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LITTLE RIVER, IOWA, WATERSHED PROJECT

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HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON WATER RESOURCES

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

AND TRANSPORTATION

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NINETY-FIFTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

NOVEMBER 29, 1977

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and Transportation



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WASHINGTON : 1978

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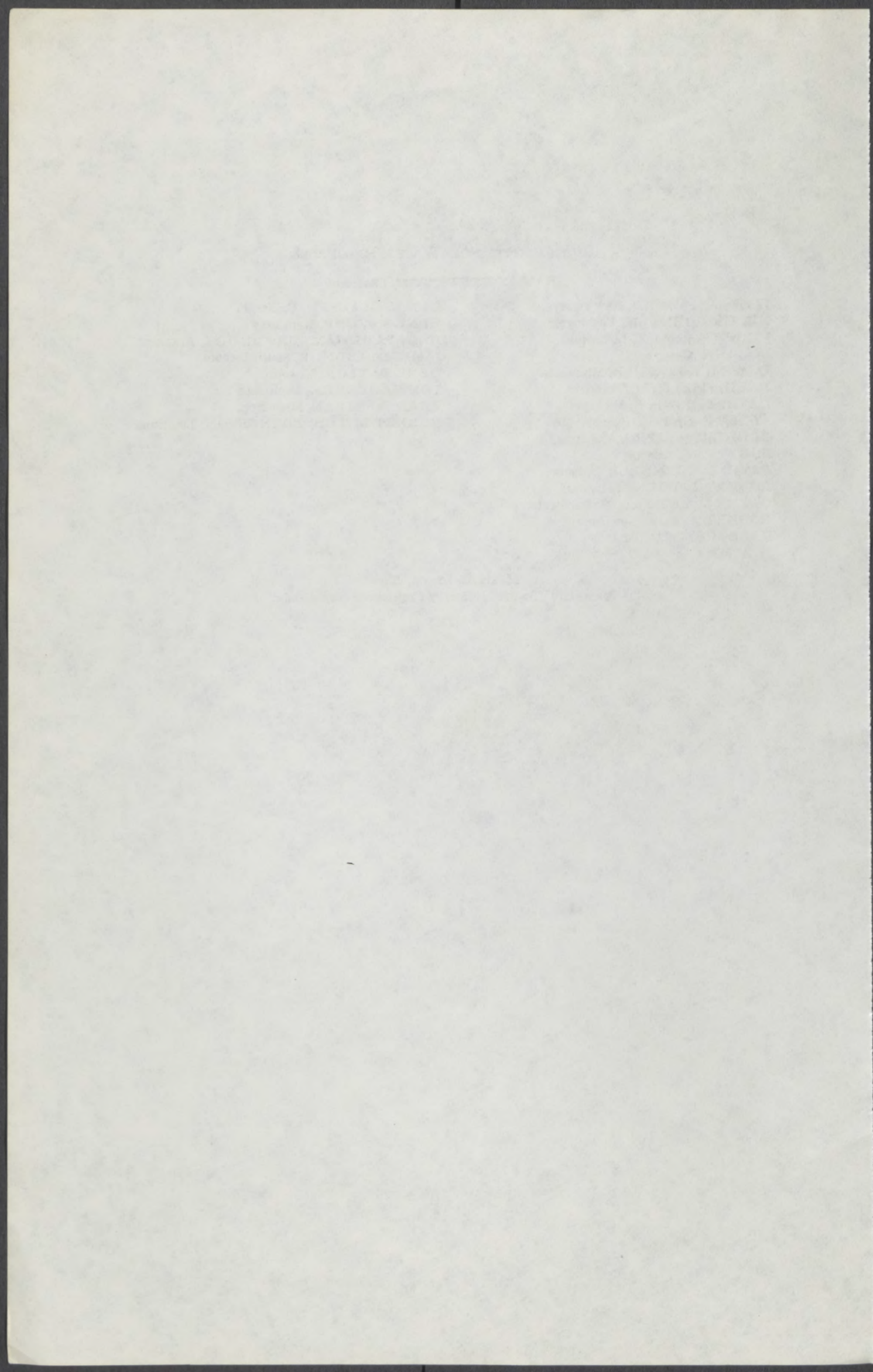
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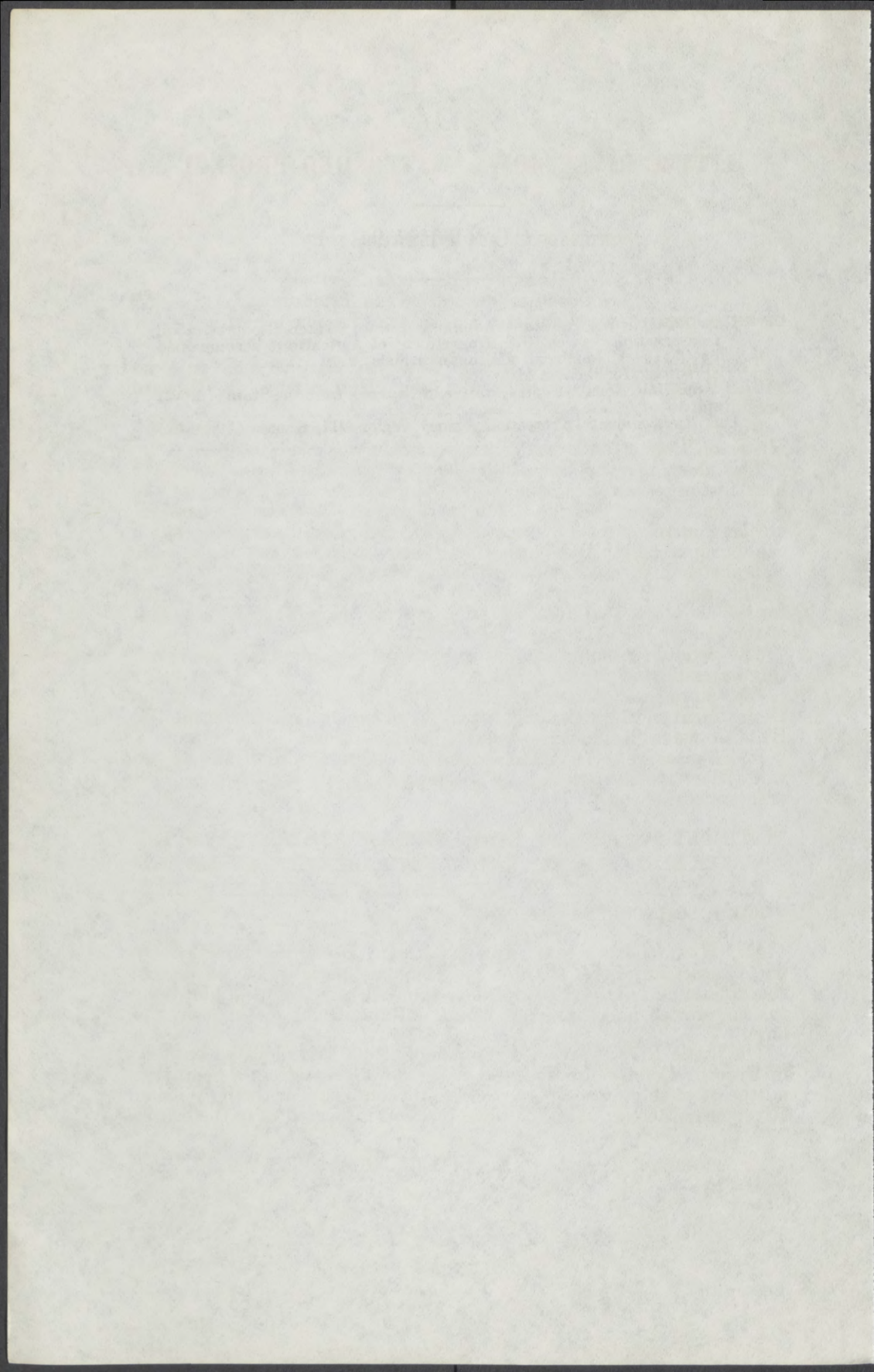
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LITTLE RIVER, IOWA, WATERSHED PROJECT

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 1977

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON WATER RESOURCES,
OF THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS AND TRANSPORTATION,
Washington, D.C.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:03 a.m., in room 2167, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. James J. Howard presiding.

