

## *Coordination: A Step for Environmental Protection*

Environmental action in North Dakota is so diffuse as to be almost totally ineffective. In legislative and regulatory agency activities or in developmental matters of statewide concern, the environmental viewpoint is at best fragmented and sporadic, at worst non-existent. This unfortunate circumstance has resulted from the development of organizations which are oriented towards special interests, such as hunting, fishing, bird study, protection of a river valley, etc., and from the lack of coordination in their activities.

Diversity is a good thing unless it goes so far as to dilute the resources, personal and economic, that are needed to accomplish the job. Diffuse interests lose their effectiveness in the political arena to the strong challenge of those interests which have a unified voice. Moreover, such diffusion may result in uncoordinated efforts so that opposing interests may play up minor differences of opinion in order to destroy the major objectives of all of the concerned organizations. In short, an uncoordinated approach plays into the hands of those who wish to degrade the environment for their own material advantage.

Probably the greatest single step that can be taken to increase awareness and protect the quality of the environment in North Dakota would be to effect the consolidation of all existing environmental organizations into a statewide environmental coordinating council. Such councils have proven remarkably effective in other states. For example, the Florida Coalition for the Environment mustered the support that led to the defeat of both the proposed Everglades Jetport and the Cross-Florida Barge Canal, both when they were already under construction.

Since its inception, the North Dakota Natural Science Society has been concerned with increasing the coordination of environmental organizations. Efforts begun by the Society about four years ago were not carried to fruition. Now, with increased pressures for wetlands drainage, surface mining, coal gasification, irrigation, flood protection, pest control, etc., it is time to re-establish this as the most important activity for the Society.

According to the Chinese proverb, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with but a single step." Let us now take that step towards the coordination of activities of environmental organizations.

—Paul B. Kannowski