

Panel picked to investigate \$1.2 billion irrigation project

FARGO, N.D. (AP) — Interior Secretary William Clark yesterday named a 12-member commission that has four months to decide whether changes should be made in a \$1.2 billion irrigation project under fire from environmentalists.

Former Louisiana Gov. David C. Treen will head the commission, established in June by Congress as part of a compromise to gain passage of the 1985 appropriation for the Garrison Diversion project, Clark said in a statement.

The project, begun in the 1960s and about one-quarter complete, would divert Missouri River water for the irrigation of 250,000 acres of North Dakota farmland and municipal and industrial use.

Environmental groups in the United States and Canadian officials argue that the project could contaminate streams and ruin commercial and recreational fishing.

Representatives of several environmental groups were among the commission appointees. Members will not be paid, but the panel has a \$1.5 million budget to cover expenses, said Cheryl Reidmiller, a spokeswoman for the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, which oversees the project.

THE COMMISSION, which disbanded on Dec. 31, must hold at least three public hearings, according to the congressional legislation. Agreement by eight members is necessary for a recommendation to be forwarded to



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— Interior Secretary William Clark

Clark, and if no report is issued, construction on the project will continue as previously designed.

The project's \$53.6 million appropriation for fiscal 1985 will not be released until Jan. 1.

"This will be a difficult, but not impossible, task," Clark said. "The individuals appointed to the commission were selected for their abilities as problem solvers, their reputations as diligent and open-minded people, their experience in high-level negotiations and their knowledge of water-development issues."

In addition to Treen, commission members are former U.S. Sen. Henry Bellmon of Oklahoma; James G. Teer,

a director of the National Audubon Society; J.W. O'Meara, executive vice president of the National Water Resources Association; Norman Livermore, former California secretary for resources; John Whitaker, former undersecretary of the U.S. Interior Department; Patrick F. Noonan, former president of The Nature Conservancy.

Also J. Gordon Milliken, a research economist at the University of Denver; Mayor Henry C. Wessman of Grand Forks, N.D.; John Paulson, retired editor of the Fargo (N.D.) Forum; Washington lawyer William B. Ingersoll; and Ann Zorn, a former member of the Nevada Environmental Commission.

Veterans Administration cuts rate ceiling on home mortgages

WASHINGTON (AP) — For the first time in nine months, the Veterans Administration is lowering its interest-rate ceiling on VA-backed basic home loans, and the president of a lenders group says he hopes further reductions are on the way.

The change, effective tomorrow, will limit interest charges on new level-payment mortgages backed by the agency to 13.5 percent, down from 14 percent. Such loans are available to eligible veterans and their families.

Most home loan rates have been rising along with other interest rates in the economy through the spring and summer. In fact, the most recent government statistics showed average rates at 15.2 percent in early July for conventional home loans not backed by the government.

But some rates have eased since then, and many economists expect them to decline further in coming weeks. The reduction in the ceiling on VA loans was made possible "by an improved mortgage market that is showing more optimism among investors that inflation has subsided and that the economy's growth rate has leveled to a more sustainable pace," said VA Administrator Harry Walters.

FELIX M. BECK, president of the Mortgage Bankers Association of America, whose members make most VA-backed loans, said, "The drop in the VA rate was justified by

market conditions that reflect the economy at manageable growth levels and the money supply within the target range."

"In addition, with inflation relatively calm, hopefully we can look for further reductions in interest rates that could spur greater activity in the real estate marketplace," he added.

"However, the federal budget deficit still looms as a threat to interest rates because of the inflationary expectations it causes," Beck said.

The announcement by the VA said the reduction would mean a savings of about \$24 a month on a new level-payment agency-backed loan averaging \$61,000.

The agency also said it is reducing by one-half percentage point the rates for two other categories, lowering the ceiling for graduated-payment mortgages to 13.75 percent and for home-improvement loans to 15 percent.

Manufactured-home loan ceilings will remain unchanged at 16 percent for homes with lots and at 15.5 percent for lots only.

Tomorrow's changes will not affect the interest rates on existing VA loans, which remain the same for the life of the agreements.

Wall Street still kicking up its heels

By CHET CURRIER
Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — As it celebrates its second anniversary, Wall Street's bull market is once again kicking up its heels.

On Aug. 12, 1982, the Dow Jones industrial average closed at a two-year low of 776.92. In the days and weeks that followed, it began one of the most powerful rallies in Wall Street history.

Two years later, the financial world is being treated to an encore performance.

Since the end of July, stock prices have soared at a dizzying rate. Trading volume records set in the early stages of the bull market have been shattered, and talk abounds on Wall Street of new highs for the market before the year is out.

The similarities of the two market upsurges have been striking. Both seemed to come out of nowhere, at a time when many investors were preoccupied with worries about the economy, or away on summer vacations.

But analysts point out that there is at least one major difference between them. The 1982 lull came amid a recession, several months before even the first signs of recovery appeared.

The 1984 rally, by contrast, is set against the background of a year-and-

ANALYSIS

a-half-old economic expansion that has already outstripped almost every forecast.

In the last four months of 1982, the market climbed about 40 percent. "This time, however, the business cycle is far too advanced to permit a rise of similar magnitude," maintained Heinz Biel, an analyst at Janney Montgomery Scott Inc.

STILL, MANY investors seem convinced at the moment that there is a lot more growth in store for business activity. Their optimism is based on the perception that inflation still gives no indication of reviving.

"All modern cycles have ended when inflation gathered enough steam so that government policy was necessary to suppress it, which also suppresses the recovery as well," said Greg Smith at Prudential-Bache Securities. "There should be no need for any such policy over the next three to six months."

In the past week, the Dow Jones average of 30 blue-chip industrials climbed 16.01 to 1,218.09, on top of the previous week's record 87.46-point rise.

The New York Stock Exchange

composite index gained 1.85 to 95.08, and the American Stock Exchange market value index was up 4.54 at 208.37.

Big Board volume averaged 152.01 million shares a day, surpassing the record of 139.23 million set the week before.

"Confidence that inflation will remain below double-digit levels is building gradually," said Charles Lieberman at Shearson Lehman American Express.

"The belief that inflation will be contained has always depended on some assurance that the economy would not overheat. The failure of monetary policy to moderate the pace of previous expansions enabled those cycles to push the limits of capacity too far, with progressively accelerating inflation the unfortunate result.

"Much has been learned from those difficult experiences," Lieberman said. "The willingness of Federal Reserve officials to tolerate what appear to be very high real interest rates indicates very clearly the depth of their commitment to reducing the economy's underlying inflation rate."

AMID THE general euphoria, many observers acknowledge that there are still potential obstacles in the market's path. The problem of the federal budget deficit, for example, has not been magically resolved.

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Table of Treasury Notes with columns for Maturity, Bid, Asked, and Change.

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