

**GARRISON DIVERSION CONSERVANCY DISTRICT****PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE****Garrison Diversion Conservancy District****Carrington, ND****July 17, 2025****9:00 AM****AGENDA**

- I. Call to Order & Pledge of Allegiance
- II. Roll Call
- III. Consideration of Minutes
  - A. **>January 9, 2025**
- IV. >Draft Crisis Communications Plan
  - A. >Media Protocol
- V. Public Relations Activities
  - A. Submitted Articles
    - 1. >ND Water July 2025
    - 2. >ND Water June 2025
    - 3. >ND Water April 2025
    - 4. >ND Water March 2025
  - B. Submitted News Releases
    - 1. >Matching Recreation Grant Program
    - 2. >Water Supply Assistance Grant Awards
  - C. Garrison Diversion & RRVWSP News Articles
    - 1. 6-23-25 Foster County Independent
    - 2. 6-19-25 Forum
    - 3. 5-3-25 Herald Press
    - 4. 4-12-25 Herald Press
    - 5. 4-12-25 Minot Daily
    - 6. 2-10-25 Bismarck Tribune
    - 7. 2-4-25 Jamestown Sun
    - 8. 1-25 Ransom County Gazette
  - D. RRVWSP Newsletter
    - 1. >2025 Newsletter Analytics
    - 2. >2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2025
    - 3. >1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2025

- E. Upcoming Conferences and PR Events
  - 1. >Water Day, ND State Fair – July 24
  - 2. Irrigation Appreciation Supper – August 5, Underwood
  - 3. ND League of Cities Conference – September 17-19, Bismarck
  - 4. ND Association of Counties Conference – October 26-28, Bismarck
  - 5. Joint ND Water Convention & Irrigation Workshop – December 9-12
- F. Other Business

The following minutes are in draft form subject to review and approval by the Public Relations Committee at its next meeting.

25-01

## **GARRISON DIVERSION CONSERVANCY DISTRICT**

### **PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE**

**Garrison Diversion Conservancy District  
Carrington, North Dakota  
January 9, 2025**

A meeting of the Public Relations Committee of the Garrison Diversion Conservancy District was held on January 9, 2025, at the Garrison Diversion headquarters in Carrington. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Dave Anderson at 10:48 a.m.

#### **DIRECTORS PRESENT**

Board Chairman Alan Walter  
Committee Chairman Dave Anderson  
Director Nikki Boote  
Secretary Kimberly Cook

#### **DIRECTORS ABSENT**

Director Margo Knorr  
Director Bill Ongstad

#### **OTHERS PRESENT**

A copy of the registration sheet is attached to these minutes as Annex I.

The meeting was recorded to assist with compilation of the minutes.

#### **READING OF THE MINUTES**

**Motion by Director Boote to dispense with a reading of the July 18, 2024, Public Relations Committee minutes and approve them as distributed. Second by Director Walter. Upon voice vote, motion carried.**

#### **PUBLIC RELATIONS ACTIVITIES**

**Task Order** - - Heather Syverson, Advanced Engineering and Environmental Services (AE2S), presented Task Order GF 1.48, 2025 Strategic Communications Services, which covers communications planning and management, public and media relations, legislative support, education and engagement support, owned media support (digital, social, video, design) and website maintenance. A copy is attached to these minutes as Annex II.

Ms. Syverson stated in 2024, the communications task order cost was \$90,100, which has been expended in its entirety. The cost of this year's task order is \$109,000. The increase is due to legislative session support.

Kimberly Cook, Secretary, added the final 2024 communications task order, including Black & Veatch's markup, was \$94,700.

Questions regarding the 2025 task order were addressed by Ms. Syverson.

**Motion by Director Boote to recommend approval of Task Order GF 1.48, 2025 Strategic Communications Services in the amount of \$109,000 to the full board. Second by Director Walter. Upon roll call vote, the following directors voted aye: Anderson, Boote and Walter. Those voting nay: none. Absent and not voting. Knorr and Ongstad. Motion carried.**

**Work Plan and Budget** - - Ms. Cook reviewed the proposed work plan items for 2025 and budget. A copy of the work plan and budget are attached to these minutes as Annex III.

**Motion by Director Walter to approve Garrison Diversion's 2025 Public Relations Work Plan, including a budget amount of \$305,000. Second by Director Boote. Upon roll call vote, the following directors voted aye: Anderson, Boote and Walter. Those voting nay: none. Absent and not voting. Knorr and Ongstad. Motion carried.**

**Submitted Articles** - - Ms. Cook reviewed copies of articles submitted to the *ND Water* magazine for the months of January, March, April, June and July on behalf of Garrison Diversion.

**News Releases** - - Ms. Cook also referred to and reviewed the news releases prepared by Garrison Diversion and submitted to local and daily newspapers relating to Garrison Diversion programs and activities.

**News Articles** - - Ms. Cook called attention to copies of and reviewed various news articles, which were published in state and local newspapers relating to Garrison Diversion and the Red River Valley Water Supply Project (RRVWSP).

**RRVWSP Newsletter** - - Ms. Cook next called attention to copies of the third and fourth quarter RRVWSP newsletters for 2024. She also reviewed the 2024 newsletter analytics.

**Meetings and Conferences** - - Chairman Anderson reviewed a list of upcoming conferences and events Garrison Diversion will attend with the display booths.

## **OTHER**

**Career Fairs** - - Ms. Cook informed the committee Garrison Diversion staff attended three college career fairs this fall looking for possible engineering recruits.

There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting was adjourned at 11:26 a.m.

**(SEAL)**

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Dave Anderson, Chairman

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Kimberly Cook, Secretary

## REGISTRATION

PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING  
Garrison Diversion Conservancy District  
Carrington, North Dakota  
January 9, 2025

NAME	ADDRESS
Lisa Schaper	GD CD
Kelly Klosterman	GD CD
Nikki Bate	GD CD
JEFF JEDAK	GD CD
Kimberly Cook	GD CD
Dave Anderson	GD CD
Alan M. Walter	GD CD - WARD CITY
Sam Paul Anderson	GD CD
Greg Bischoff	GD CD
Mike Lued	GD CD
Chiff Harratty	GD CD
Steve Forde	GD CD
Kip Kovar	GD CD
Paul Boersma	BY
Angon Wed	Carrington
Chiff Harratty	Ward City
Kurt Rennekamp	BY
On Line	
Heather Syverson	Advanced Engineering & Env. Service



## Black & Veatch Corporation

Professional Services for the Red River Valley Water Supply Project  
Under General Agreement dated January 17, 2008

## Task Order GF 1.48 – 2025 Strategic Communications Services

Effective Date – January 1, 2025

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Content of this Task Order (TO) is as follows:

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### I. PROJECT BACKGROUND

1. The Red River Valley Water Supply Project (Project) will provide an emergency and supplemental water supply to central and eastern North Dakota (ND) in the event of moderate or severe drought conditions providing resiliency for the communities and economy in the Red River Valley. The Project, as envisioned by the Garrison Diversion Conservancy District (Garrison Diversion, Owner), will also supply additional water to support industrial development as well as provide an environmental benefit to local rivers during drought conditions by augmenting natural stream flows. The source water will be withdrawn from the McClusky Canal west of the City of McClusky, ND, treated at a nearby biota water treatment plant. A 125-mile, multi-county pipeline will then convey flows from the plant east to the Sheyenne River. Lake Ashtabula located downstream will provide storage allowing for controlled releases to the Red River Valley when flow augmentation is needed.
2. Professional services to develop, implement, and support the overall Project's communication program are being accomplished through the execution of annual task orders. The approach in this Task Order is like previous Task Orders undertaken since 2021. Black & Veatch's (Engineer's) Consultant, Advanced Engineering and Environmental Services, LLC, will be primarily responsible for the execution of this Task Order collaborating with Garrison Diversion's in-house staff.

## II. TASK ORDER OBJECTIVES

1. With the RRVWSP under construction and seeking significant funding from the State of North Dakota during the upcoming legislative session, this Task Order will assist Garrison Diversion in the development of a consistent and reliable communications strategy for project sponsors, community leaders, legislators, state leaders, and strategic partners.
2. Coordinating communications outreach during the 2025 legislative session, which will include working with staff, LAWA, and public affairs consultants to develop messaging in support of legislative requests, testimony development, presentation, and informational handouts to respond to legislative information requests and outreach.
3. Focus on assisting Garrison Diversion staff with the efforts of education, advocacy, and outreach to provide up to date and accurate information about the Project.
4. Planning and support for events that elevate the status of Garrison Diversion and the Project, including industry conferences and special events.
5. Tracking and reporting of project media coverage as well as quarterly newsletter and social media analytics.
6. Provide website maintenance as requested for the RRVWSP, Garrison Diversion, and LAWA websites.

## III. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

1. Under this Task Order, Engineer through its Consultant will provide services in accordance with the Standard Form of Agreement between Owner and Engineer for Professional Services dated January 17, 2008 (Agreement).
2. General Description of Activities. The Basic Services to be performed by the Engineer's Consultant consist of professional services associated with the project development and communications for the Project.
3. Work outside Basic and Special Services. Engineer through its Consultant agrees to provide the Basic Services and Special Services identified herein. Work not specifically discussed herein as part of Basic Services or Special Services is considered Additional Services. Additional Services will only be performed with proper separate authorization such as an amendment to this Task Order or a new separate Task Order.
4. Explicit Responsibilities. Basic Services and Special Services explicitly set forth the services Engineer's Consultant will perform and do not implicitly put any additional responsibilities or duties upon the Project Team and Communications Team. Deliverables to be provided are explicitly identified in the Deliverables paragraph of this Task Order.
5. Explicitly Identified Quantities. Engineer's Consultant in development of this Task Order estimates the level of effort required to provide the services discussed. Where specific

information is listed as to the quantity of service to be provided, those quantities listed are considered Basic Services or Special Services and are, therefore, included in this Task Order scope of service and associated fee estimate. Services exceeding the written quantities shown below in Basic Services or Special Services are considered Additional Services.

#### IV. BASIC SERVICES

Basic Services of this Task Order are organized into major tasks as follows:

##### Communications

- Task 1 – Strategic Communications Planning and Management
- Task 2 – Public and Media Relations
- Task 3 – Legislative Session Support
- Task 4 – Education and Engagement Support
- Task 5 – Owned Media Support (Digital, Social, Video, Design)
- Task 6 – Website Maintenance

##### 1. Task 1 – Strategic Communications Planning and Management

This task includes overall management of Project Development related to communications and public outreach, the strategic development of and deployment of communication efforts for various audiences, and Communications Team meetings with Garrison Diversion staff.

##### 2. Task 2 – Public and Media Relations

This task includes the quarterly development and dissemination of the RRVWSP newsletter and analytic reports that provide the newsletter open and click rates, as well as most read articles; as well as media monitoring to identify and assess the positive negative or neutral view of the RRVWSP, Garrison Diversion, and/or LAWA. This task also includes the monthly cost of the Constant Contact email marketing account utilized to send the newsletter, event invitations, and other Project updates, as well as the annual cost to utilize Meltwater, a program that tracks traditional media and social media sentiments about the Project, Garrison Diversion, and LAWA.

