

Conservationists say Watt must go

Interior Secretary James Watt has custodial responsibility for roughly one fifth of the land mass of the United States and is conservator of the nation's natural resources. But according to the National Wildlife Federation last week, "evidence of Mr. Watt's unsuitability for the job he holds has become so overwhelming we are convinced that the sooner he is relieved of his duties, the better it will be for our country and its resources. There is no way, in our judgment, that Mr. Watt can be rehabilitated."

The National Wildlife Federation prides itself on being a large, politically conservative body of environmental moderates. In fact, a recent statistical sampling of its 800,000 dues-paying members showed that two out of three had voted for Ronald Reagan in the last election.

"As an organization that deals in issues rather than personalities, we held our fire when other environmental groups denounced Secretary Watt," says Jay Hair, NWF's executive vice president. "We tried to maintain a dialog with him. We shared the Reagan administration's desire to cut federal spending—a good conservationist position—and we thought we could wean its Secretary of the Interior away from error through patience and reason."

Watt "places a much higher priority on development and exploitation than on conservation," Hair contends. "We have found that while he pays lip service to environmental protection, he is working to undermine or circumvent many of our basic environmental protection laws. We have found that he is inflexible and unresponsive to ideas and entreaties from the conservation movement. And finally, through a poll of our membership we have found that Mr. Watt is out of step, not only with the views of conservation leaders who have called on him, but with the mainstream of American thought."

Those are strong words coming from a group with 4.5 million members and supporters—the largest conservation group in the nation. But Watt has a talent for raising the hackles of environmentalists. Meanwhile, their repeated calls for his ouster appear to leave him unruffled. While that irks his detractors too, it's been Watt's actions—or sometimes lack of them—not his personality, that upsets people most.

For example, not one species has been added to the endangered-species list this year. "Is that unusual? Absolutely," says Peter Holmes, endangered-species specialist at Defenders of Wildlife. The Interior Department normally would have added up to a dozen new entries by now, "But not only have they not listed new species," Holmes says, "they also have frozen the list of those proposed for listing

during the month of January, before Reagan took office. I don't want to sound alarmist about it, or be just castigating Watt, as is so popular, but Mr. Watt told the endangered-species program manager, Ron Lambertson, that he was in favor of the program as long as work was done to take species off the list. In other words, he wants to start reversing the trend of adding species for protection."

Watt recently provoked the ire of Californians when he tried to open offshore tracts to oil exploration—something many feared could endanger both sea otters and resort beaches. He has also been castigated for helping scuttle the Law of the Sea treaty, for proposing a moratorium on new acquisition of fragile habitat, for promoting mineral exploration in wilderness areas, for offering to give concessionaires in national parks greater say in how parks are managed, for efforts to accelerate offshore oil and gas leasing and for the alleged emasculation of the agency's strip-mining office.

NWF had been a holdout in the war against Watt. Now that they've entered the campaign, one can expect greater emphasis on strategic—rather than tactical—maneuvers. NWF's participation also testifies to the fact that even political conservatives consider protection of their environment worth fighting for. □

Ariane: The U.S. Push

"Arianespace—first commercial operational space carrier," announces the full-color advertisement filling the back cover of AVIATION WEEK AND SPACE TECHNOLOGY. The weekly magazine is read throughout the U.S. aerospace industry, which includes numerous potential users of the launch services provided by the space shuttle. And what Arianespace is selling—right in the shuttle's backyard—is the shuttle's competition.

Arianespace is a private company established in March of 1980 to finance, produce, market and launch Ariane, the multi-stage rocket developed by the European Space Agency. Its shareholders are the 36 principal European aerospace firms, 11 European banks and CNES, the French space agency. Like the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration, which markets the shuttle, Arianespace has a list of potential customers extending through 1985, some of whom are firmly committed to one launch vehicle or the other while a greater number have merely reserved places in line.

Both lists represent business from several countries, some of which have taken options on both boosters to be on the safe side. But for Arianespace, marketing in the United States is, understandably, a special case. Billions of U.S. dollars and considerable national prestige depend on the shut-

tle's success, making it somewhat audacious for a European combine to try for the shuttle's "native" business.

The job is essentially in the hands of three people, Americans all, who are employed by the Grumman Corp. of Bethpage, Long Island, N.Y. Grumman has a contract to serve as Arianespace's U.S. marketing representative, which it does by means of advertisements, personal contacts, thick information packages and plain old salesmanship. So far only two U.S. firms have even placed reservations on Ariane flights—RCA, which holds a spot in October of next year, and Satellite Television Corp, which has a slot in 1985—but the real hunting ground for the marketers is the next half-decade. The potential market for the 1986-1990 period, says Robert Shutak, the West Coast member of Grumman's Arianespace team, includes as many as 240 potential payloads, of which Ariane rockets could handle perhaps 60.

Even if Arianespace corrals all 60, the U.S. shuttle will hardly be put out of business. But Arianespace's U.S. sales reps are quoting about \$46 million (in June 1980 dollars) for a single launch, so even if each rocket carries two paying payloads (as most will), nearly \$1.4 billion is at stake.

Still, why is a U.S. company marketing a foreign competitor in its own country? It's a matter of dollars and cents, just as it is for commercial satellite users who are likely to look first at their profit statements (or projections) when they have to put a payload in orbit. The U.S. government has encouraged aerospace companies such as Grumman to sell their aircraft abroad, says John Herre, Shutak's East Coast counterpart, and Grumman just happens to be trying to sell the French government its E-2C, a \$200 million plane packed with radar gear to keep watch over naval fleets at sea. France has contributed nearly 60 percent of Arianespace's operating capital (and more than 60 percent of the development costs of Ariane itself), so each Arianespace sale to the U.S. represents a significant "offset" against the cost of E-2Cs bought by France.

There are complex trade-offs facing a potential customer trying to decide whose launch service to buy—the shuttle can perhaps undersell Ariane, but its development problems worry some customers who need to count on their launch dates, and the conventional rockets offered by NASA as alternatives may not always be in production. But Arianespace offers inducements as well. Perhaps the most important, particularly to small users, says Shutak, is the possibility of a financial plan that requires a customer to pay only 20 percent of his bill in the 3 years preceding the actual launch. The rest is not due until afterward, when the payload (typically a commercial communications satellite) has started to produce revenue. Arianespace will even introduce the customer to the appropriate European banks—but the customer still has to swing the deal. □