



Post-Register

Conference leaders

JACKSON, WYO. — Leading participants at the Western Governors Conference last week at Teton Village near Jackson are from left, Utah Gov. Scott Matheson, newly-elected chairman of the National Governors Association;

Secretary of Interior James Watt; and Nevada Gov. Robert F. List, conference chairman. They are shown at a press conference where they fielded questions from representatives of the news media.

Palisades project listed

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JACKSON, WYO. — Teton Dam, which collapsed as it was filling near capacity June 6, 1976, is not being considered for federal rebuilding funds, Garry Carruthers, assistant secretary of the Department of Interior, said in a Post-Register interview.

But, he said, this is the current view, and what may happen in the future is not determined.

He did say the department is reversing the previous Carter administration and is contemplating starting of new reclamation projects as early as 1983.

This also was disclosed in remarks given by Secretary of Interior James Watt at the Western Governors Conference.

Watt, Carruthers, Robert F. Burford, director of the Bureau of Land Management, and other top interior department officials attended the four-day conference last week at Teton Village, a dozen miles northwest of Jackson.

Carruthers said a top priority list of 15 reclamation projects is contemplated for funding, possibly for starting in 1983. Most of these are in the Southwest and range in cost between \$40 million and \$700 million.

At Boise, A. Kenneth Dunn, director of the Idaho Department of Water Resources, said there are two Idaho projects on the proposed construction list.

These will be judged over a period of several years, not short-term, he said.

Burford, a former Grand Junction, Colo., rancher, said both of Idaho's senators, Jim McClure and Steve Symms, have been supportive of BLM programs.

Burford revealed in his talk to the governors his plan which categorizes management in three divisions: highly productive allotments in good condition, with no resource conflicts; allotments in fair-to-poor conditions which are not producing at medium-to-high conditions and which will take the most money; and allotments which are in sta-

ble condition, with no major resource conflicts, but with economically-limited production.

Burford also said the BLM is looking at the governors' request for return of 50 percent of collected grazing fees for ranges that have been improved by the ranchers.

Burford said "the new range land management policy meets the review objectives and can be accomplished within the per-

sonnel and inventory funding cuts projected for fiscal 1982."

He said it also should streamline the environmental impact statement.

"Our first priority will be to keep the good land from going bad," he said. "As we get more funds and more people, we'll apply them to those lands, which right now, we are able to handle in a custodial fashion. At least, we'll try to keep them from getting worse."

They include installing a new 115 megawatt turbine to augment one of 90 megawatts at Palisades at a cost upwards of \$75 million and a power turbine at Anderson Ranch Dam northeast of Boise at a cost of more than \$30 million.

Also in an interview, Burford rejected claims of some Idaho ranchers and livestockmen that the BLM management was to blame for the large number of summer range fires this year.

Burford pointed out range growth has to be judged on their capacity over several years, not just one or two years.

Burford, along with Robert Buffington, Boise, state BLM director, who was also at the conference, pointed out there were no changes in BLM range management policies this summer.

They said they had no control over the copious spring rainfall which spurred grass growth and which helped fuel the fires.

"It is not our fault the wildlife doesn't like tall grass, but then, neither do the livestock," said Buffington in answer to criticism wildlife avoids tall grass to eat because it is too tough and has an unpleasant odor.

Burford acknowledged that perhaps more livestock grazing could have been permitted to keep down the growth on some ranges.

Burford said there are new methods of assessment under consideration, based on what he called "selective management."