##### 3. Task 3 – Legislative Session Support

This task includes the development of messaging in support of the 2025 legislative requests in support of the RRVWSP as well as creation of materials including testimony, presentations, graphics, videos, and handouts related to the 2025 legislative session. This task includes working with Garrison Diversion staff, LAWA members, and public affairs consultants to respond to legislator requests for information and coordinate Project supporters for testimony and legislator outreach.

##### 4. Task 4 – Education and Engagement Support

This task includes working with Garrison Diversion staff and LAWA members to plan, coordinate, strategize, and execute communication services through the strategic development of articles,



news releases, handouts, mailers, presentations, videos, graphics, and website content to educate and engage stakeholders, end users, affected landowners, and the public on key areas of the project. This task also includes communication and design services as described above to provide an extension of staff on an on-call basis.

5. Task 5 – Owned Media Support (Digital, Social, Video, Design)

This task includes the creation of four quarterly social media plans for Facebook and Twitter, as well as daily monitoring for comments and the development of responses, plus graphic design for social media posts.

6. Task 6 – Website Maintenance

Provide on-call website maintenance services for Garrison Diversion, Lake Agassiz Water Authority, and the RRVWSP as needed. This task includes fixing any issues that may develop with the three sites, as well as providing help to Garrison Diversion staff with creating, removing webpages, or adding new functions to the sites on an as-needed basis. This includes website hosting services and fees.

## V. DELIVERABLES

The following deliverables will be furnished under this Task Order. Documents or deliverables not included in the list below will be provided as Additional Services as authorized by the Owner.

1. Quarterly newsletter creation, dissemination, and analytics reports.
2. Quarterly social media content development, scheduling on Facebook and Twitter, and analytics report.
3. Content, video, and graphics development for owned media such as website, handouts, newsletters, social media, posters/signage, and presentations.
4. Development, media relations, and promotion of earned (traditional) media.
5. Development of standardized talking points for consistent messaging by Garrison Diversion, stakeholders, community leaders, and other interested groups.
6. Hosting services and on-call website maintenance for three websites associated with the RRVWSP – Garrison Diversion, LAWA, and RRVWSP sites.

## VI. SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF OWNER

1. Interim Deliverable Review Requirements. Owner commits to review periods for interim deliverables of no more than fourteen calendar days after receipt of deliverables from Engineer's Consultant.
2. Provide Relevant Information. Owner agrees to provide relevant information and content regarding requirements for the various tasks. The Engineer's Consultant shall be entitled to use

and rely upon all information provided by the Owner or Owner's consultants in performing services under this Task Order.

3. Advertising and Rental Fees. Owner agrees to pay directly to publication(s) or venues the fees of all public advertisements or in relation to conferences and events.

#### **VII. FEE**

The total fee for Basic Services provided under this Task Order is One Hundred Nine Thousand Dollars (\$109,000).

A worksheet showing the fee and level of effort by task is included in Attachment A.

#### **VIII. PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE**

This scope and schedule start on January 1, 2025, with anticipated completion on or before December 31, 2025.

#### **IX. DOCUMENTS INCORPORATED BY REFERENCE AND ATTACHMENTS**

1. Standard Form of Agreement between Owner and Engineer for Professional Services dated January 17, 2008, is incorporated by reference.
2. Attachment A – Fee Estimate Worksheets

#### **X. ACCEPTANCE**

If this satisfactorily sets forth your understanding of this Task Order, please print and sign this document. You should retain one copy for your files and return an electronic copy via email to Paul Boersma ([BoersmaPM@BV.com](mailto:BoersmaPM@BV.com)) with Black & Veatch Corporation.

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Duane DeKrey, General Manager  
Garrison Diversion Conservancy District

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Paul Boersma, Vice President  
Black & Veatch Corporation

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

**ATTACHMENT A**

**Fee Estimate Worksheets**

<div><div><div></div><div>GARRISON DIVISION</div></div><div><div>Garrison Diversion Conservancy District</div><div>Task Order GF 1.48 - 2025 Strategic Communications Services</div><div>BV Project No. xxxxxx</div><div>Black &amp; Veatch and Subconsultants</div></div></div>																	
Task	Lead Firm	Task Description	Position	Labor Detail	Expense Detail	Sub Consulta	Sub Consult	Expense Detail	AE2S Hours	AE2S Sub Costs	AE2S Sub Markup	Total Direct Expense	BV Level of Effort (hrs)	TOTAL	TOTAL	TOTAL	TOTAL
IV. BASIC SERVICES																	
1	AE2S	Strategic Communications Planning and Management		\$0	\$0	136	\$23,673	\$1,754				\$25,427	0	\$0	\$25,427	\$25,427	
A	AE2S	Client communications/strategy session/meetings		\$0	\$0	84	\$14,500	\$1,295				\$15,795	0	\$0	\$15,795	\$15,795	
B	AE2S	Analytics and reporting		\$0	\$0	16	\$3,116	\$156				\$3,272	0	\$0	\$3,272	\$3,272	
C	AE2S	Communications management		\$0	\$0	36	\$6,056	\$303				\$6,359	0	\$0	\$6,359	\$6,359	
2	AE2S	Public and Media Relations		\$0	\$0	44	\$10,553	\$528				\$11,081	0	\$0	\$11,081	\$11,081	
A	AE2S	Quarterly digital newsletter production		\$0	\$0	24	\$4,181	\$209				\$4,390	0	\$0	\$4,390	\$4,390	
B	AE2S	Media monitoring and potential responses		\$0	\$0	20	\$6,373	\$319				\$6,692	0	\$0	\$6,692	\$6,692	
3	AE2S	Interim Legislative Session Support		\$0	\$0	128	\$20,880	\$1,043				\$21,923	0	\$0	\$21,923	\$21,923	
A	AE2S	Graphic design, presentations, and associated materials		\$0	\$0	40	\$5,647	\$282				\$5,929	0	\$0	\$5,929	\$5,929	
B	AE2S	Legislative update and strategy meetings		\$0	\$0	52	\$8,564	\$428				\$8,992	0	\$0	\$8,992	\$8,992	
C	AE2S	Legislative stakeholder support coordination		\$0	\$0	36	\$6,670	\$333				\$7,003	0	\$0	\$7,003	\$7,003	
4	AE2S	Education and Engagement Support		\$0	\$0	130	\$20,668	\$1,033				\$21,701	0	\$0	\$21,701	\$21,701	
A	AE2S	Assist with outreach strategy development		\$0	\$0	36	\$6,321	\$316				\$6,637	0	\$0	\$6,637	\$6,637	
B	AE2S	Develop Outreach materials		\$0	\$0	64	\$9,540	\$477				\$10,017	0	\$0	\$10,017	\$10,017	
C	AE2S	Support coordination to outreach		\$0	\$0	30	\$4,807	\$240				\$5,047	0	\$0	\$5,047	\$5,047	
5	AE2S	Owned Media Support (Digital, Social, Video, Design)		\$0	\$0	168	\$20,551	\$1,027				\$21,578	0	\$0	\$21,578	\$21,578	
A	AE2S	Facebook, twitter, and Youtube platform oversight and monitoring		\$0	\$0	20	\$2,688	\$134				\$2,822	0	\$0	\$2,822	\$2,822	
B	AE2S	Quarterly social media planning, scheduling and monitoring		\$0	\$0	20	\$2,688	\$134				\$2,822	0	\$0	\$2,822	\$2,822	
C	AE2S	General graphic design support		\$0	\$0	128	\$15,175	\$759				\$15,934	0	\$0	\$15,934	\$15,934	
6	AE2S	Website Maintenance		\$0	\$0	40	\$6,943	\$347				\$7,290	0	\$0	\$7,290	\$7,290	
A	AE2S	Website Maintenance		\$0	\$0	40	\$6,943	\$347				\$7,290	0	\$0	\$7,290	\$7,290	
PROJECT TOTALS				\$0	\$0	646	\$103,268	\$5,732				\$109,000	0	\$0	\$109,000	\$109,000	

[illegible]

## **Red River Valley Water Supply Project (RRVWSP) Crisis Communications Plan**

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## I. Introduction

The Red River Valley Water Supply Project (RRVWSP) Crisis Communications Plan was developed to define the structure for communicating with internal and external stakeholders in the event of a crisis. This Crisis Communications Plan should be utilized for any crisis scenario that affects the people, environment, assets, and reputation of the RRVWSP.

The communications staff intends to conduct tabletop practices on this plan once a year to keep the protocols top-of-mind and provide an opportunity to update the information as needed.

Goals for every response should be specific to each situation, but some general overarching goals can be good starting points for a crisis response.

- Minimize the impact on operations and people.
- Minimize the amount of time spent focusing on the crisis.
- Regain control of the situation and conversation around the RRVWSP.

This Crisis Communication Plan outlines the following steps:

- Defines the potential crisis situations.
- Defines and assigns the crisis team.
- Details the six steps to take in a crisis event.
- Advises proper crisis follow-up.
- Provides templates and resources for a variety of situations.



## II. Recognizing a Crisis

### What is a crisis?

A crisis is any event or situation that is expected to create an unstable or unresolved situation. We have identified the following scenarios that could adversely impact the operations, financial stability, and/or reputation of the Project. Potential crises may include, but are not limited to the factors listed below:

### Examples of crisis categories:

- General accident
- Workplace or construction accident
- Negative press or social media
- Landowner conflict
- Employee-misconduct
- Physical injuries
- Malevolence (intentional injury)
- Issues with facilities
- Technology-related
- Natural disaster
- Violence or vandalism
- Coordinated external campaign (online campaign to injure brand)

### Preparing for a Crisis – PEAR Model

Before any incident or crisis occurs, utilize the PEAR model (People, Environment, Asset, Reputation).

- People
- Environment
- Asset
- Reputation

These steps will take some of the uncertainty out of the unforeseen crisis.

- Identify a crisis communication notification system including all means to reach people.
- Up-to-date phone/email numbers for media, boards, regulatory agencies, legal and others. Keep both electronic and hard copy formats.
- Determine individuals in departments that would serve on the crisis team.
- Designate and train spokesperson for specific incidents.
- Prepare the spokespeople in advance with media training.
- Anticipate questions associated with each situation and prepare spokespeople.

The PEAR process can be continuously used as the Project progresses into different phases and as situations arise.

### III. Crisis Management Team

The following core team will be instrumental in managing crisis communications. The individual(s) assigned to these roles may vary from situation to situation and may change as the Project progresses.

