

It was the first omnibus water bill in 16 years, and it was a historic day in more than one respect. For this was a bill that varied, in almost every important aspect, from previous water resources legislation.

In the first place, the bill authorized an amazing array of projects: more than 300 new projects nationwide, at a total cost of around \$16 billion. In the Tulsa District alone, it authorized more than a half-billion dollars in projects. This was not as debilitating to the federal budget as it might sound, for nationwide, the bill deauthorized 293 projects that would have cost about \$11 billion.

In the second place, the bill established a port user fee and increased the inland waterways fuel tax, shifting more of the cost of waterway operations to users.

And in the third place, the bill set into law new cost-sharing partnerships between the Corps and non-federal sponsors such as cities and towns. For the first time in many years, locals would pay major slices of the cost of projects, including studies leading up to the projects. This was the controversial provision that had held up the bill for so many years, with the Reagan Administration insisting that larger shares of the costs be devolved from the federal treasury.

Patete spoke of a new partnership between the Corps and local governments.

"People who gain from the water projects should be willing to invest in the many benefits they receive," he said. "More local involvement will mean a setting of priorities by the users, which will give our projects greater impetus and credibility . . .

"I see an upcoming era full of changes and challenges . . . a new way of doing business — for the Corps and for our sponsors," Patete said. As it turned out, he was more than right in that prediction.⁵



Left: What some called "The Tulsa Treaty" was signed by city and Corps officials Jan. 22, 1988. The agreement set terms of a historic partnership between the city and the Corps to develop the \$155 million Mingo Creek flood control project. Signing (seated) were Tulsa Mayor Dick Crawford, left, and Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works Robert W. Page, Sr. Looking on, left to right: Tulsa's Stan Williams and J.D. Metcalfe and the Corps' Lt. Gen. H.J. Hatch, Chief of Engineers; and Brig. Gen. Robert C. Lee, Southwestern Division Commander. Below: Tulsa's Mingo Creek caused \$160 million in damages in 1974, 1976, and 1984 floods.

MINGO CREEK, TULSA.

The date was January 22, 1988, a Friday; the time, just before noon; the place, the City Hall of Tulsa, one of the most flood-haunted cities in the United States. The drama played out there epitomized Patete's predictions about the new partnership.

The occasion? Leaders of the Corps of Engineers, from Washington to the Tulsa District office, had gathered with city leadership to sign one of the first new cost-sharing agreements in the nation for one of the largest local flood protection projects in the Corps' history.

