

## Discussion Questions

1. What was the Federal Flood Control Act of 1944, and why was that law so influential in creating large-scale public works projects like the Oahe Irrigation Project? How would the people of South Dakota benefit from this Federal legislation?
2. Who was Ken Holum? Based on the text, provide a brief sketch of Holum and trace his advocacy of the Oahe Irrigation Project. To whom did he appeal, what role did he play in the project, and what was his ultimate fate?
3. Who were Lewis Pick and Glenn Sloan, and what roles did they play in the Oahe Irrigation Project and other federally funded public works projects?
4. What are the governmental agencies called “sub-districts”? What was the Oahe Conservancy Sub-District? What role do sub-districts play as “intermediaries” between the local people and the Federal government? How were the officers or members of the sub-districts appointed? What kinds of policy issues were debated as part of authorized sub-district deliberations and proceedings? Trace the history — especially the constituents — of the Oahe Conservancy Sub-District.
5. Who were the United Family Farmers, and what role did they play in the Oahe Irrigation Project?
6. Trace the evolving activities of George Piper throughout the course of this text. What were his positions with respect to the Oahe Irrigation Project? What role did Piper play in the disposition of the Oahe Irrigation Project?
7. What did President Jimmy Carter have to do with respect to the continued authorization of the Oahe Irrigation Project? What ultimate action did he take, and was his action justified?
8. Why is a multidisciplinary understanding of the political, economic, social, physical, biological (ecological), and environmental factors of the Oahe Irrigation Project critical to our appreciation of the course of history in South Dakota and the nation? Why was the deauthorization of the Oahe Irrigation Project a model for the evolution of large complex Federally funded public works projects in the latter part of the twentieth century?
9. Were the positions of Senator George McGovern, Governor Bill Janklow, President Jimmy Carter, and other high-ranking politicians predictable in the context of the nation and their political parties, party policies, and constituency groups? Why or why not?

10. Consider notions of “progress” and definitions of progress. Why did some people believe deauthorization of the Oahe Irrigation Project was an example of progress, while others found it to be the opposite of progress or a kind of reverse progress? What is your definition of progress? Should the Federal government be in the business of promoting projects like Oahe? Why or why not?
11. Could we draw a parallel today between the Oahe Irrigation Project and our continued authorization and support of fossil fuel-fired electricity plants?
12. To what extent is the Oahe Irrigation Project part of the story of westward expansion, our Jeffersonian notions of farming, and the concept of the politically autonomous and democratic gentleman farmer?
13. The Army Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation, often at odds, decided to come together because “they had learned that a clenched fist is not the best instrument with which to dip into the public trough.” Discuss this quotation taken from Albert Williams’ book, *The Water and the Power*, discussed by Carrels on page 16.
14. Why did the people of South Dakota believe that they were “owed” the Oahe Irrigation Project? What had they “given up” or sacrificed in order to be rewarded the Oahe Irrigation Project?
15. What do we learn about the physical condition of the soils in the Lake Plain irrigation area? Are the soils compatible with irrigation? What kinds of soil treatments were suggested to make the Lake Plain more readily irrigable? Predict the effects of Lake Plain return flows on the water quality of the James River.
16. Finally, what are the most important lessons you learned from Peter Carrels’ *Uphill Against Water*?

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