Category	Name / Title	Responsibility	Contact
<b>Communications &amp; Media Relations</b>	<b>Kimberly Cook</b> GDCD Communications Director	Leads development of public response to crisis through creation of talking points, FAQs, news releases, internal messaging, coaching spokespeople, etc.	Cell: 701.652.5470 Office: 701.652.3194 <a href="mailto:kimberlyc@gdcd.org">kimberlyc@gdcd.org</a>
<b>Leadership</b>	<b>Duane DeKrey</b> GDCD General Manager  <b>Dr. Tim Mahoney</b> Mayor, City of Fargo; LAWA Chair	Oversees operational response during a crisis, ensuring continuity of essential Project functions. Coordinates with team to assess disruptions, implement contingency plans, and restore normal operations.	Cell: 701.652.5170 Office: 701.652.3194 <a href="mailto:duaned@gdcd.org">duaned@gdcd.org</a>  Cell: 701.212.2134 Office: 701.241.1310 <a href="mailto:TMahoney@FargoND.gov">TMahoney@FargoND.gov</a>
<b>Engineering</b>	<b>Kip Kovar</b> GDCD District Engineer / Deputy Program Manager	Works closely with operations and construction teams to develop solutions, mitigate damage, and communicate technical details to stakeholders in an accessible manner.	Cell: 701.652.5736 Office: 701.652.3194 <a href="mailto:kipk@gdcd.org">kipk@gdcd.org</a>
<b>Administration</b>	<b>Merri Mooridian</b> GDCD Administrative Officer/Deputy Program Manager	Ensures internal processes run smoothly, including documentation, resource allocation, and team coordination. Manages meeting logistics and post-crisis evaluations to improve future responses.	Cell: 701.320.1904 Office: 701.652.3194 <a href="mailto:merrim@gdcd.org">merrim@gdcd.org</a>
<b>Construction</b>	<b>Kip Kovar</b> GDCD District Engineer/Deputy Program Manager  <b>Vance Miller</b> Black & Veatch Contractor Liason	Manages on-the-ground response for active construction sites, ensuring safety and assessing potential delays or damages. Works with engineering and operations to develop response strategies and communicate realistic timelines for Project adjustments.	Cell: 701.652.5736 Office: 701.652.3194 <a href="mailto:kipk@gdcd.org">kipk@gdcd.org</a>  Cell: 713.202.3374 <a href="mailto:millerve@bv.com">millerve@bv.com</a>
<b>Government Relations</b>	<b>Terry Effertz</b> GDCD Representative  <b>Brent Bogar</b> LAWA Representative	Primary point(s) of contact for elected officials, regulatory agencies, and policymakers. Ensures compliance with government regulations, provides timely updates to public officials, and coordinates responses to inquiries or concerns from government agencies.	Phone: 701.833.7224 <a href="mailto:terry@effertzlegal.com">terry@effertzlegal.com</a>  Cell: 701.202.7814 Office: 701.221.0530 <a href="mailto:brent.bogar@ae2s.com">brent.bogar@ae2s.com</a>
<b>Landowner Liaison</b>	<b>Kip Kovar</b> GDCD District Engineer  <b>Scott Mehring</b> GDCD Field Services Supervisor	Engages with affected landowners to address concerns, provide updates, and mitigate any negative impacts of the crisis. Facilitates resolutions and maintains positive relationships with property owners involved in the crisis.	Cell: 701.652.5736 Office: 701.652.3194 <a href="mailto:kipk@gdcd.org">kipk@gdcd.org</a>  Cell: 701.527.4169 Office: 701.652.3194 <a href="mailto:scottm@gdcd.org">scottm@gdcd.org</a>
<b>Legal</b>	<b>Tami Norgard</b> GDCD Representative  <b>John Shockley</b> LAWA Representative	Reviews crisis response strategies to ensure all communications and actions comply with legal and regulatory requirements. Advises on risk mitigation, liability concerns, and public disclosures, while coordinating with external legal counsel if necessary.	Phone: 701.237.6983 <a href="mailto:tnorgard@vogellaw.com">tnorgard@vogellaw.com</a>  Phone: 701.282.3249 <a href="mailto:jshockley@ohnstadlaw.com">jshockley@ohnstadlaw.com</a>
<b>Project Users</b>	<b>Large/Small</b>	Appointed by LAWA Board	

\*Crisis team will also consist of Project consultants and contractors, as well as necessary advisors to be called upon depending on the crisis.

#### IV. 6 Steps for Crisis Communication Response

The following six steps for crisis communication protocol are important for communicating in a thorough and organized way during a crisis. These steps should be utilized for working with the media, staff, and stakeholders. Depending on the intensity of the situation, these steps may need to be taken within the first few hours of a crisis and then repeated as needed.



##### **6 Steps Graphic**

1. Verify the Situation
2. Notify and Assign Responsibility
3. Assess the Level of Crisis
4. Develop Plan and Messaging
5. Message Approval and Release
6. Monitor and Provide Feedback

## 1) Verify the Situation

The Communications Director is responsible for beginning the initial steps of determining what happened, and if a situation rises to the level of “crisis.” The Communications Director should immediately identify as many facts as possible to create an initial fact sheet.

**Initial Fact Sheet** | Answer the following questions if you are able:

- WHAT happened and where?
- WHEN did this happen?
- WHO is involved?
- HOW did it happen?
- WHAT is currently being done?

**Consider these follow-up questions:**

- Do you have all the facts (to the best of your knowledge)?
  - If not, do you know when more information will be available?
- What other information is needed to get a more complete picture of the situation?
- Has the information been confirmed by a credible source(s) or from multiple sources?
- Is there an ongoing risk to life, property, or general safety?
- Will there be an emotional response to the situation? This may indicate the virality of the crisis. (See Step 3)

### Important Note

The media may be alerted to the situation before all the facts can be confirmed. If contacted by the media before you have all the information, it is a best practice to provide a statement indicating that “We are gathering information about the situation and additional details will be provided when they are available.”

It is important not to speculate as this can create a chain of misinformation. It is also important to respond to media inquiries as quickly as possible, even if your only answer is “We will let you know when we have information.”

## 2) Notify and Assign Responsibility

Once a situation is identified as a potential crisis, the Crisis Management Team (CMT) should be notified. This will efficiently alert the necessary members of the CMT, as well as other stakeholders, who should be informed of the situation. Depending on the specific situation, this list may be adjusted. The CMT should be trained to contact emergency responders immediately in case of life-threatening situations, prior to working down the following list. In most instances, the list may include:

### Create list of Chain of Command

Legal counsel and additional experts should also be brought in as needed.

### Important Note

Even if the situation does not seem like it could attract attention from the media or the public, it is important that the CMT be informed because situations can escalate quickly.

### 3) Assess the Level of Crisis

Based on the level of communication required as listed in the criteria below, the CMT should determine the crisis level of the situation.

Level	Intensity Indicators
Minimally Intense	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crisis attracts little or no attention.</li> <li>• Media requests information prior to the situation occurring – CMT has time to plan response.</li> <li>• Public and/or media are virtually unaware of crisis.</li> </ul>
Moderate Intensity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crisis situation is developing and attracting slow, but steady media coverage.</li> <li>• External stakeholders (cities, county, State of ND) receive media inquiries.</li> <li>• The public at large is aware of the situation, but it is attracting very little attention.</li> </ul>
Intense	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growing attention from local and regional media.</li> <li>• Media contacts RRVWSP parties who are not on the Crisis Communication Team for information.</li> <li>• The media, RRVWSP stakeholders, and community partners are present at the site of the crisis.</li> <li>• Affected and potentially affected parties threaten to talk to the media.</li> </ul>
Extreme Intensity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Media has immediate and urgent need for information about the crisis. Spokesperson may need to provide statement of empathy/caring.</li> <li>• Media appear on-site for live coverage.</li> <li>• Groups or individuals publicly express anger or outrage.</li> </ul>

#### 4) Develop Plan and Messaging

The Communications Director is responsible for organizing the public response to the crisis, with input from the rest of the CMT. The Communications Director and their assignee(s) are responsible for creating materials such as news releases and statements for the media, organizing news conferences, and crafting social media posts.

*The Communications Director and their assignee(s), upon consultation with the CMT, should:*

- Record confirmed facts that the CMT can review and approve to prevent rumors or misinterpretations from spreading within RRVWSP, to media outlets, and the public.
- Develop news release and/or talking points for spokesperson to convey key information.
- Develop or refer to a list of questions that could be asked by landowners, residents, city, county, and the state about the crisis, and develop answers in line with talking points.
- Modify pre-scripted messages or develop new messages.
- Identify the best methods to reach key audiences. Key audiences may include:
  1. Landowners
  2. Residents
  3. Consultants & Contractors
  4. City/County Leaders
  5. State Leaders
  6. Media
- Determine the appropriate channels and disseminate information as necessary. Channels could include the RRVWSP website, social media platforms, statements released to the media, news releases, news conferences.
- Respond to media inquiries and coordinate time/location of media response, interviews or press conference.
- Assist spokesperson in presenting or providing key information and answering media questions.
- Prepare to address RRVWSP's record for the relevant crisis situation, e.g., project safety, integrity, treatment of employees and contractors, etc.
- Identify main on-site contacts and provide them necessary information.
- Schedule regular updates with external stakeholders such as emergency responders, cities, counties, State of ND, etc.
- Schedule regular internal communication updates.
- Monitor crisis and update messages based on the crisis.

#### **Important Note**

Depending on the level of crisis, it is a best practice to “unschedule” social media posts, newsletters and other previously scheduled communications that may come across as out of touch, insensitive, or confusing to the public during the crisis.

## 5) Message Approval & Release

Once messaging is developed, it should be reviewed and approved by the following individuals:

1. Leadership - GDCCD Chair/LAWA Chair
2. Subject Matter Expert dependent on specific situation (engineering, construction, etc.)
3. Legal Counsel – GDCCD/LAWA
4. Lead Contractor if necessary

Once reviewed, the Communications Director will work with the CMT to finalize for release. Messaging may be released through a variety of methods and timeframes, depending on the crisis. In “Extreme Intensity” or “Intense Crisis”, the main statement or overarching message should come from the Communications Director and, if deemed appropriate, include a message of empathy and caring.

All messages should be coordinated with the Communications Director and channeled through the approval processes to make sure that they are in line with the overall messages and approved by the CMT before being disseminated.



## 6) Monitor and Provide Feedback

During and after the crisis the Communication Leader will coordinate with the CMT to:

### 1. Review crisis coverage:

- Identify the media outlets that have inquired about the situation.
- Review local, regional, national, and other media coverage and determine whether coverage was positive, negative, or neutral in tone.
- Conduct regular internet searches for key words, such as Red River Valley Water Supply Project, Garrison Diversion Conservancy District, and words describing the incident, specific people's names who are involved, locations, etc.
- Monitor social media, blogs, comment boards or chat sites to assess public comments. Remember, all communication can be pulled for legal purposes.

### 2. Identify trends:

- What is the focus for the media?
- Is the focus changing?
- Are there patterns that indicate RRVWSP messages should focus on or respond to?

### 3. Identify public and key stakeholder issues:

- What are the major issues being addressed through the media?
- What questions or concerns are being posed?
- Incorporate lessons learned into updates to the crisis communications plan.
- During the crisis and afterward, lessons learned (e.g., what types of messages are needed, what approach the media takes to a certain type of story, what the media, public and shareholders are asking, etc.) should be noted.
- Ask friendly external stakeholders for feedback about how the RRVWSP handled the crisis to gain additional insight about what worked, what didn't, and lessons learned.

