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UM RESEARCHER STUDIES LIFE OF DAMS

MISSOULA, Mont. ---

A University of Montana researcher wants to find out the useful life of the dams that store Montana's most valuable resource -- water.

Dr. Richard L. Konizeski, a School of Forestry professor of hydrology and watershed management, is beginning a study to determine the life expectancies of small, headwater reservoirs in Montana. In other words, how fast will those reservoirs fill with solid matter so that they can no longer store water?

Dr. Konizeski reports that the Montana University Joint Water Resources Center at Bozeman has granted him \$66,600 to conduct the four-year study.

He is just now completing a \$32,000 study to determine the age of the ground-water in the Missoula Valley by checking the strength of residual radioactivity and aging of carbon particles in the water.

Dr. Konizeski has a bachelor's degree from Washington State University, Pullman, and a master's and doctorate from the University of Chicago. He was hydrologist 11 years for the U.S. Geologic Survey in Missoula until he joined the University staff in 1967.

He says the annual surface water runoff in Montana is approximately 28 million acre-feet. The conservative value of the water Montana uses for irrigation -- 8 million a/f at \$3 per a/f; industry and cities -- 350,000 a/f at \$17 per a/f, and hydroelectric generation -- 853,000 average annual kilowatts at 7 mills per kilowatt, exclusive of recreational and minor uses, is about \$35 million. That, he says, is comparable to the annual Montana timber harvest.

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Although most of the water runs off in the spring, demands for water are highest at other times of the year. For instance, agriculture needs most of its water in July, August and September.

Already 60 main stream reservoirs have been constructed in Montana, utilizing nearly all of the suitable major dam sites.

Emphasis is therefore shifting to the building of small reservoirs on the small tributary streams that feed Montana's rivers. The problem, however, is to learn how fast those small reservoirs will fill up with silt. Dr. Konizeski intends to find that out.

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