Concluding Remarks

Today's symposium has demonstrated once again, the deep interest and optimism Montanans have for restoring the resource potential of the Clark Fork River. The registered attendance list numbers more than 150, including many from our neighboring States of Idaho and Washington. On behalf of the planning committee and sponsors of the symposium. I want to thank the attendees, participants and supporters for making this meeting a success.

Scientists from many disciplines have joined here to report their study results--each has added new insight to the dynamics of an abused ecosystem, but most importantly, their work provides a basis for preparing and implementing reclamation and management plans for the future. It is essential that we begin these remedial programs and plans now. Funding will always be a limitation but we must pursue corrective actions. Many of the primary sources of toxic pollutants at the headwaters are being addressed by the "Superfund" remedial investigations. These are complex sites worthy of detailed investigations and planning. We are encouraged that substantial clean-up activities have already begun.

The upper river has responded remarkably to the cessation of mining and the wastewater treatment program implemented more than 30 years ago. This resilience of the natural system is encouraging, but fish mortalities following a summer thunderstorm and exceedance of water quality criteria during spring runoff are reminders of the river's vulnerability to even mild disturbance.

The stabilization of mining waste deposits in the upper river flood plain must be a high priority. Restoring riparian stability and agricultural production in such a large area is a major undertaking with many unique problems. The process can be started, however, with relatively simple techniques such as fencing riparian zones and restoration of channel integrity in the most contaminated and erosive areas.

The problems of the lower river are equally important, but less distinct, Evidence of water quality deterioration has been reported by residents as far downstream as Lake Fend Oreille. Collection of definitive data for such a large water volume as the lower river requires sustained and intensive monitoring. Such programs were initiated in Montana in 1984 and, with funds authorized by the legislature, the monitoring will continue through 1987. A continued monitoring program will be necessary to assess changes in water quality and to minimize conflict when enforcement decisions are required. A coordinated and cooperative monitoring program shared by agencies in Montana and Idaho is needed to cope with economic and population growth without sacrificing the unique environmental qualities that have attracted visitors and residents alike to the region.

Water resource management strategies must be developed to provide adequate year-round flows for instream uses such as fisheries, recreation, esthetics, and water quality control. New demands for the Clark Fork waters will intensify. Without protection of minimum flows, even the most expensive and sophisticated wastewater treatment will not be adequate to meet the desired water quality conditions.

Cooperative programs are needed also to identify and protect critical habitat for fish in tributary streams, to reduce sedimentation, and to minimize water level fluctuations in the lower river reservoirs. Each of these tasks will improve our opportunity to develop a vigorous sport fishery in the lower river.

Today's symposium is evidence of the range of projects underway in the Clark Fork basin. In 1984, many diverse groups, including environmental groups, private citizens, the Montana Environmental Quality

Council, and members of industry urged State government to develop a comprehensive water quality study and management plan for the Clark Fork River. Governor Schwinden responded to the requests by establishing the Clark Fork Project within his office. The project, initiated with a grant from the Anaconda Minerals Company, is working to coordinate the many agency efforts, to establish cooperative monitoring programs and interagency agreements, and to secure funds for the necessary monitoring and reclamation projects. The Clark Fork Project offers an unusual opportunity for all interest groups to be included in planning for the future of the Clark Fork River basin. There is no question that the results will be worth the effort.

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