## V. Crisis Follow-Up

Following the crisis, when the Project has returned to operational, the communication team should revisit actions. This will occur immediately after the crisis to accurately reflect upon the responses and timing.

- Are there any reputational issues that will require actions following the crisis? The Project communication team and leadership will need to evaluate how reputational, safety, and/or environmental messages are delivered post crisis.
- All statements, media notes and updated contacts will be updated by the crisis communication team and handed off to the Project communication team and leadership.
- A final report will be issued to the crisis team by the crisis communication team for filing and any future needs.

### Evaluation Includes

#### 1. Response Timing:

Was the Crisis Communication Team Lead notified by an appropriate person? Did the team come together in a manner that helped communicate to the crisis team, media and employees? Were the other companies involved in the situation identified quickly and the responsible parties notified in a manner that allowed them to prepare responses in a timely manner?

#### 2. Media Response and Notification:

Was the press statement prepared within the first hour? Did the follow-up occur with the correct messages and correct people? Did the social media monitoring pull all data that was required to answer questions?

#### 3. Staffing:

Were the correct communication people involved or are there additional resources that will be needed to manage a future situation?

#### 4. Cooperation:

Did the other crisis team members understand the role of the communication team members? Was it clear who was doing what?

## VI. Communication Tools and Tips

### Communication Tools

Media Tools for Immediate Response	
<p><b>Newspapers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Needs detailed information.</li> <li>Must be news.</li> <li>Graphics and photographs can be helpful.</li> <li>May require subject matter experts.</li> </ul> <p><b>Television</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Needs video, preferably active.</li> <li>Best with engaging spokesperson who can give interviews full of sound bites and quotes.</li> <li>Message must be precise.</li> </ul> <p><b>Radio Talk Shows</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Must be prepared to answer questions about many topics.</li> <li>Best when an engaging and trusted spokesperson.</li> <li>Must reinforce key talking points.</li> <li>Best with a spokesperson who is well-spoken, engaging, and visibly interested in the topic.</li> </ul> <p><b>Radio News</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information should be to the point.</li> <li>Best with an engaging spokesperson who can speak clearly and with inflection.</li> </ul> <p><b>Facebook</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A social networking site based off individual and organizational pages.</li> </ul> <p><b>Direct Presentations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expensive but can be effective at reaching remote audiences or audiences that are asking for specific, extensive data.</li> <li>Best with a subject-matter expert.</li> <li>Effective with targeted and specific groups.</li> </ul> <p><b>Direct Mail (Post-event)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expensive but can be effective at reaching remote audiences.</li> </ul>	<p><b>X (Formerly Twitter)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A social micro-blogging site requiring posts to be 280 characters or less.</li> <li>A Twitter account is useful for the Project, used to post story links to website, meeting updates, and engage with other social groups about the Project.</li> </ul> <p><b>YouTube</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Video sharing site that can allow or not allow comments on videos.</li> <li>Useful in sharing video content across other platforms.</li> </ul> <p><b>Website</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Content posted and maintained by the organization. Hopefully the first line of information.</li> <li>The official location for all information related to the Project.</li> <li>Website includes reference documents, fact sheets, FAQs, and the ability to sign up for the newsletter.</li> </ul> <p><b>Newsletters</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A direct delivery service bringing information to subscribers through email.</li> <li>Information is typically news or educational materials.</li> <li>This platform does not typically garner any response. It is a one-way flow of information to readers.</li> </ul> <p><b>Magazines (Post-event)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Typically requires a personal aspect to the information.</li> <li>High-quality photos and graphics are a plus.</li> <li>Must have an angle.</li> </ul>

## Best Practices for Media Communication

The following are best practices for communicating with the media, whether during a crisis or a standard interview. All designated spokespeople should study and utilize these best practices. They should also be shared with any RRVWSP representatives who interact with media.

### **Never say, “No comment”**

This sounds evasive. It is better to say, “We are currently gathering information about the situation and will get back to you once more information becomes available.” Remember to follow through and provide the requested information if/when it can be shared.

### **Take a Moment to Prepare**

If you are not ready to speak with the media but they are present and requesting an interview, it is acceptable to ask for a few minutes to prepare. It is also okay to pause to collect your thoughts before answering a reporter’s questions.

### **Don’t Speculate**

Only answer questions pertaining to what you know. Answer as briefly and accurately as possible. Never speculate about the cause of an incident. Reporters may try to coerce you into speculation. Don’t feel compelled to fill silences. To redirect the questioning, you may say, “I can’t speculate on that. What I do know is....” You don’t need to go into specifics, even if you’re pressured to do so. You may say, “We are currently evaluating the extent of the situation, and we will provide additional information as we learn more.”

### **Don’t Discuss Liability, Cause or Fault**

In many cases, an investigation determines the initial reasons suspected to be the cause of an incident were not correct. The most difficult questions to answer are “why” and “how.” You may have opinions about why or how something happened, but your role is not to offer personal opinions. Always stick to confirmed information.

### **Nothing is “Off the Record”**

Assume everything you say in front of a reporter or in a public meeting is “on the record” even if a camera is not recording. You should never tell a reporter something and request that it be “off the record.” It is entirely up to them what they report once you provide information. Don’t say something that you don’t want repeated.

### **Do Not Be Afraid to Ask for Clarification**

A reporter may attempt to bombard you with rapid-fire questions. Feel free to decline to provide an answer if you do not know, it is fine to admit that. If it is something you feel comfortable answering after doing some research, tell the reporter that you will get back to him/her when you have time. Feel free to respond with your own questions if you want to better understand where the interview is headed. Ask questions such as, “What have you

heard?” “Can I confirm this information?” “What is this story about?” “Who else have you contacted?”

### **Stay Calm**

If a reporter puts you on the defensive, remain calm. Don't give angry or defensive responses. Correct misinformation and get back to your key message. Remember, reporters always have the last word in the editing room so it's important to not give them any material that can be taken out of context.

### **“Be Human”**

It can be difficult to control your emotions when tensions are running high. It is better to show some emotion through care, concern, and empathy than it is to be robotic. For this reason, interviews can sometimes be better than providing a written statement to the media, because an interview provides an opportunity to show human connection.

### **Find a Quiet Interview Spot**

When selecting an interview location or news conference location, find a controlled area that is quiet and away from the scene of the crisis.

### **Stay Within Your Area of Responsibility**

Only answer questions pertaining to what you know. For instance, if you are an expert on the technical side but a reporter is asking an administrative or outreach question, you should refer the reporter to someone on the team who knows more about those topics.

### **Instruct Staff How to Direct Media Inquiries**

All media inquiries must be directed to the designated Media Liaison, Kimberly Cook, Garrison Diversion Communications Director, at the time they are received.

Kimberly Cook, Communications Director

[kimberlyc@gdcd.org](mailto:kimberlyc@gdcd.org)

701.652.5470 (cell)

*Protocol for Responding to Media Requests* document available in appendix.

## VII. Appendix

Short text blurb explaining contents.

Templates for team

- Crisis communication checklist - One page template of steps
- Protocol for responding to media requests

DRAFT

## Protocol for Responding to Media Requests

### Purpose:

To ensure consistent and accurate responses to media inquiries regarding all facets of the Red River Valley Water Supply Project. This protocol outlines the procedures and responsibilities for Garrison Diversion staff and board members, LAWA members, and consultants.

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### GENERAL GUIDELINES

#### 1. Central Point of Contact:

All media inquiries must be directed to the designated Media Liaison, Kimberly Cook, Garrison Diversion Communications Director, at the time they are received.

Kimberly Cook, Communications Director

[kimberlyc@gdcd.org](mailto:kimberlyc@gdcd.org)

701.652.5470 (cell)

#### 2. Inquiry Process and Response

- Politely acknowledge the inquiry and collect the following information:
  - Journalist's name, outlet, and contact details.
  - Deadline for response.
  - Nature of the inquiry (specific questions, topic of interest).
  - State that you or someone from the team will get back to them.
- Notify the Media Liaison immediately.

#### 3. Assess the Inquiry

The Media Liaison (and potentially communications support staff, Garrison Diversion, and LAWA leads) will evaluate the inquiry to determine:

- The nature, validity, and importance of the request.
- Any opportunities or risks involved in the request.
- What type of response is needed such as written statement, interview, or supporting materials.

Based on this assessment, the Media Liaison or appropriate spokesperson may contact the media contact to accept, decline, or issue a statement for the inquiry.

#### 4. Choosing a Spokesperson

Only designated spokespersons are authorized to speak to the media (after alerting Media Liaison) including the following:

Spokesperson	Title	Topic Areas
Duane DeKrey	Garrison Diversion General Manager and LAWA Secretary/Treasurer	Project history, project progress, legislative, landowner relations, and funding efforts.
Kip Kovar	Garrison Diversion District Engineer/RRVWSP Deputy Program Manager	Technical and engineering efforts, project costs, construction, completion, and restoration.
Merri Mooridian	Garrison Diversion Administrative Officer/RRVWSP Deputy Program Manager	Project funding history, use funds, project finances, funding request.
Kimberly Cook	Garrison Diversion Communications Director and Media Liaison	Project overview, communication efforts.
Dr. Tim Mahoney	Fargo Mayor and LAWA Chair	Project benefits to Fargo and end users, assurance program, and legislative funding.
Brandon Bochenski	Grand Forks Mayor and LAWA Vice Chair	Project benefits to Grand Forks and end users, assurance program, and legislative funding.
Jay Anderson	Garrison Board Chair, Ransom County Representative, and Rural Water Board member	Garrison Diversion commitment to project and end users, focus on core pipe and support for future branch pipelines



Special subject matters may require others that are not presently represented in the table above. If that is the case, the Media Liaison will reach out to those individuals to brief them and ask them to speak about that specific subject matter.

## **5. Consultant Guidance**

Consultants, subconsultants, and contractors need client approval to speak about the project in public settings such as conference presentations, videos, website content, social media content, and other large-scale public platforms.

## **6. Providing Parameters**

Some subject matters may be sensitive or complex and may require talking points, supporting materials, or other efforts to convey messages appropriately and clearly. If that is determined to be the case, the Media Liaison may involve others on the project team such as legal, legislative, or communication consultants to draft support materials.

## **7. Post Inquiry Follow-up**

The Media Liaison and communications team will monitor the resulting media coverage of the inquiry and provide a link to the publication or broadcast to the spokesperson and key project team leaders.

If there are any inaccuracies in the publication or broadcast, the Media Liaison and communications team will attempt to correct if possible.

## **8. Crisis Communications**

If the Media Liaison or other project team members have determined that the media inquiry is part of an event that may be considered a crisis, the Crisis Communication Plan will be utilized to ensure that all proper avenues have been considered.

# 2025 Legislative Wrap-Up

Submitted by  
Garrison Diversion Conservancy District

With North Dakota's 2025 legislative session now in the rearview mirror, the co-sponsors of the Red River Valley Water Supply Project (RRVWSP) are adjusting the work plan for the 2025-2027 biennium to match the budget approved by the legislature. Garrison Diversion Conservancy District (Garrison Diversion) and Lake Agassiz Water Authority (LAWA) requested \$221 million from the Department of Water Resources Budget through House Bill 1020.

