
And never brought to mind?
And mini-Orme and maxi-Orme
And any of their kind.

*Refrain:
Just think of all that would be lost
Beneath water and mud.
This project should never be built
For Auld Orme Dam's a dud.*

Why dam the Verde and the Salt
To make a reservoir?
There's seven on the rivers now,
Why do we need one more?

They say Orme Dam would stop a flood
When the hills get lots of rain.
Let's build the Rio Salado
And not live in flood plains.

The dam would sit atop some faults
And it's not really grand
To have Phoenix downstream when Orme's
Designed like Teton Dam.

The river's used throughout the year,
Especially summertime.
What better place to find oneself
When it's one hundred-nine?

The water from the dam would flood
An Indian people's land,
And harm the nesting bald eagles,
The symbol of our land.

The Indian tribe of Yavapais
Would like to keep their land.
They know the earth lasts longer than
The money from our hand.

They could sell out and be moved by
The U.S. Government.
They've voted twice, they will not go.
Why don't we take the hint?

So Auld Orme Dam has created
Lots of controversy.
There's no doubt it's the worst part of
The pork barrel C.A.P.

The New Year's here, let's start anew,
And to Orme Dam say "No".
Let Indians stay, and eagles soar,
And let wild rivers flow.

*Refrain:
Just think of all that would be lost
Beneath water and mud.
This project should never be built
For Auld Orme Dam's a dud.*

BEST WISHES FOR THE NEW YEAR

Audubon Official Favors Bridges, Upstream Dams

New bridges and use of upstream dams for flood control are a better answer to the Valley's flood problems than the proposed Orme Dam, according to the president of the National Audubon Society.

In a recent letter to Gov. Bruce Babbitt, Russell Peterson, said he was "amazed to learn that agribusiness (would) pay only two percent of Orme's cost yet receive all of its water.

"Federal taxpayers and local urbanites most foot 98 percent of the bill. Most of the capital repayment costs of the \$360 million Orme dam must be borne directly by Arizonans who live in Maricopa, Pima and Pinal counties through increases in their property taxes and water bills," Peterson said.

"It is important for (taxpayers) to understand that local repayment costs of Orme far exceed the local costs of bridges and airport channelization," he said.

Peterson said new bridges already authorized and funded are designed to withstand the peak flows on recent floods, especially if six upstream Salt River Project dams are used for flood control as well as water storage.

"All of the alternatives . . . should cost about \$50 million — a fraction of the \$360 million cost of Orme Dam," Peterson told Babbitt.

With cheap water, there would be no incentive for farmers to conserve water, he said.

Congress Hears Orme Alternatives

A R I Z O N A

Alternatives to Orme Dam — including raising Roosevelt Dam, using the six existing dams for flood control, building adequate bridges and channelizing the river around the airport — would cost about \$50 million, compared to the \$300 million price tag for the controversial dam, the president of the Maricopa Audubon Society told Congress last week.

President Scott Burge, testifying before the public works appropriations subcommittees of the U.S. Senate and House, said the alternatives he suggests could be completed in less than three years, while it will take at least seven years to build Orme Dam at the confluence of the Salt and

Verde Rivers.

The recent flooding in Phoenix has renewed the fevered demands for Orme, which was killed by President Carter in 1977. The dam would displace the Fort McDowell Indian Tribe, endanger the nesting grounds for the endangered bald eagle and could threaten the admittedly insecure supports for Stewart Mountain Dam. Proponents of the dam say it will save the Phoenix area from flooding, which has become a regular tragedy.

Burge testified that Orme is a dirt dam "situated on a fault-ridden, questionably safe site just 10 miles upstream" from Phoenix. He said if Orme were built and imperiled the weak foundation of Stewart Mountain Dam, the resulting flood would "cause

catastrophic damages and countless deaths to the huge metropolitan area immediately downstream."

Burge said that "those who push for Orme's construction do Arizona and the nation's taxpayers a great disservice in asking the federal government to accomplish flood control in the slowest, most expensive and most dangerous manner."