Mr. HOWARD. The Subcommittee on Water Resources of the Committee on Public Works and Transportation will come to order.

This morning, the Subcommittee on Water Resources meets to hear testimony on the Little River, Iowa, watershed project of the Soil Conservation Service. This is a project for flood prevention, erosion control, municipal water supply, and related purposes, which can be approved by resolutions of this committee and the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works.

The project is being considered at this time because an HUD grant for the acquisition of lands for the project is due to expire at the end of the year.

The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee approved this watershed work plan on March 7, 1977.

We will receive testimony from the Soil Conservation Service of the Department of Agriculture. Presenting testimony is Mr. Joseph W. Haas, Assistant Administrator for Water Resources.

It is a pleasure to have you with us this morning, Mr. Haas. If you will, please identify the person accompanying you and then proceed with your testimony.

**TESTIMONY OF JOSEPH W. HAAS, ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR FOR
WATER RESOURCES, SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, ACCOMPANIED BY CHARLES F. LAMBORN, SOIL CONSERVATIONIST**

Mr. HAAS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am accompanied by Mr. Charles Lamborn, a watershed planning specialist in our Watershed Planning Division. He will help me with any technical questions the committee may have and point out significant features on the map.

The Little River watershed consists of 63,400 acres located entirely in Decatur County, Iowa. Little River flows south from a point just northeast of the town of Van Wert to its confluence with the Weldon River near Mercer, Mo. The town of Leon is located near the center

of the project area. Decatur City and Pleasanton are also located in the watershed.

The project proposed includes conservation measures to reduce runoff, erosion and sediment to be installed by the landowners in the watershed.

In addition, the plan provides for six floodwater-retarding structures and one multiple-purpose reservoir for flood prevention, municipal water supply, and fish and wildlife. The reservoirs range in capacity from 86 to 18,500 acre-feet, and from 5.9 to 704 acres in surface area.

The economy of this area is primarily agricultural. There are 288 farms averaging approximately 296 acres in size located in the watershed. All land is in private ownership.

Crop land accounts for 27 percent of the area, pasture land for 43 percent, and forest land for 21 percent. The remaining 9 percent is used for miscellaneous purposes.

The major farm enterprise is the production of cattle and hogs. Eighty-five percent of the farms produce corn and soybeans.

Floodwater, erosion, and sediment damages to cropland, pasture, roads, bridges, and public utilities are a serious problem.

Loss of crops, reduction of yields, and delay of tillage operations are experienced. The quality and quantity of pasture forage is reduced. Fences are destroyed. Sediment and debris are left on roads and under bridges.

The average annual floodwater damage is estimated to be \$186,000. It consists of \$156,000 damage to crops and pasture and \$9,000 to other agricultural features; \$5,000 to roads and bridges, and \$15,000 to scour damage.

In addition, there is an estimated \$9,000 annually from gully erosion and sediment.

The people of Leon and Decatur City depend on wells for their water supply. Water is of poor quality and that of Leon exceeds the maximum recommended concentration for most minerals. Wells at Decatur City are subject to pollution and provide insufficient yield.

These project measures will reduce average annual flood damages by 71 percent. An estimated 47 farms including 2,588 acres will benefit directly from installation of the project. The 2,340 residents of Leon and Decatur City will be assured of an adequate water supply to meet their present needs and for future growth and development.

Access to the 704-acre reservoir created at the multiple-purpose structure site will be part of a 1,825-acre area managed for fish and wildlife habitat. Public access will be provided and facilities for fishing, picnicking, and hunting are expected to attract 54,000 visitors annually.

The total project cost is estimated at \$3,970,000, of which local interests will contribute about 47 percent. Estimated annual benefits of \$321,000 will be realized from the project. It is estimated that the project will produce about \$1.50 of benefits for each \$1 spent.

We recommend that this plan be approved by the committee. If there are questions, I will be pleased to answer them.

Mr. HOWARD. Thank you very much. I will now recognize the chairman of the Committee on Public Works and Transportation, Harold T. (Bizz) Johnson.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Haas, I understand that field hearings were held in Iowa.

Mr. HAAS. That is correct. The Senate committee that acts on watershed projects did hold hearings in Iowa approximately a year ago.