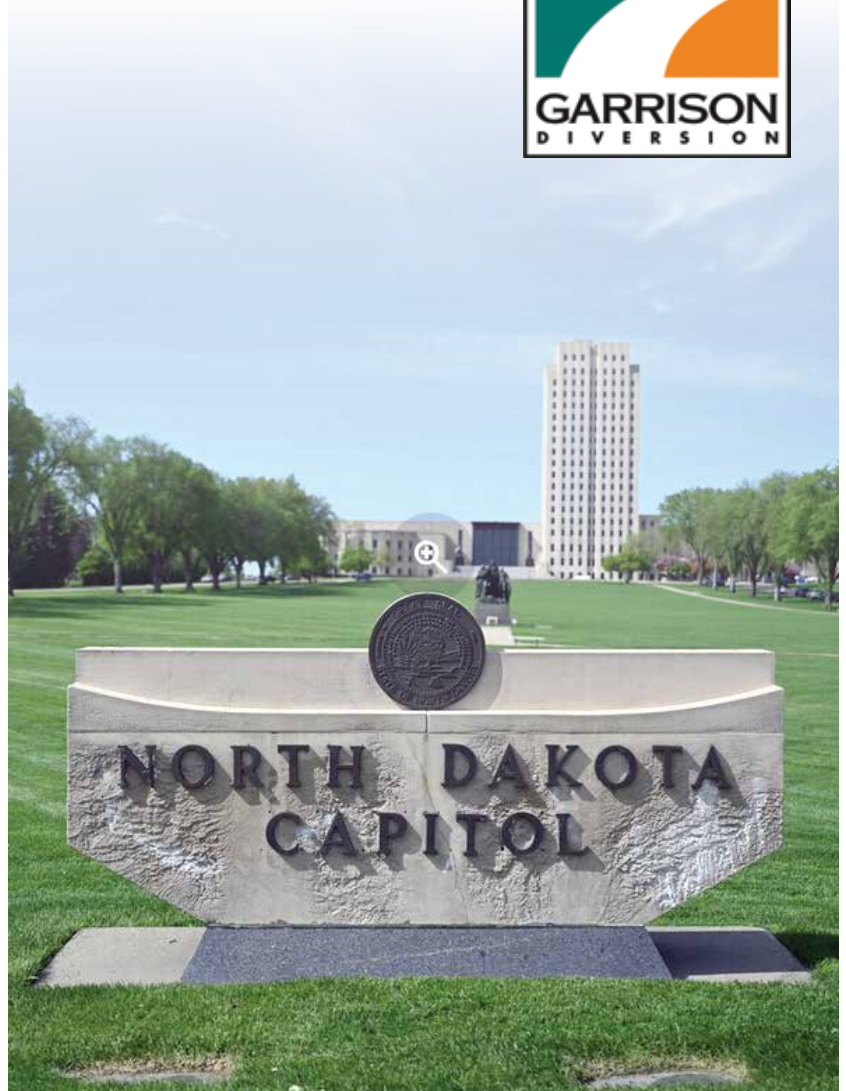
Ultimately, the legislature appropriated \$205 million for the RRVWSP. Gov. Kelly Armstrong signed House Bill 1020 on May 17. ~~"Though it is less than we originally requested, we are grateful for the amount approved by legislators,"~~ says Duane DeKrey, Garrison Diversion General Manager.

The \$205 million represents the State's 75% cost share for the upcoming biennium. End users of the emergency and supplemental water supply are responsible for the remaining 25% cost share.

"We appreciate the legislature's support to move the project forward in a timely manner," says LAWA Chair and Fargo Mayor Dr. Tim Mahoney.

On June 13, the State Water Commission approved 26 water infrastructure funding requests for the 2025-2027 biennium, including \$150 million for the RRVWSP. One goal of the 2025-2027 work plan is to continue progress on the installation of the transmission pipeline. Currently there are more than 40 miles of shovel-ready pipeline. The upcoming biennium will also see the final designs of the biota water treatment plant, McClusky Canal Pump Station, main pump station, and ground storage reservoirs.

During the 2023 legislative session, lawmakers approved legislative intent for the RRVWSP totaling \$953 million in future funding. With the \$205 million approved this year, that leaves \$568 million for RRVWSP in future biennia.



The Garrison Diversion Conservancy District distributes a quarterly newsletter to provide updates on the Red River Valley Water Supply Project. Are you subscribed? Visit [www.RRVWSP.com](http://www.RRVWSP.com) to sign up to receive the newsletter in your inbox each quarter.



# Earliest RRVWSP Construction Start to Date



North Dakota's relatively mild and dry winter allowed construction crews to begin pipe installation on the RRVWSP earlier than previous years. The early start comes on the heels of the 2024 construction season which saw the most pipe installed to date.

Carstensen Contracting Inc. was back in the field by mid-April to continue construction of Contract 5D, which includes 10 miles of pipeline and a trenchless crossing of Pipestem Creek in western Foster County and eastern Wells County. Carstensen will also begin Contract 6A this year. That contract includes the installation of a 7.1-mile transmission pipeline from the James River to Eastman Township in Foster County.

Garney Construction will work on land restoration, structure build out, hydrostatic testing, and soil haul off for Contract 5B, east of Carrington. Oscar Renda Contracting will continue working on Contract 5C this year, which includes approximately eight miles of pipeline and two major trenchless crossings east of Carrington, in Foster County.

When the RRVWSP transmission pipeline is complete, it will span from the McClusky Canal to the discharge structure, which empties into the Sheyenne River, located about six miles south of Cooperstown. The RRVWSP is projected to serve nearly half of North Dakota's population, from the central part of the state to the eastern side of the state.

To date, 19 miles of the 125-mile buried pipeline are installed.





Alan Idso

## Introducing Alan Idso, LAWA Board Member

There is a new face on the Lake Agassiz Water Authority (LAWA) board of directors. Alan Idso has served on the Cass Rural Water Users District board of directors for the past four years. When Mark Johnson retired from the Cass Rural Water Users and LAWA boards earlier this year, Alan stepped into the LAWA Director role to represent Cass Rural Water Users.

“As a rural water user, I have always had some interest in how the water system delivers water to all of Cass County and beyond. I knew several of the board members before I joined the Cass Rural Water Users board and I thought this is a good group of people to work with. It was the right time for me to serve on the board,” Alan says.

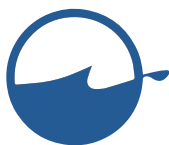
Rural water plays a role in multiple facets of Alan’s life. A few years after he graduated from NDSU with a degree in crop and weed science, he went to work for The Arthur Companies. Twenty-five years later, he’s still with the organization and works in Ayr, North Dakota. In addition to his career and water board responsibilities, Alan has been the treasurer/clerk of Erie Township for more than 20 years. He lives on a farm site outside of Erie with his wife, Kari, and sons, Isaac and Ian. The Idso family tries to go on a few camping trips each year and Alan and the boys like to ride snowmobiles in the winter.

The impact the Red River Valley Water Supply Project (RRVWSP) will have on Cass County and beyond is not lost on Alan. The emergency and supplemental water supply is co-sponsored by LAWA and Garrison Diversion Conservancy District. Alan says the additional water supply will be of critical importance.

“With the continued population growth around the Fargo area, not to mention the entire Red River Valley, the demand for clean, quality water will continue to increase,” he explains. “Being highly dependent on precipitation to supply surface water for a growing population is a risk if the region enters a prolonged dry period. Having another source of water is critical to our state’s population and economy.

“In my area of the state, I don’t think a lot of people realize that this project is being built and has pipe in the ground. Around Fargo, people see all the construction associated with the FM Diversion project to redirect excess water around the city. But as people who work with water know, the Red River can run low just as easily as it can flood, and the Red River Valley Water Supply is an equal project to manage flow in our critical waterway,” Alan added.

In his short time thus far on the LAWA Board, Alan says he has already learned a lot about the RRVWSP. “I look forward to continuing to learn more and being part of such an important project for North Dakota,” he says.



**Lake Agassiz  
Water Authority**



# Garrison Diversion Conservancy District Committed to NORTH DAKOTA Through Grant Programs

By Kimberly Cook

The enhancement of one of North Dakota's most treasured resources – its recreational opportunities – is a key initiative for the Garrison Diversion Conservancy District (Garrison Diversion), and this spring, the Recreation Committee awarded matching recreation grants to 22 projects, totaling \$622,894.

Garrison Diversion staff and directors are proud to invest in the promotion, development and enhancement of recreation facilities and opportunities within the district.

Garrison Diversion established a Matching Recreation Grant Program dedicated to returning mill-levy funds within the 28-county member district in 1990, enabling communities of all sizes to enhance their recreation facilities or develop new opportunities through this beneficial program.

The Matching Recreation Grant Program distributes 20 percent of Garrison Diversion's one-mill levy to eligible projects within the district. Projects are eligible to receive up to 25 percent of the non-federal share of the project. Garrison Diversion's Recreation Committee meets twice a year, in the spring and fall, to award money to applicants.

Over the life of the program, over \$9.0 million has been awarded in matching recreation grants, enabling the completion of valuable recreation projects around the state. Through the years, projects have included boat ramps and docks, picnic facilities, restrooms, campgrounds, bathhouses, playground areas, and recreational trails.



## New Application Guidelines Going Forward

With the growing popularity of the program, the Garrison Diversion Recreation Committee examined application guidelines at the spring meeting. The committee determined in order to better accommodate the larger number of requests, the maximum individual project award was reduced to \$50,000. This is a change from the maximum \$75,000 grant award previously allowed. Additionally, multiple county-sponsored projects are now only eligible for up to 25 percent of the nonfederal share of the project, rather than the 50 percent previously permissible.

“It’s exciting that Garrison Diversion can help beautify and improve recreation amenities across the state through the Matching Recreation Grant Program,” says committee chairman Bruce Klein. “We’re proud to support the needs of our member counties and give back to them through this program.”



