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Five-State Meeting Here

Man's Apathy to Environment Termed Ticket to Extinction

By BEN CASTILLO

Man might be writing himself a one-way ticket to extinction because of his apathetic attitude toward environment, the chief of the New Mexico Environmental Improvement Agency said Friday.

Larry Gordon, featured speaker at an all-day five-state conference on air pollution control, told his audience at the Western Skies that "since the birth of Christ, 250 species of animals have disappeared from this earth -- 166 of them in the past 60 years."

GORDON WAS one of a cast of speakers which included David Calkins, regional director of the U.S. Air Pollution Control Office in San Francisco, and Dr. Arthur Atkisson, director of the Institute of Urban Health at the University of Texas in Houston.

Calkins spoke of the interrelation of federal and state laws, which are aimed at having a uniform pollution control mechanism by July, 1975; and Atkisson centered his comments on the chemistry of pollution.

Gordon said he received an advanced degree in ecology more than 20 years ago only to find out that ecology was an unknown subject, and added that 10 years ago it was virtually impossible to get anybody to attend environment meetings.

FIVE YEARS ago, he said, a few attended because they were invited; and two years ago when a paper mill was scheduled to be built in New Mexico, the populace showed up in force.

Ecology then, is relatively a new human concern, he said.

Gordon said air pollution control programs should be coordinated to avoid duplication of effort, and "they should be aimed at the problem."

He said in Albuquerque 90 per cent of the problem arises from automobiles, either from the fumes they emit or the dust they raise.

HE SAID LAND use, freeways, housing development and mass transit systems should be considered on their environmental merits, and be painted man as a funny animal when it comes to transportation.

"To get away from the city, he buys land 25 miles away, moves away and takes his urban problems with him." Gordon said. "Little does he realize that he's driving 50 miles more daily and emitting that much more exhaust which compounds the problem."

Another example, he said, is mass transit.

"Gasoline taxes are used only for freeways," Gordon said, "while much of that money could be diverted to building rapid transit systems with less pollution and more efficiency."