The CHAIRMAN. As I understand it, Senators from the State of Iowa approved the project, and the Senate committee has approved this matter.

Mr. HAAS. That is correct. They passed it in March.

The CHAIRMAN. And it is my understanding here that the Congressman from Iowa, Mr. Harkin, also approves the project?

Mr. HAAS. That is my understanding.

The CHAIRMAN. This is truly one that the Soil Conservation people, both at the national level and the State level, approved also, as far as the project is concerned?

Mr. HAAS. Yes, sir, that is correct.

The CHAIRMAN. That is all, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. HOWARD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to insert into the record at this point the statement received from Hon. Tom Harkin, of Iowa.

[Statement referred to follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN TOM HARKIN

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, thank you very much for the opportunity to submit testimony on the proposed Little River Watershed Project, Decatur County, Iowa.

Allow me to state at the outset that I am very familiar with the proposed project and am strongly in favor of it. I have had the good fortune of being able to work closely with the local sponsors of this project over the past three years. I am sure that the support for this project is very strong, and I am not aware of any opposition to it.

This project has been under consideration since 1966 and has been carefully reviewed at both the state and local levels. I had the opportunity last year at this time to participate in a field hearing in Leon, Iowa, sponsored by the Senate Public Works Committee and chaired by Senator John Culver of Iowa. I believe the record of that hearing does an excellent job of outlining the many benefits of this project.

However, one benefit which I feel was underestimated in the analysis of benefits and costs was the use of the main reservoir as a water source for municipal and rural water supply. As the Senate hearing record indicates, ground water supplies in southern Iowa are very limited and of such poor quality that extensive treatment is required to make it potable. Many farms and small towns are without an adequate water supply and are using water that does not meet current standards. Consequently, not only will the City of Leon greatly benefit from this water supply, but also the Southern Iowa Rural Water Association (SIRWA) is joining as sponsors and will utilize this water source for a rural water system soon to be developed. Thus, the very survival of many small towns and the sustaining of current agricultural productivity of this area are dependent upon this project. I cannot emphasize enough the value of this project to southern Iowa and the return that will accrue on tax dollars invested in this project.

I also want to emphasize the importance of action by the Committee today. Last year, the local sponsors obtained a \$400,000 Housing and Urban Development grant to assist in land acquisition at the main reservoir site. However, this grant which expires at the end of this calendar year was made contingent upon Congressional authorization. Therefore, Congressional action is needed now to ensure the utilization of the HUD grant.

This concludes my statement, and I would like to thank the Committee for its timely consideration of this matter.

Mr. HOWARD. The gentleman from California, Mr. Clausen?

Mr. CLAUSEN. Mr. Haas, for the record, of course, we are pleased to accommodate the request of the prospective members of the Iowa delegation in order to fulfill their requirements so that they can qual-

ify for this HUD assistance and we are pleased to have you before the committee; I wanted to state this.

As a follow-on to the line of questioning of the gentleman from California, Mr. Johnson, is there any known opposition to the project?

Mr. HAAS. No, sir, I know of no opposition. There was some concern during the planning of the project, expressed by the Environmental Protection Agency, concerning water quality.

Mr. CLAUSEN. That was one of the questions that I wanted to ask of you, because it has been brought to my attention that they have some concerns over the pesticides and, possibly, the supply of mercury, that would have an impact, possibly adversely, on the water supply. Could you comment on that?

Mr. HAAS. Yes. That is correct, Mr. Clausen. At the present time, the stream that enters where this large structure site would be placed is being monitored. There have been some water samples already collected. There were some collected during the planning of the project.

We have underway—or, have executed already—a contract with the U.S. Geological Survey people, and they will be monitoring and analyzing the quality of the water that would enter this reservoir.

Our present indication is, our own personal feeling in the Soil Conservation Service, and in consultation with the State sanitary board, is that the water quality is adequate. It is not first class, but it is adequate, in our opinion.

The Environmental Protection Agency still has some reservations. So we have agreed to monitor this stream for the coming year—or, it will be at least a year before this dam would be installed, even if approved by the committee today—during this course of time, we will collect water samples, have them analyzed by the Geological Survey, and if there shows up any continuing serious question about the quality of the water entering the reservoir, the water supply purpose could be deleted from the project.