### *The following counties received Matching Recreation Grant funds in spring 2025:*

- **Barnes County:** \$34,700 to Barnes and Ransom counties to continue developing the Sheyenne River Water Trail
- **Bottineau County:** \$5,571 to Bottineau County to install a vault toilet at the Carbury Dam Recreation Area; \$50,000 to Bottineau County to purchase a snow system for Bottineau Winter Park; \$1,195 to the city of Souris to purchase park benches for the city park
- **Burleigh County:** \$16,000 to Bismarck Parks & Recreation to install a playground at General Sibley Park; \$28,699 to the Burleigh County Water Resource District to create an accessible playground area at McDowell Dam
- **Cass County:** \$50,000 to Mapleton Park Board to create the new Ashmoor Glen Park; \$50,000 to the city of Reile’s Acres for the Reile’s Park Revitalization project; \$50,000 to the Fargo Park District to develop the SW Regional Pond Recreation Area
- **Dickey County:** \$460 to the Dickey County Park Board to purchase a picnic table for Wilson Dam
- **Eddy County:** \$25,000 to construct new restrooms at the Eddy County Fairgrounds; \$2,473 for the Jim Johnson Park bathroom renovation
- **Grand Forks County:** \$39,560 to the Grand Forks Park District to construct a new playground at Elks Park
- **McLean County:** \$50,000 to the city of Mercer for the Mercer Community Center building project
- **Ramsey County:** \$43,977 to the Devils Lake Park District for the Merle Baisch Memorial Wheelchair Ramp project; \$50,000 to the Ramsey County Fair Board for retractable bleachers at the Ramsey County Fairgrounds multi-purpose building
- **Ransom County:** \$25,688 to the Lisbon Park District for multiple improvements at Sandager Park
- **Sargent County:** \$19,097 to the Sargent County Park Board to construct a new bathhouse on the south side of the Silver Lake Recreation Area
- **Stutsman County:** \$6,209 to Jamestown Parks & Recreation for the lighting project at Jack Brown Stadium; \$4,000 to the Medina City Park to install water hookups at the campsites
- **Traill County:** \$20,265 to the Mayville Park District to create a skate park in Mayville
- **Ward County:** \$50,000 to the Kenmare Park District to assist with the construction of a splash pad

The fall deadline of **September 2** is the next chance to apply for grant funds. For additional information regarding the Matching Recreation Grant Program, please visit [www.garrisondiversion.org](http://www.garrisondiversion.org) or contact Garrison Diversion at 701-652-3194.



# Water Supply Assistance Grant Program Awards \$302,076

Garrison Diversion's MR&I Water Supply Assistance Grant Program was developed in 2021 to help fulfill the mission to provide a reliable, high-quality and affordable water supply to the people of North Dakota. The relatively new program provides funding assistance to offset the costs of new customer hookups to a rural water system or district within Garrison Diversion's member counties.

The Water Supply Assistance Grant Program is also in place to aid municipal water systems or districts with extraordinary OM&R projects or emergencies impacting the delivery of water to users, introduce health and safety issues, or bring potential harm to other infrastructure if not repaired.

"Rural water provides a better quality of life for North Dakota citizens, and strengthens our rural communities," says MR&I Committee Chair Larry Kassian. "Garrison Diversion is proud to support rural water in North Dakota, and this program is an excellent example of giving back to our district."

Assistance for new customer hookups comes with a 50 percent cost-share for projects exceeding \$2,500, with a maximum reimbursement of \$10,000 per customer hookup. If it becomes necessary to prioritize grant requests, they will be evaluated as such: residential use; livestock use; commercial/business use.

In May, the MR&I Committee awarded a program high \$302,076 to 49 rural water users in the district for residential, livestock and business use.

The following systems had projects receiving funding from the Water Supply Assistance Grant Program:

- **All Seasons Water Users District:** \$46,407 for five customer hookups
- **Barnes Rural Water District:** \$45,988 for seven customer hookups
- **Cass Rural Water:** \$32,761 for four customer hookups
- **Central Plains Water District:** \$20,753 for five customer hookups
- **Dakota Rural Water District:** \$9,558 for two customer hookups
- **East Central Regional Water District:** \$19,011 for two customer hookups
- **Greater Ramsey Water District:** \$7,016 for one customer hookup
- **McKenzie County Rural Water:** \$5,696 for three customer hookups
- **McLean-Sheridan Rural Water District:** \$1,911 for one customer hookup
- **North Prairie Regional Water District:** \$4,750 for one customer hookup
- **South Central Regional Water District:** \$10,000 for one customer hookup
- **Southeast Water Users District:** \$42,225 for five customer hookups
- **Stutsman Rural Water District:** \$56,000 for 12 customer hookups

There are two grant application periods each year. The next deadline for new customer hookup applications is **August 1, although emergency requests are considered as needed**. There continues to be no deadline on extraordinary OM&R projects for municipalities, as these will occur on an as-needed basis.

Eligibility requirements state the applicant must reside within one of Garrison Diversion's 28 member counties, must be or have a member sponsor that is a political subdivision (municipality or rural water district), and a municipality must serve a population of 5,000 people or less.

Grant guidelines and applications can be found at [www.garrisondiversion.org](http://www.garrisondiversion.org).



# Garrison Diversion Conservancy District: Focused on North Dakota

Oftentimes when the topic of “Garrison Diversion” is brought up among North Dakotans, the Garrison Diversion Conservancy District (Garrison Diversion) is confused with the Garrison Diversion Unit (GDU) Project. Simply put, Garrison Diversion is the local agency responsible for the implementation of a federal project, whose scope has been greatly revised over many years. Read on to learn how Garrison Diversion is committed to improving the quality of life for the citizens of North Dakota!



## GARRISON DIVERSION UNIT PROJECT

The GDU Project is the result of a federal plan with roots in the Flood Control Act of 1944 (later renamed the Pick-Sloan Missouri Basin Program), which constructed multiple dams on the Missouri River for the purpose of flood control, navigation, irrigation and hydropower. To compensate North Dakota for flooding prime farmland as a result of the dams, the state was promised more than a million acres of irrigation; however, further studies indicated that the soil in northwestern North Dakota was not suitable for irrigation according to federal irrigation standards. As a result, the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) revised the diversion plan proposing instead to take water from the Garrison Dam and reservoir to irrigate other lands to the east, and thus became known as the “Garrison Diversion.”

In 1965, federal legislation called for the construction of the Garrison Diversion Unit Principal Supply Works, which included the McClusky Canal, New Rockford Canal, Snake Creek Pumping Plant and Oakes Test Area. Congress later halted the project, and legislation was reformulated multiple times through the 1986 Reformulation Act and the Dakota Water Resources Act of 2000.

In order to establish, construct, develop, maintain and operate the GDU and all its components, the North Dakota legislature created the Garrison Diversion

Conservancy District in 1955, and included 22 counties. N.D. Century Code (CH. 61-24) directs Garrison Diversion to:

- Promote the establishment, construction, development, maintenance, and operation of the Garrison Diversion Unit, or any part thereof.
- To make available ... waters diverted from the Missouri River for irrigation, domestic, municipal, and industrial needs, and for hydroelectric power, recreation, fish, wildlife, and other beneficial and public uses.
- To study and provide for the water needs of eastern North Dakota communities and water districts and western Minnesota communities through a Red River Valley Water Supply Project.

Today, Garrison Diversion consists of 28 counties, with each county supporting Garrison Diversion's operations by issuing a one-mill levy and electing a citizen to serve a four-year term on its board of directors. The mission of Garrison Diversion today is to “provide a reliable, high quality and affordable water supply to benefit the people of North Dakota.”

While reliable water supplies are the core of our mission, Garrison Diversion's focus goes well beyond a dependable drinking water supply. We also aim to provide opportunities for agriculture, recreation and development of North Dakota's natural resources.





## AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

The promised irrigation projects in the original GDU project did not materialize; however, the potential that irrigation holds for building a healthier North Dakota remains as strong as ever. Garrison Diversion works to develop and enhance irrigation throughout the state by investing in agriculture initiatives through partnerships with the North Dakota Irrigation Association and NDSU Extension Service.

The McClusky Canal, an original feature of the GDU, has become a valuable resource to farmers looking to develop irrigation on their farmland. To help guide irrigation expansion efforts along the McClusky Canal, Garrison Diversion developed an Irrigation Master Plan. Since 2010, developing the McClusky Canal Irrigation Project has been a vast undertaking. In recent years, multiple irrigation projects have been developed, currently irrigating nearly 8,000 acres.

Along with irrigation development, Garrison Diversion has worked with numerous government agencies and environmental groups to maintain, enhance and protect North Dakota's natural resources. From wildlife habitat mitigation to the North Country Trail, Garrison Diversion has played a part in keeping North Dakota a beautiful and environmentally friendly place to live and visit.

## RED RIVER VALLEY WATER SUPPLY PROJECT

Garrison Diversion is the state lead in the development of the Red River Valley Water Supply Project (RRVWSP), the purpose of which is to meet the water supply needs of central and eastern North Dakota through providing a supplemental water supply during times of drought.

Surface water supplies in central North Dakota and the Red River Valley are limited and unreliable, especially in drought conditions. With continued growth and industrial development, the RRVWSP is needed to mitigate against

drought conditions that would cause costly shortages, foster economic development by meeting municipal, rural and industrial water demands, and provide for economic sustainability.

The RRVWSP will use a buried pipeline to carry Missouri River water from the McClusky Canal to the Sheyenne River, which will provide a supplemental water supply to users in central and eastern North Dakota during droughts. When completed, the RRVWSP could benefit nearly half of the state's population. The water will also provide opportunities for industrial development, as a current lack of industrial water supply has driven industries to obtain water through less desirable means and/or relocation outside of North Dakota.

Project construction is underway in the Carrington area, with 18 miles of pipe in the ground as of December 2024. The 125-mile pipeline and supporting facilities are anticipated to be operational in 2032. "The construction crews made a lot of progress last season and we're in a great place with design. We're hoping to keep the momentum as we approach a new construction season and beyond," Garrison Diversion General Manager Duane DeKrey says.

## MUNICIPAL, RURAL AND INDUSTRIAL (MR&I) WATER SUPPLY PROGRAM

Reliable and high-quality water is vital to the success of small towns and family farms. Garrison Diversion works to ensure North Dakotans have access to reliable and high quality water through the state Municipal, Rural and Industrial Water Supply Program. Garrison Diversion is the fiscal agent and, along with the Department of Water Resources, is responsible for administering the state MR&I Program in which \$400 million is authorized in federal funds to help water systems deliver quality water to homes, businesses and farms across the state.

To date, nearly \$460 million has been awarded for system expansions and improvements across the state.

Engels Point Wildlife Management Area



Harvey Centennial Park



Additionally, Garrison Diversion recently developed a Water Supply Assistance Grant Program, designed to provide funding assistance to offset the costs of new customer hookups to a rural water system or district within Garrison Diversion's member counties. The Water Supply Assistance Grant Program is also in place to aid municipal water systems or districts with extraordinary OM&R projects that will impact the delivery of water to users, introduce health and safety issues, or bring potential harm to other infrastructure if not repaired.

## RECREATION

The enhancement of one of North Dakota's most treasured resources, our recreational opportunities, is a key initiative for Garrison Diversion. Investing in the promotion, development and preservation of our natural resources is important to ensure the continued and future utilization of these areas.

Garrison Diversion believes in developing recreational opportunities that provide North Dakotans areas to enjoy our great outdoors. For this reason, Garrison Diversion dedicates two-tenths, or 20%, of its one-mill levy to our Matching Recreation Grant Program.

Funds from this program have been awarded to install new playground equipment at parks, develop campground facilities and walking paths, among other facilities. Since the program's inception in 1990, more than \$9 million has been awarded for recreation projects within the district.

