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Administration of all the far-flung hydroelectric power and water resource activities in the Department of the Interior hereafter will be centered under James R. Smith with the new title of Assistant Secretary for Water and Power Resources, Acting Secretary of the Interior Fred J. Russell announced today.

Russell said the change will assure more effective management since all seven agencies now reporting to Smith “are deeply concerned with optimum use and conservation of one of our most vital basic resources - water."

“We now can move ahead more rapidly in comprehensive planning, river basin management, and establishing research priorities,” Secretary Russell added. “The Department’s leadership roles on the Water Resources Council, the Committee on Water Resources Research of the Federal Council on Science and Technology, and the various River Basin Commissions and other regional water resources institutions will be strengthened. Further, our relations with State and local water resources authorities and universities will be enhanced.”

The agencies reporting to Assistant Secretary Smith are:

- The Bureau of Reclamation, which provides water for 10 million acres of land in the west, municipal and industrial water for a population of 15 million, and which generate 43 billion kilowatts of hydroelectric power annually.
- The Bonneville Power Administration, Chief power marketing agency in the Pacific Northwest.
- The Southeastern Power Administration, a major power marketing agency head-quartered at Elberton, Ga.
- The Southwestern Power Administration, Tulsa, Okla., another key power distributor.
- The Alaska Power Administration, Juneau, Interior’s hydroelectric power distributor for that State;
- The office of Saline Water, which manages a multimillion dollar long-range research and demonstration program for converting seawater and brackish water to fresh; and
- The Office of Water Resources Research, which invests millions of dollars annually in scientific studies by colleges and others.

Under Smith's direction, the Department’s power agencies participate in the generation and marketing of energy from plants with a combined capability of 18 million kilowatts. They manage nearly 30,000 miles of transmission lines and realize a gross income of $300 million annually.

Smith, a native of Sioux FaIls, S.D., was named an Assistant: Secretary in Interior in March 1969 following 2.5 years of activity in water and land resource development much of it in the Missouri Basin.