Mr. CLAUSEN. Well, when you make reference to monitoring, I am assuming that you are referring to a request from the legal administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, in a letter by Mr. Jerome Svore to Mr. William J. Brune, State conservationist of the Soil Conservation Service, wherein they specifically spelled out some four items that they asked that you monitor. Is this correct?

Mr. HAAS. That is correct.

Mr. CLAUSEN. And are you intending to comply with that request?

Mr. HAAS. Yes, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. Would the gentlemen yield?

Mr. CLAUSEN. I would be happy to yield to the gentleman from California.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, wasn't there ample protection, too, given the Environmental Protection Agency under the Clean Water Act, wherever water is to be used for domestic purposes?

Mr. HAAS. Well, yes, there are both State laws and obviously, some Federal regulation of water quality. Certainly, the reservoir would not be installed if there was any indication that water quality would not be satisfactory. But, at this time, we are reasonably certain it is. These further checks will either verify or discount that feeling.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Mr. CLAUSEN. Well, I am assuming that part of this is designed to fulfill the requirements under the Safe Drinking Act that the agencies of

Government have. So, Mr. Chairman, I think it would be helpful for the purpose of this hearing, if I would ask unanimous consent to insert in the record this letter of April 21, from the regional administrator, Mr. Jerome Svore, to Mr. William J. Brune.

Mr. HOWARD. Without objection, so ordered.

[The following was received for the record:]

U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY,
Kansas City, Mo., April 21, 1976.

Mr. WILLIAM J. BRUNE,
State Conservationist, Soil Conservation Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture,
Des Moines, Iowa

DEAR MR. BRUNE: We have reviewed your preliminary response to our comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed Little River Watershed Project. We wish to advise you of our reaction to the proposed response. At this time, we cannot retract the environmental reservations we expressed in our comment letter of March 19, 1976, because the proposed response neither addresses the concerns we have raised nor offers any suggested actions to resolve these concerns.

Our comment letter on the draft EIS stated our reservations regarding the water quality of impoundment M-1 for water supply and fish and wildlife. Your response to our letter only states we have differing professional opinions. We believe the EIS process is the proper place to raise differing professional opinions. However, neither your draft EIS nor your proposed response adequately support the basis for your disagreement. The final statement should support your contention that the water quality of impoundment M-1 will be adequate to provide a safe drinking water supply and allow for the propagation and protection of fish and wildlife. For instance, the water quality data in the draft statement indicated PCB's, DDT and dieldrin exceeded our agency's criteria for freshwater aquatic life under both standing water (no flow) conditions and flowing conditions. Because of these data, we do not understand why your office does not perceive a potential problem with the fishery.

Based on your comments on the draft statement and your proposed response to those comments, we offer the following suggestions which we believe could alleviate many of our concerns with the project. Specifically, the final statement should include the following information.

1. An assessment of the water quality data which was incorporated into the draft EIS.
2. Documentation of the surrounding bodies of water which have been sampled for metals and pesticides. These data could support or refute the suitability of the water quality in impoundment M-1 to meet designated uses.
3. An assessment of the above data as it related to applicable Environmental Protection Agency and Food and Drug Administration standards and criteria.
4. Direct responses to the concerns we raised in our comment letter on the draft statement.

Since you believe the current water quality data are inconclusive and there is a need for continued monitoring of water quality, we have the following recommendations pursuant to an ongoing assessment of water quality.

1. Between now and the time of construction, a sampling program including an assessment of the water quality, bottom sediments, and contaminants in fish flesh should be undertaken.
2. Should significant water quality data prove unsatisfactory, a draft supplement EIS should be prepared on the project before construction commences.
3. There should be appropriate commitments to an ongoing water and fish sampling program after project operation commences.

4. If an unacceptable condition occurs after construction, reservoir management should be committed to restrict affected uses until the adverse condition is resolved. Please keep us informed regarding the sampling program by providing periodic data reports. We trust our continuing concerns will receive adequate consideration in the final statement.

Sincerely yours,

JEROME H. SVORE,
Regional Administrator.

