



# MR&I Program Brings Millions to Rural North Dakota Communities

By Angela Magstadt

Through the statewide Municipal, Rural and Industrial (MR&I) water supply program, the Garrison Diversion Conservancy District (Garrison Diversion) helps North Dakota communities bring a clean, reliable supply of water to their residents, farms, schools, hospitals, and industries.

Reliable and high-quality water can mean the difference between success and failure for small towns and family farms. Garrison Diversion is the fiscal agent and, along with the State Water Commission, is responsible for administering the MR&I program. This program has \$400 million authorized in federal funding to help water systems deliver quality water to homes, businesses, and farms across North Dakota.

## The Program's Beginning

In 1986, the federal government authorized a change in the Garrison Diversion project that gave it \$200 million and the responsibility of delivering water to North Dakota cities, towns, rural communities, and growing industrial users. The Dakota Water Resources Act of 2000 authorized an additional \$200 million to help meet these statewide water needs, along with an additional \$200 million for Native American MR&I needs. The original \$200 million included in the 1986 Reformulation Act has been expended. Though much has been accomplished, the water supply needs across the state continue to grow.

Garrison Diversion and the State Water Commission jointly oversee the MR&I grant program through a joint MR&I committee. Many, if not most, water systems throughout the state have received financial grants from the program.

The funding provided through the MR&I program for water development in the state helps ensure the infrastructure necessary to support future growth is in place. A dependable water system is essential not only for quality of life, but also for economic development.

“More than 100,000 rural residents have access to quality water on tap via the state’s rural and regional water systems, and approximately 70 percent of the state’s incorporated cities receive water from those systems,” says Eric Volk, executive director of the North Dakota Rural Water Systems Association. “Many of these small communities and rural residents would not have a safe, reliable, and abundant source of drinking water if it wasn’t for the federal MR&I program.”



## Current Projects Moving Forward with Help of MR&I Program

Water systems across North Dakota depend on the MR&I program for funding to address their current and future demands.

One such system is South Central Regional Water District, which is currently in the midst of a huge expansion project that will bring quality water to more than 1,500 residents in Emmons, Logan, McIntosh, and Kidder counties. During this expansion, South Central received a large increase in water user signups, and needed additional funding to get water to those users. “Funding through the MR&I program was instrumental in launching our regional water supply projects that provide reliable, high-quality drinking water to rural residents in our district,” says South Central Regional Water District Manager Larry Kassian.

Residents in and around the city of Leonard rely on private wells for their water because there is no central water system, and recent tests have found unsafe levels of arsenic in many of these wells. To address this urgent issue,



Cass Rural Water Users District has stepped in, and is planning to extend its service to the Leonard area, bringing safe, clean water to the people who desperately need it. But the cost to do this is high – nearly \$3.2 million. While this may seem impossible for the residents that have signed up to receive this water, thanks to the MR&I project, \$2.4 million will be covered by a generous grant.

“We really appreciate the hard work and support we received from the Governor’s Office, State Water Commission, and Garrison Diversion Conservancy District to provide MR&I funding for the Leonard Area Arsenic Project,” says Jerry Blomeke, manager of Cass Rural Water Users District. “It is because of this funding that we are now in a position to complete the design work and seek bids this summer. Without the quick response provided by the MR&I committee, the earliest we could have been ready to bid would have been over the winter.”

The joint MR&I committee meets each biennium to consider funding requests made by small-town, regional, and rural water systems. Following are the projects that received financial assistance through the MR&I program for federal fiscal years 2015 and 2016.

- **South Central Regional Water District** received nearly \$4.4 million in MR&I funding to bring quality water to additional rural users and individual service connections within the Tappen and Dawson areas.
- The **Southwest Pipeline Project** received \$3 million in MR&I funds to assist with its major construction projects, including a supplemental raw water intake and the Dickinson Water Treatment Plant.
- **McLean-Sheridan Rural Water District** received \$160,000 to bring water to additional customers as part of its Blue and Brush Lake expansion project.
- The **City of Gladstone** received an MR&I grant of \$735,000 to construct a new 250,000-gallon water storage tank and install a new water main to address current and future demands. The City of Gladstone’s water system serves 353 people.
- The **City of Makoti** received an MR&I grant of \$1.05 million to construct a new 200,000-gallon elevated water tank and install a new water main. The City of Makoti’s water system serves 154 people.
- The **City of Glenburn** received more than \$1.2 million in MR&I funding to construct a 100,000-gallon water tower and install new water mains. Glenburn’s water system serves 453 people.
- The **City of Mohall** received a \$670,000 grant to construct a 225,000-gallon water tower. Mohall’s water system serves 796 people.
- The **City of Sherwood** received a \$456,000 grant to install new water mains. Sherwood’s water system serves 256 people.
- The **City of Burlington** received a \$600,000 grant to construct a new 10-inch water main. Burlington’s water system serves 1,060 people with the water supply from the Northwest Area Water Supply project.
- **Cass Rural Water Users District** received nearly \$2.4 million to install 25 miles of distribution pipeline to serve 35 rural water users and 60 individual service connections in the city of Leonard to address water quality issues with arsenic.
- The **City of Carrington** received \$1.9 million to construct a 500,000-gallon elevated water storage tank and install a new high-service pump building. Carrington’s water system serves 2,075 people, as well as areas of Stutsman Rural Water District and Greater Ramsey Water District.

- The **City of Casselton** received more than \$1.2 million to construct a 500,000-gallon water tower. Casselton's water system serves 2,491 people.
- The **City of Kindred** received \$735,000 to construct a new 150,000-gallon water storage tower. Kindred's water system serves 722 people.
- The **City of New England** received nearly \$1.6 million to construct a new 200,000-gallon water storage tank and install a new water main. New England's water system serves 632 people.
- The **City of Rugby** received a grant for \$458,000 to make improvements to its water treatment plant. Rugby's water system serves 2,900 people and All Seasons Water Users District.



- The **City of Wahpeton** received \$960,000 to make improvements to its water treatment plant. Wahpeton's water system serves 7,853 people.
- The **City of Westhope** received \$255,000 to install a new water main. Westhope's water system serves 427 people.

## Benefits to Many, More Work Remains

“Thanks to the millions of dollars provided by the MR&I water supply program, thousands of North Dakotans have access to an ample supply of good-quality water,” says Garrison Diversion General Manager Duane DeKrey. “However, even with the extensive progress we have made over the years, there is still a great deal that needs to be done. Our job is not complete until all North Dakotans have the quality water they deserve.”

## Dushinske/Jamison Water Resources Scholarship

13<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL  
GOLF SCRAMBLE

Top O' The Day  
**Tee-Off**

Monday, Aug. 8, 2016

CrossRoads Golf Course, Carrington

- Registration & Sack Lunch at Noon
- Shotgun Start at 1 p.m.
- Dinner & Awards at 6 p.m.
- 18-hole 4-person scramble
- \$50/person entry fee

To register, contact Stacey at the Garrison Diversion Conservancy District at 701-652-3194 or [gdc@daktel.com](mailto:gdc@daktel.com)