



The environmental movement of the 1960s and 1970s helped bring more citizens into direct participation in their government. The Tulsa District changed procedures to listen more effectively to citizens such as these Tulsans advocating Joe Creek flood control. Among participants: Col. Pinkey, seated in front row, third from right.

SILENT SPRING. At about the time Rachel Carson published *Silent Spring* in 1962, warning of ecological dangers facing mankind, the environmental movement began to force the Corps to re-examine its policies.

Two trends in government at that time were destined to impact the Corps greatly:

- The trend of minority and special-interest groups to demand greater participation in decision-making; and
- The trend to force government agencies to consider the environmental effects of their actions.

In the 1970s two authors studied the response to those trends by five major federal agencies. From a study published by the prestigious Brookings Institution (*Can Organizations Change? Environmental Protection, Citizen Participation, and the Corps of Engineers*) came a revealing conclusion: “despite legislation, administrative rules, and public pressure, little had changed in the decision making and environmental practices of most federal agencies.”

They found one exception: “The Army Corps of Engineers . . . viewed by many as the epitome of a well-entrenched bureaucracy . . . seemed to be making a conscious and serious effort to accommodate itself to the spirit of the environmental movement as well as to the letter of the law.”

The Brookings Institution was amazed at this discovery. Was this the same Corps commonly viewed as an impenetrable fortress, the same Corps that Franklin Roosevelt once called “the most difficult foreign power I have to deal with?”

Intrigued, the researchers looked further and concluded that, while economic development remained the first goal of the Corps, the agency had adopted a second goal of environmental quality.

The two goals co-exist “uneasily,” but the Corps was moving toward parity, the authors said. They quoted one of the Corps’ top engineers in 1976, Maj. Gen. (and former Tulsa District Engineer) John W. Morris: “During our studies, our planning and designing, we listen carefully to the voices of opposition, regardless of how emotional they may be, because it is in the adversary arena where views are exchanged, knowledge is gained, and compromises are reached . . . The right way is to balance actions, consider all sides, and make decisions based upon those considerations which are the greatest benefit to the most people.”²