Mr. CLAUSEN. I think, Mr. Chairman, that that answers my questions and concerns, and is would be helpful, I think, if you kept the committee posted of the monitoring effort, so that we are fulfilling our obligation as we authorize these things on that kind of a contingency.

Mr. HAAS. We certainly will, sir.

Mr. CLAUSEN. Thank you.

Mr. HOWARD. Are there any other questions? The gentleman from Missouri, Mr. Young?

Mr. YOUNG. No questions, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Mr. HOWARD. The gentleman from Indiana.

Mr. CORNWELL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Haas, I would like to know how many acres are going to be taken by this watershed project and included in the watershed. How many productive acres will be taken out of circulation?

Mr. HAAS. Well, by "productive," I assume you mean presently tillable, viable cropland.

Mr. CORNWELL. Yes, sir.

Mr. HAAS. It would be a minor amount associated with the construction of the large reservoir. The large reservoir will flood 704 acres permanently, with probably an additional couple hundred acres temporarily, during flood stage. Any crops grown in that area, of course, would be no longer available.

Mr. CORNWELL. And you have no public opposition to this?

Mr. HAAS. No, sir. The total land—of course, this is crop land, forest land, pasture land, everything—required for the project is 1,825 acres.

Mr. HOWARD. We understand 337 acres of cropland are to be involved.

Mr. CORNWELL. Thank you. You say that conservation and treatment measures to reduce runoff, erosion, and sediment will be installed by the landowner in the watershed. Would you explain that, please?

Mr. HAAS. OK. In all watershed projects, we often say "treat the land from the ridgetop to the valley floor." This means installing conservation practices; that is, terraces, waterways, grade stabilization structures, contour farming, those kinds of things, that reduce the amount of erosion and sediment delivered to the stream.

These kinds of practices are installed generally by landowners, and often with some cost-sharing assistance by the agricultural conservation program. But they are not installed really as part of the Federal project. They are included as part of the project, but installed at the volunteerism of the farmers involved.

Mr. CORNWELL. So they are just agricultural practices, not really construction of physical facilities?

Mr. HAAS. Well, construction to the extent that there are field terraces, cropland terraces, waterways, some small check dams, those kinds of things.

Mr. CORNWELL. I have no further questions. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Haas.

Mr. HOWARD. The gentleman from Missouri, Mr. Taylor?

Mr. TAYLOR. No questions, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. HOWARD. The gentleman from Georgia?

Mr. GINN. No questions.

Mr. HOWARD. The gentleman from Arizona, Mr. Stump?

Mr. STUMP. No questions.

Mr. CLAUSEN. Just one other question.

Mr. HOWARD. The gentleman from California.

Mr. CLAUSEN. I think I know what the answer is, but I think we ought to have it as a part of my line of questioning. It is my understanding that the benefit-cost ratio has been established at 1.5 to 1, and this is on a basis of the 6½-percent discount rate?

Mr. HAAS. That is correct.

Mr. CLAUSEN. Thank you.

Mr. HOWARD. We wish to thank you very much for your testimony, Mr. Haas, and for your appearance here today, and the hearings on this project are adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 10:18 a.m., the hearings were adjourned.]

LITTLE RIVER WATERSHED, IOWA

Size and location: 63,400 acres in Decatur County.

Sponsors: Decatur County Soil Conservation District; Decatur County Board of Supervisors; Decatur County Conservation Board; City of Leon; City of Decatur City; Iowa Conservation Commission.

Purposes: Watershed Protection, Flood Prevention, Municipal and Industrial Water Supply, and Fish and Wildlife.