Orme originally was proposed to hold water for the Central Arizona Project, which will bring Colorado River water into Arizona. Its purpose later was expanded to include flood control capacity. Environmental groups have promised to oppose any efforts to resurrect Orme in the courts, which could delay construction even longer. ■

New Times, April 2-8, 80

July 1980 Audubon magazine

THE AUDUBON CAUSE

edited by **ROBERT C. BOARDMAN** and **NANCY HORNICK**

Desert Eagles

There are fewer than a dozen pairs of desert-nesting bald eagles left in the United States, and most of them nest in cottonwood trees along the banks of the Salt and Verde rivers in central Arizona. Cattle also like the river's edge, where there is water to drink and where the best pasturage grows.

In recent years more cattle have been grazing there, and they are eating the cottonwood seedlings and saplings. When desert eagles can't find suitable trees, they will nest on cliffs instead, but the cliff-nesting pairs tend to be far less successful in producing young.

The nesting sites are situated in the Tonto, Prescott, and Coconino national forests. Last year, officers of Maricopa Audubon Society in Phoenix informed Forest Service authorities that the chapter would take legal action under the Endangered Species Act if something wasn't done to assure the continued growth of new trees and to protect the riverbottom habitat from overgrazing.

The chapter did not have to go to court. This spring its officers and the heads of the three national forests reached agreement on a plan. First, some areas will be fenced off long enough for the vegetation to be restored. Long-term relief will be provided by measures such as rest-rotation of grazing areas and wells to create some new watering holes for cattle away from the rivers.

141

Arizona Republic, April, 13, 1980

Alternatives To The Orme Dam

Editor:

Alternatives to Orme Dam will provide adequate flood control for the Valley more quickly, safely and at a fraction the cost. Furthermore, these flood control measures are already planned for or under consideration by city, county and state governments in Arizona.

This solution requires the six existing Salt River Project dams be operated for flood control purposes as well as for water storage and raising Roosevelt Dam. It also means building adequate bridges, channelizing around the airport and protecting or relocating Holly Acres, the only remaining community in the flood plain.

This alternative to Orme Dam would cost about \$50 million compared to Orme's price tag of \$300 million, resulting in a savings of a quarter billion tax dollars.

Almost all of these measures can be accomplished in less than three years. Orme, including time to complete its alternatives study now underway, would take at least seven years to build.

It could be tied up much longer because of possible litigation involving the endangered Bald Eagles that reside near the Orme damsite and the forced eviction of the Fort McDowell Indian Tribe from their homeland.

Furthermore, Orme Dam is a dirt dam situated on a fault-ridden, questionably safe site, just 10 miles upstream from a metropolitan area of over 1 million inhabitants. That recalls another earth dam, Teton, built by the Bureau of Reclamation in Idaho which was hastily erected because of strong pressure from similarly vociferous politicians.

If Orme Dam were built, it could threaten the safety of Stewart Mountain Dam upstream. By

backing water up against that dam, Orme's reservoir could imperil the foundation of Stewart Mountain. If Stewart Mountain broke, a wall of water would come rushing down, overtopping Orme. If Orme were full of water, as would be probable in a flood situation, its earthen structure could wash out causing catastrophic damages and countless deaths to the huge metropolitan area immediately downstream.

Phoenix has had excellent flood plain laws since 1973 which have been respected by the community. Almost all of the damages in the floods of the past two years were due to inadequately sized bridges and a portion of Phoenix's airport runway built deep within the flood plain.

Most of the residential damages occurred in one small community, Holly Acres, which was built prior to flood plain zoning laws. Holly Acres is located downstream from Phoenix and very regrettably situated by its developers deep within the flood plain at the confluence of three of the largest rivers in central Arizona. Its 85 homes can be diked off for a few million dollars, a fraction of Orme's \$300 million cost.

Those who push for Orme's construction do Arizona and the nation's taxpayers a great disservice in asking the federal government to accomplish flood control in the slowest, most expensive and most dangerous manner.

These alternatives show how proud independent, self-reliant Arizonans can meet their own community needs and do not have to come begging to Washington for a handout to solve their local flood control problems.

SCOTT BURGE
President
Maricopa Audubon Society
Phoenix