In addition, the Chain of Lakes Recreation Area, four in-line lakes on the McClusky Canal, provides numerous recreational opportunities such as fishing, camping, boating, hunting, hiking and more. East Park Lake, West Park Lake, Heckers Lake and New Johns Lake make a popular recreation destination in central North Dakota. The recreation areas are equipped with boat ramps, primitive camping sites and vault toilets for the convenience of visitors.

The McClusky Canal is important to these recreation areas because water is pumped from the canal, as needed, in order to maintain optimal water levels for recreation. Garrison Diversion performs basic maintenance of the Chain of Lakes facilities.

## OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE

Garrison Diversion is responsible for the operations and maintenance (O&M) on the GDU project facilities under a cooperative agreement with Reclamation, who owns the facilities. The GDU facilities include the McClusky Canal, New Rockford Canal and Snake Creek Pumping Plant.

Garrison Diversion maintains an impressive staff, with high levels of expertise. The staff includes a professional engineer, master electricians, certified diesel mechanic, painting and coating specialists, vegetative management specialists and multiple heavy equipment operators. O&M employees are located in Carrington, McClusky, New Rockford and at the Snake Creek Pumping Plant in Coleharbor.

A large fleet of equipment is maintained with dozers, loaders, backhoes, trucks and excavators, and many specialized pieces that allow for work in a variety of situations.

Expertise in canal maintenance, earth moving and other construction areas enables the O&M staff to assist federal and state government agencies such as the Department of Water Resources, Reclamation, North Dakota Game & Fish, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. These partnerships benefit everybody involved!

For the past 60 years, we have been committed to building, planning and implementing water projects across the state through our several areas of focus. Looking forward, we are proud to play a vital role in the future of our state. To learn more about Garrison Diversion, visit [www.garrisondiversion.org](http://www.garrisondiversion.org) and follow us on Facebook by searching GDND.ND.



Silt Fence





# New Year, New Faces

By Kimberly Cook

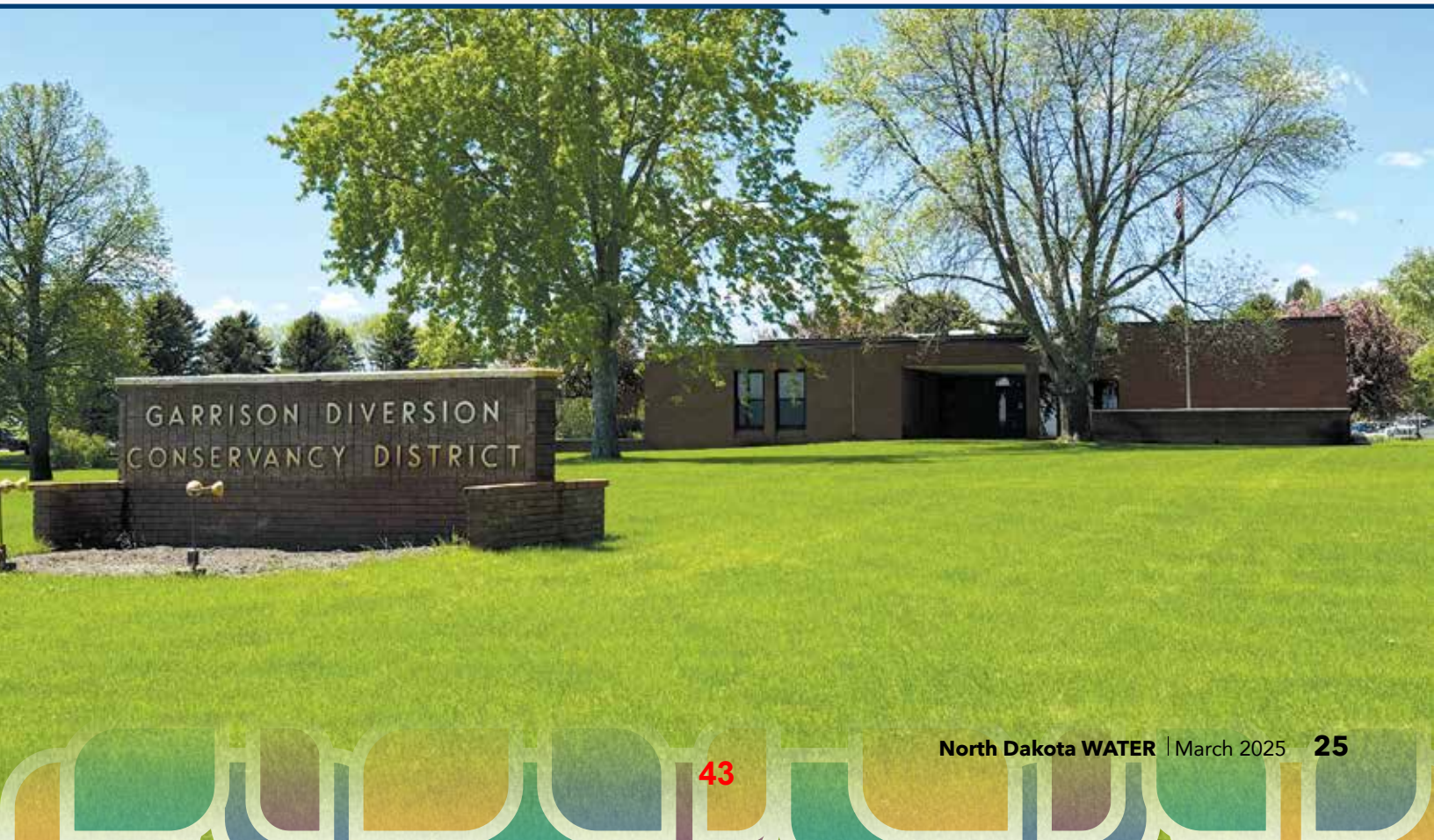
The Garrison Diversion Conservancy District (Garrison Diversion) board of directors has 28 members representing each of the 28 counties within the district. Each county supports Garrison Diversion's operations by issuing a one-mill levy and electing a citizen to serve a four-year term on its board of directors. The board works collectively to fulfill Garrison Diversion's mission to provide a reliable, high-quality and affordable water supply to benefit the people of North Dakota.

Each January, the board welcomes new electees to the organization and holds elections for leadership positions. This year, several new faces are visible at the regular meetings and the board is under new leadership.

## NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Garrison Diversion's board of directors is pleased to welcome two new individuals elected in November's general election to replace long-time directors who retired at the end of 2024. Robin Arndt, McKenzie County, and Roger Gunlikson, Williams County, participated in their first quarterly meeting of the board of directors in January.

"It's hard to replace the wealth of knowledge and leadership lost with the retirement of Ward and Richard, but we are grateful to have gained two new individuals who are already engaged and ready for the opportunity to make a huge difference for future generations," Chairman Jay Anderson says.



## ROBIN ARNDT, McKenzie County

Robin Arndt is stepping in to fill the McKenzie County vacancy left when former director Richard Cayko retired. Arndt is a highly respected individual in the parks and recreation circle and with over 30 years of service as the Watford City Parks District superintendent, Robin has personally seen the positive impact Garrison Diversion has made on its member counties, especially through the Matching Recreation Grant Program.



Robin brings an abundance of recreation experience to benefit the board's operations and will serve on Garrison Diversion's Recreation Committee.

"Garrison Diversion leads the way in implementation, operation and maintenance in providing quality water to the citizens of North Dakota. I'm looking forward to expanding my horizons and contributing my 30-plus years of park and rec experience in the Recreation Program," Robin says.

Robin resides in Watford City with his wife, Stacey. They have five grown children.

## ROGER GUNLIKSON, Williams County

Roger is a retired farmer living in Grenora, North Dakota, and has been actively involved in the water community for more than 20 years, including participation on the Williams County Water Resource District Board, ND Water Resource District Association Board and ND Irrigation Association board. Roger has been a strong leader who also served as past president or chair of each of these organizations. Additionally, he has been active in multiple other community boards and organizations throughout the years.



Roger will serve on Garrison Diversion's Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee.

"I know Garrison Diversion works with the state of North Dakota and the federal government to put Missouri River water to beneficial use for North Dakota, and I'm looking forward to this opportunity to engage further with the board members and staff to continue working to fulfill this mission," Roger says.

Roger is married to Pamela. He has one daughter and three stepsons.

*Each director will serve a four-year term on the board.*

## NEW BOARD LEADERSHIP

The board is also under new leadership, as the executive committee will now be led by Chair Jay Anderson, Ransom County; 1st Vice Chair Greg Bischoff, Barnes County; and 2nd Vice Chair Jeff LeDoux, Cass County, each serving a two-year term in their new leadership positions.

Anderson, Bischoff and LeDoux will also serve on Garrison Diversion's 10-member executive committee, which monitors the financials, federal matters and overall operations of the Garrison Diversion. The committee consists of 10 members, each serving a two-year term.

### JAY ANDERSON

As the calendar turned to a new year, the four-year reign of board chair Alan Walter, Ward County, also came to an end as he turned the gavel over to Jay Anderson of Ransom County.



Jay was elected by the board to serve as chairman, replacing Walter, who reached the end of his term in the leadership position. Anderson is a long-time director who has been heavily involved in the water industry since 1994, when he became involved with the Ransom Sargent Water Users. Since then, Jay has recognized that a lot of positive things have come from developing water systems across the state.

"In light of that, I think the Red River Valley Water Supply Project is one of the most vital and important water projects the state has seen and will have a bigger impact than we can even estimate. I think there is great potential here with the Missouri River," Anderson says. "What we do at Garrison Diversion is important and I'm glad to work with other very knowledgeable board members with diverse backgrounds who are willing to be involved and have purpose being involved with this board."

Congratulations to Jay on this leadership position.

### GREG BISCHOFF

Greg Bischoff, first vice chair, has been a representative for Barnes County since 2016, fully immersing himself into the board operations from the start. Previously the second vice chair, Greg has been leading the board and supporting the vision and projects benefitting a large part of North Dakota. He has also been heavily involved with the Red River Valley Water Supply Project and instrumental in its forward progress.





Greg graduated from Valley City State University with a bachelor of science degree in business administration and is the owner of Allard Trophy Co. in Valley City, where he also resides.

## JEFF LEDOUX

Jeff LeDoux, Cass County, steps into the second vice chair spot and his first term on the executive committee. A civil engineer with Houston Engineering for more than 35 years, including 12 years as president/CEO of the company, Jeff's professional background is an asset to the board.



LeDoux has been an active member of multiple community and professional organizations throughout his career, including the American Council of Engineering Companies of North Dakota and the North Dakota Society of Professional Engineers.

LeDoux lives in Fargo with his wife, Becky. They have three adult children.

## NEW EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

With several individuals reaching their term limits on the executive committee, elections were held to replace those positions. Nikki Boote, Griggs County; Bruce Klein, LaMoure County; and Jason Siegert, Traill County will now hold spots on the executive committee.

## NIKKI BOOTE

Nikki represents Griggs County citizens and brings a positive attitude to the room. She's been an engaged community member, recognizing that community service is an important part of rural life. Boote is a Dickinson State University graduate and works at Dakota Central in Carrington.