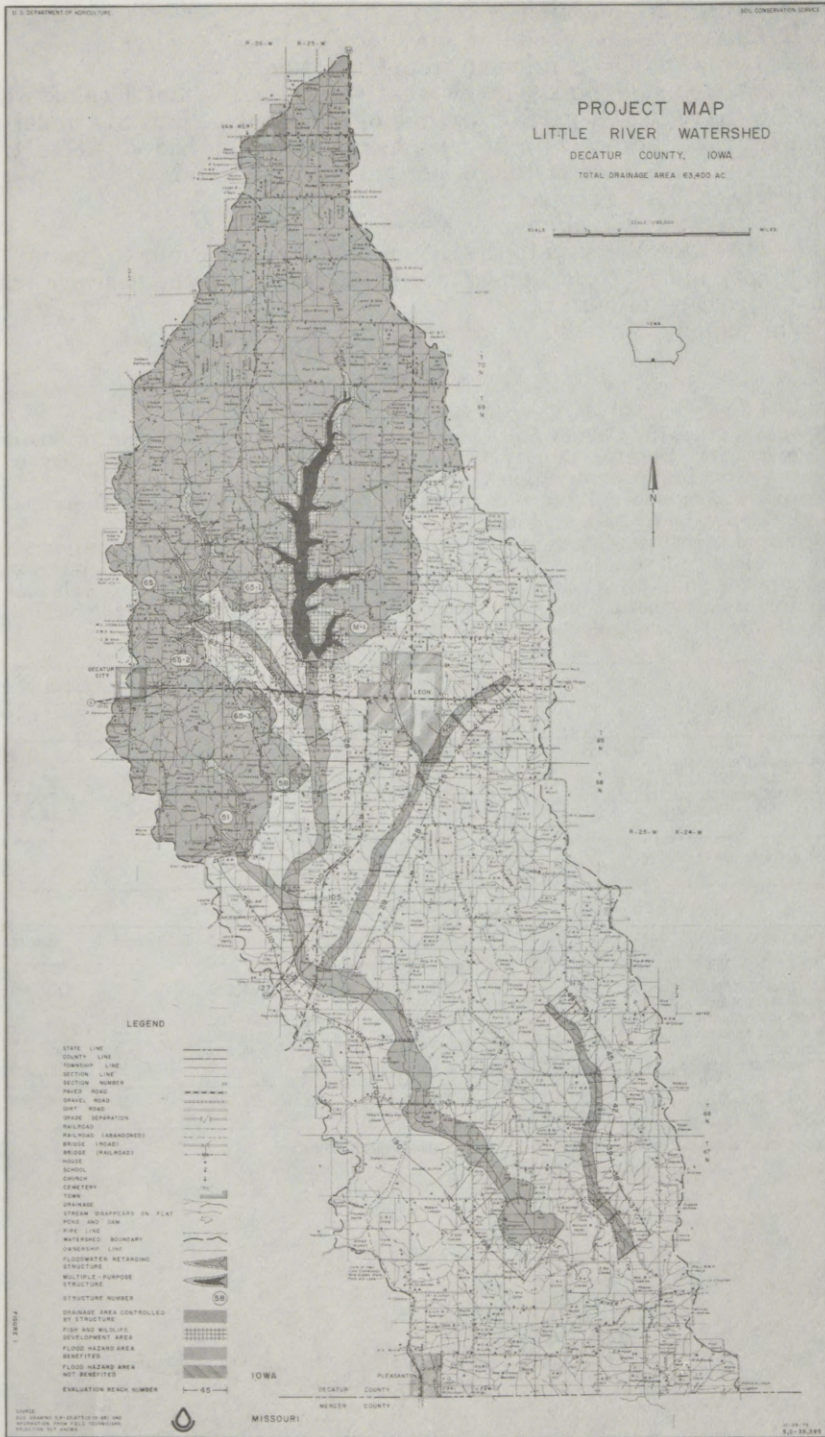
Principal Measures: Soil conservation practices on farms and structural measures consisting of six floodwater retarding structures, one multiple purpose structure for flood prevention, municipal and industrial water supply, fish and wildlife, intake structure and raw water line, and fish and wildlife facilities. The total storage capacity of the structures is 25,594 acre-feet.

