

Celebrating the Oakes Title Transfer

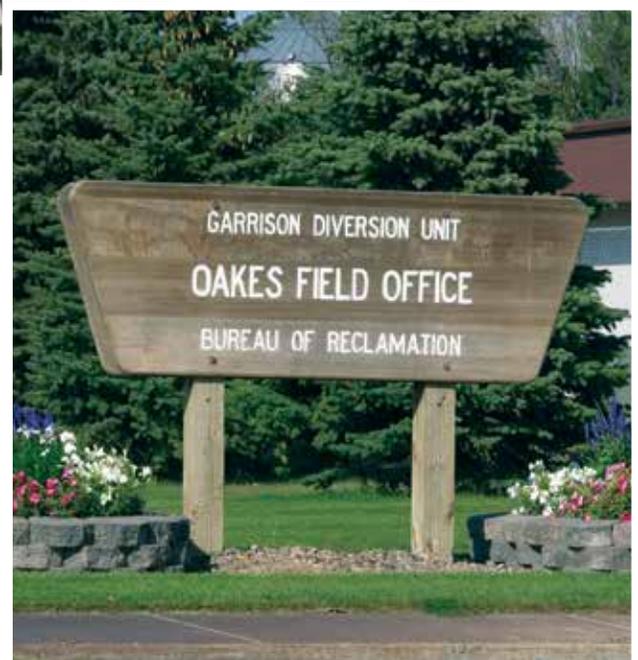
By Kimberly Cook



A celebration in Oakes, N.D., marked the successful title transfer of the Oakes Test Area (OTA). The ceremony was held to complete the transfer of ownership of the OTA, the irrigation test site located in the southeast corner of North Dakota, from the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) to the Dickey-Sargent Irrigation District.

Deputy Secretary of Interior Kate MacGregor and Senator John Hoeven were in attendance, along with staff from Senator Kevin Cramer and Congressman Kelly Armstrong's offices.

Duane DeKrey, Garrison Diversion Conservancy District's (Garrison Diversion) general manager, attended the ceremony and was given the opportunity to express gratitude to Senator Hoeven and the Bureau of Reclamation for the extensive work completed in order to make the title transfer possible.



“At Garrison Diversion, we have been tied to the Oakes Test Area for over 30 years by working cooperatively with the Bureau of Reclamation to provide operations and maintenance assistance for the facility,” said DeKrey. “Transferring the Oakes Test Area to the Dickey-Sargent Irrigation District has been a goal for many years and, after all this time, the dedication and determination of the Dickey-Sargent board of directors, along with the persistence of Senator Hoeven, has resulted in the successful title transfer of this valuable facility, which provides significant benefits to farmers and irrigators in the region.”

Finalizing the title transfer gives the Dickey-Sargent Irrigation District self-determination and provides the ability to modify its facilities and modernize the irrigation system without undergoing a federal process, while allowing for more efficient and economical operations and maintenance operations.

Senator Hoeven and the North Dakota delegation helped make the title transfer possible, along with the Department of Interior, Reclamation, Dickey-Sargent Irrigation District, and Garrison Diversion.

For more than 40 years, the OTA has provided a wealth of important data imperative to developing the best management practices for irrigated agriculture in North Dakota. The irrigation research site was developed by Reclamation in cooperation with state and federal agencies as a 5,000-acre irrigation test site designed to study best management irrigation practices, water quality and management, and wetlands and wildlife. Prior to irrigation delivery, data collection and monitoring was completed to document pre-development conditions. Irrigation delivery began at the OTA in the spring of 1988, after the completion of a subsurface drainage system and water distribution system. Over the years, a variety of crops have been irrigated, most notably, corn, soybeans, dry beans, onions, and potatoes.



Since 1988, the number of acres irrigated at the test site has varied significantly. While the OTA is authorized to irrigate up to 5,000 acres, limited water supplies have prevented the test area from reaching its full potential and the test area has only irrigated between 500 and 4,300 acres per year.

