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Bureaucrats Muddy the Waters

A STATED goal of Section 208 of Public law 92,500 is to make all the nation's waters "fishable and swimmable" by 1983.

Bureaucrats in charge might as well have added "and to make them fully federally controlled by the same date."

Environmental extremists and ecological fanatics favor federal control of water and other resources because they expect themselves or their friends to be in charge of bureaus which regulate them.

Congress has gone along with their demands because pure, clean water has tremendous appeal for a nation of water lovers and also, probably, because environmentalists could stage longer, louder demonstrations than ordinary citizens.

The outcome is enactment of a national water policy law, or control law, with a network of overlapping, costly bureaus with excessive regulations to implement it.

Much of the activity involves the

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which has been in the news lately regarding a dispute with Oklahoma officials over water purity.

Douglas M. Costle, EPA administrator, has said: "We intend to move ahead with this (water) program without delay, employing the whole range of pollution control tools, including education, regulations, improved management, incentives and voluntary programs." Voluntary was at the end of the list.

Another federal control agency in water matters is the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which has metamorphosed from a military defense unit into a dam-building bureaucracy.

Under its extensive powers, the corps regulates use of "wetlands", which includes any lands adjacent to any body of water or stream that is now, ever has been or ever might be used for navigation.

It means that if an Indian used a canoe on a wet weather creek in western Oklahoma, it may be a na-

vigable stream.

General Accounting Office (GAO) has entered the water control picture. It sent out inspectors, who brought back word that conservation districts aren't doing their job well and that Soil Conservation Service employees should be "more aggressive."

Oklahoma conservation districts are faced with enforcement of laws against "non-point source pollution". This includes impurities which have no definable source, and which might come from agriculture, construction, roadsides or other origins.

Under these laws, conservation has been changed from a voluntary responsibility of land owners to compulsion.

Control of our water resources is passing rapidly from individuals and local government into Washington bureaus.

It should be obvious that muddy thinking about water is largely due to the numerous federal agencies dabbling in it.