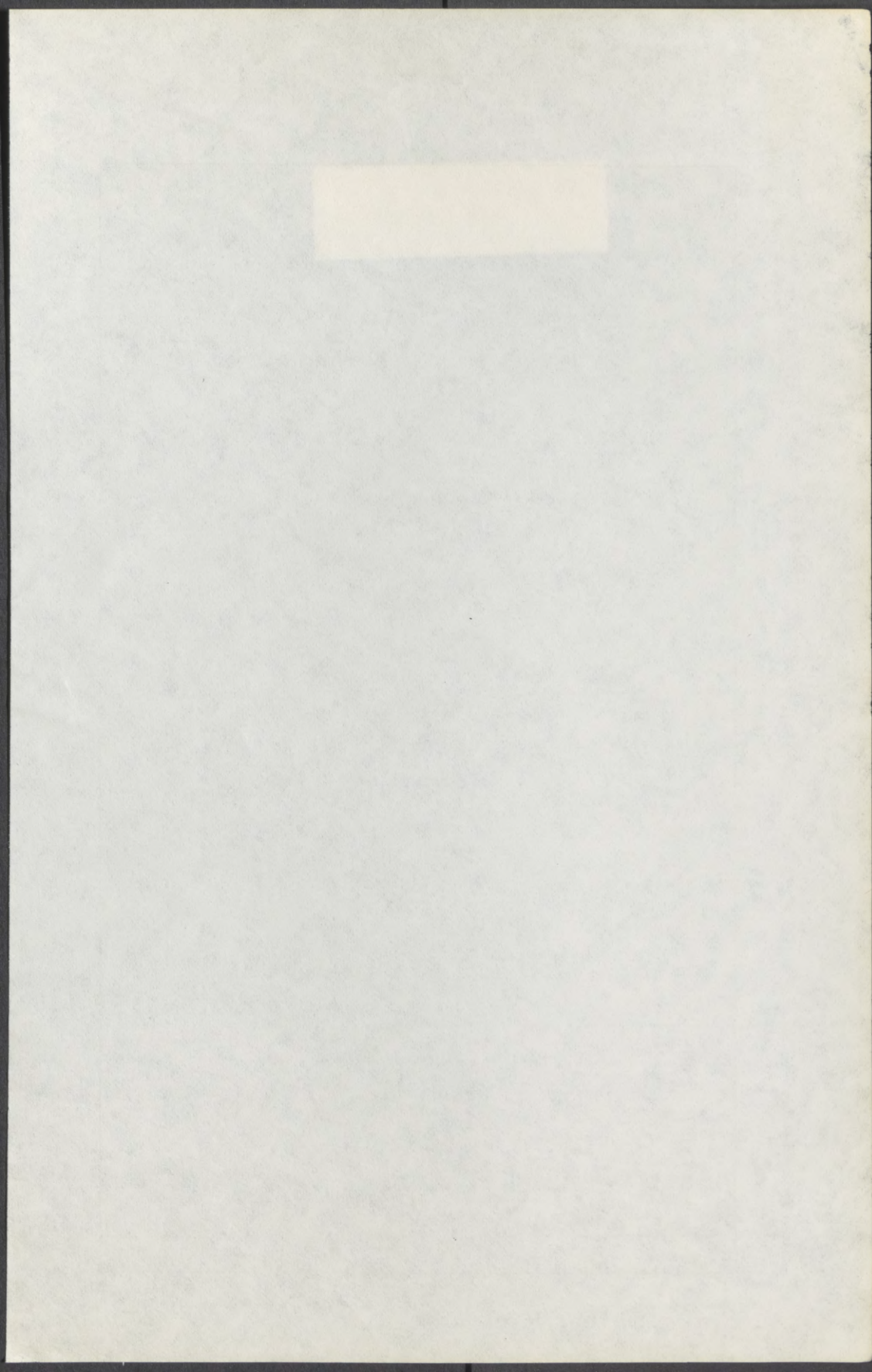
	Average annual dollars ¹	
	Benefit	Cost
Annual benefits and costs:		
Flood prevention.....	194,000	93,700
Fish and wildlife.....	80,200	79,300
Municipal and industrial.....	47,200	23,800

¹ 6½ percent, 100 yr.

Capital costs	Public Law 566 funds		Other funds		Total amount
	Amount	Percent	Amount	Percent	
Land treatment measures.....	\$55,000	7	\$745,000	93	\$800,000
Structural measures:					
Flood prevention.....	1,276,000	87	190,000	13	1,466,000
Municipal and industrial.....	2,000	1	373,000	99	375,000
Fish and wildlife.....	537,000	50	529,000	50	1,066,000
Project administration.....	227,000	86	36,000	14	263,000
Total.....	2,097,000	53	1,873,000	147	3,970,000

¹ The value of measures already installed (\$1,736,000) increases this to 63 percent.







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