Nikki will chair the Public Relations Committee in addition to serving on the executive committee. She lives in Binford with her husband, Alan, and they have three children. When not tied up with board meetings or work, Nikki enjoys playing the piano and watching her kids participate in activities, rodeo, and golf.

## BRUCE KLEIN

Bruce was elected to the board in 2016 and represents LaMoure County. Since becoming involved, he has learned there is so much more to Garrison Diversion than just irrigation and the original project that was proposed many years ago.

Bruce will now chair the Recreation Committee member and enjoys awarding money to recreation projects around the state and making a difference in many communities.

Bruce has been a county commissioner for LaMoure County for over 20 years. He grew up in rural LaMoure and received a bachelor's degree from North Dakota State University. He is a full-time farmer, working the family farm with his brother. Bruce and his wife, Crystal, have been married for almost 50 years and have three grown sons. Bruce is an avid fisherman and enjoys reading, and together they enjoy camping and spending time with family.



## JASON SIEGERT

Longtime water advocate Jason Siegert of Hillsboro is the Traill County representative.

While he's one of the newer members to join the Garrison Diversion board, Siegert fully understands the importance of valuable resources and the significance of a quality water supply, having served on the Traill County Water Resource District board since 2006.

Siegert is also a dedicated public servant, committing time to multiple community and church organizations. He is a farmer residing in Hillsboro, with his wife, Corrie. They have four children.

Jason will chair Garrison Diversion's Red River Valley Committee, dealing with all aspects of the Red River Valley Water Supply Project.



The remaining members of the executive committee: Mike Tweed, Eddy County; Brian Orn, Sargent County; Larry Kassian, Burleigh County; Dave Anderson, Pierce County; and Alan Walter (ex-officio), Ward County.

*Garrison Diversion board members recognize the importance water plays in North Dakota's future. They are leaders in building North Dakota's water supply infrastructure and managing the water, focusing on irrigation, recreation, municipal, rural and industrial water supply and the operations and maintenance of Garrison Diversion Unit facilities.*

Contact: Kimberly Cook  
 Phone: 701.652.3194  
 Email: [kimberlyc@gdcd.org](mailto:kimberlyc@gdcd.org)

For immediate release:

### Garrison Diversion Matching Recreation Grant Program Awards \$622,894

The Garrison Diversion Conservancy District's (Garrison Diversion) Recreation Committee awarded matching recreation grants to 22 projects, totaling \$622,894.

"It's exciting that Garrison Diversion can help beautify and improve recreation amenities across the state through the Matching Recreation Grant Program," says committee chairman Bruce Klein. "We're proud to support the needs of our member counties and give back to them through this program."

The following counties received Matching Recreation Grant funds in the spring of 2025:

- **Barnes County** –\$34,700 to Barnes and Ransom Counties to continue developing the Sheyenne River Water Trail
- **Bottineau County** – \$5,571 to Bottineau County to install a vault toilet at the Carbury Dam Recreation Area; \$50,000 to Bottineau County to purchase a snow system for Winter Park; \$1,195 to the City of Souris to purchase park benches for the city park
- **Burleigh County** - \$16,000 to Bismarck Parks & Recreation to install a playground at General Sibley Park; \$28,699 to the Burleigh County Water Resource District to create an accessible playground area at McDowell Dam
- **Cass County** - \$50,000 to Mapleton Park Board to create the new Ashmoor Glen Park; \$50,000 to the City of Reile's Acres for the Reile's Park Revitalization project; \$50,000 to the Fargo Park District to develop the SW Regional Pond Recreation Area
- **Dickey County** - \$460 to the Dickey County Park Board to purchase a picnic table for Wilson Dam
- **Eddy County** - \$25,000 to construct new restrooms at the Eddy County Fairgrounds; \$2,473 for the Jim Johnson Park bathroom renovation
- **Grand Forks County** – \$39,560 to the Grand Forks Park District to construct a new playground at Elks Park
- **McLean County** - \$50,000 to the City of Mercer for the Mercer Community Center building project
- **Ramsey County** - \$43,977 to the Devils Lake Park District for the Merle Baisch Memorial Wheelchair Ramp project; \$50,000 to the Ramsey County Fair Board for retractable bleachers at the Ramsey County Fairgrounds multi-purpose building
- **Ransom County** - \$25,688 to the Lisbon Park District for multiple improvements at Sandager Park
- **Sargent County** - \$19,097 to the Sargent County Park Board to construct a new bathhouse on the south side of the Silver Lake Recreation Area
- **Stutsman County** - \$6,209 to Jamestown Parks & Recreation for the lighting project at Jack Brown Stadium; \$4,000 to the Medina City Park to install water hookups at the campsites
- **Traill County** - \$20,265 to the Mayville Park District to create a skate park in Mayville
- **Ward County** - \$50,000 to the Kenmare Park District to assist with the construction of a splash pad

Garrison Diversion dedicates two-tenths of its mill levy to the Matching Recreation Grant Program. Funds from this program have been awarded to install new playground equipment and develop parks, campground facilities and walking paths, among other projects. Throughout the life of the program, over \$9 million has been awarded to recreation projects.

The fall deadline, **September 2**, is the next chance to apply for grant funds.

For additional information regarding the Matching Recreation Grant Program, please visit [www.garrisondiversion.org](http://www.garrisondiversion.org) or contact Garrison Diversion at 701.652.3194.

For more information:  
 Kimberly Cook  
[kimberlyc@gdcd.org](mailto:kimberlyc@gdcd.org)

**For Immediate Release:**

**Garrison Diversion Awards \$302,076 in Water Supply Assistance Grants**

CARRINGTON, ND (May 22, 2025) --- The Garrison Diversion Conservancy District's (Garrison Diversion) MR&I Water Supply Assistance Grant Program provides funding assistance to offset the costs of new customer hookups to a rural water system or district within Garrison Diversion's member counties.

The Water Supply Assistance Grant Program is also in place to aid municipal water systems or districts with extraordinary OM&R projects or emergencies impacting the delivery of water to users, introduce health and safety issues, or bring potential harm to other infrastructure if not repaired.

"Rural water provides a better quality of life for North Dakota citizens, and strengthens our rural communities," says MR&I Committee Chair Larry Kassian. "Garrison Diversion is proud to support rural water in North Dakota, and this program is an excellent example of giving back to our district."

In May, the MR&I Committee awarded a program high \$302,076 to 49 rural water users in the district for residential, livestock and business use.

The following systems had projects receiving funding from the Water Supply Assistance Grant Program:

- **All Seasons Water Users District** - \$46,407 for five customer hookups
- **Barnes Rural Water District** - \$45,988 for seven customer hookups
- **Cass Rural Water** - \$32,761 for four customer hookups
- **Central Plains Water District** - \$20,753 for five customer hookups
- **Dakota Rural Water District** - \$9,558 for two customer hookups
- **East Central Regional Water District** - \$19,011 for two customer hookups
- **Greater Ramsey Water District** - \$7,016 for one customer hookup
- **McKenzie County Rural Water** - \$5,696 for three customer hookups
- **McLean-Sheridan Rural Water District** - \$1,911 for one customer hookup
- **North Prairie Regional Water District** - \$4,750 for one customer hookup
- **South Central Regional Water District** - \$10,000 for one customer hookup
- **Southeast Water Users District** - \$42,225 for five customer hookups
- **Stutsman Rural Water District** - \$56,000 for 12 customer hookups

There are two grant application periods each year. The next deadline for new customer hookup applications is **August 1**, although emergency requests are considered as needed. There continues to be no deadline on extraordinary OM&R projects for municipalities, as these will occur on an as-needed basis.

Eligibility requirements state the applicant must reside within one of Garrison Diversion's 28 member counties, must be or have a member sponsor that is a political subdivision (municipality or rural water district), and a municipality must serve a population of 5,000 people or less. Grant guidelines and applications can be found at [www.garrisondiversion.org](http://www.garrisondiversion.org).



# Road use agreement signed with Garrison Diversion for Kensal Rd.

BY NATHAN PRICE

Foster County and Garrison Diversion have signed an agreement allowing for the use of County Road 1621 (aka Kensal Road) for construction of the Red River Valley Water Supply Project – one that will see the highway receive a fresh overlay and chip seal.

Designed to provide an emergency supply of water to central and eastern North Dakota,

the Red River Valley Water Supply Project (RRVWSP) is a water pipeline project that will run through portions of McLean, Burleigh, Sheridan, Wells, Foster and Griggs Counties.



Construction of the 125-mile pipeline has been ongoing for some time, and now Garrison Diversion – the entity overseeing construction of the RRVWSP – will be using five miles of the Kensal Road in Foster County to continue their work.

During a regular meeting of the county commission earlier this month on June 3,

Kip Kovar of Garrison Diversion requested access to five miles of the road in exchange for a commitment to mill and overlay that stretch of road afterwards, at no cost to the county.

At the time they said the estimated cost for such a mill and overlay is approximately \$1.6 million, and the county commission initially appeared amenable to such an agreement.

However, no decision was made at that meeting, as it was instead decided to complete a Memorandum of Understanding that would stipulate the exact terms and penalties Garrison Diversion must abide by.

After several days of discussions and multiple special meetings of the commission, final terms were recently agreed to.

First was a more broad Memorandum of Understanding, stipulating terms that Garrison Diversion must

## COUNTY —

adhere to moving forward regarding any and all roads used within the county.

It requires, among other things, pre-inspection assessments for all designated haul roads, dust control at the expense of Garrison Diversion and maintenance and restoration of any gravel or asphalt roads designated as haul routes, also at the expense of Garrison Diversion.

Second was an addendum to that Memorandum of Understanding, which is specific to the stretch of Kensal Road that Garrison Diversion is requesting to access.

The addendum clarifies what kind of restoration will be required once Garrison Diversion is done using the road.

“[The Garrison Diversion Conservancy District (GDCD)] shall be responsible to repair County Hwy 1621 with a 1” grind and 2” overlay after November 1st, 2028, .. The year following the 1” grind and 2” overlay, GDCD shall chip seal the five miles of County Hwy 1621.”

Specifically, the only portion of Kensal Road that has now been designated a haul road is the five miles between Highway 200 and 2nd Street SE.

The addendum further stipulates that Foster County will inspect the four miles of the Kensal Road between 2nd Street SE and the Foster-Stutsman County border – and that any damage to that section of highway beyond normal wear-and-tear could be subject to the same restoration requirements as the other five miles.

Meanwhile, the Memorandum of Understanding includes a number of penalties should Garrison Diversion fail to adhere to its terms. Those penalties are as follows:

“Failure to provide proper notice of haul routes shall result in a fine of one thousand (\$1,000) dollars.

“Failure to properly maintain and restore roadways shall result in a fine of twice the cost of repairs.

“Any vehicle traveling on a non-haul road shall be assessed a fine of \$1,000 per mile per incident. Fines shall be attributable to GDCD. Fines shall be paid within 10 days of notice.

“RRVWSP shall be shut down for 24 hours for any vehicle traveling within Foster County without the required truck identification.”

The Memorandum of Understanding and its addendum are part of an effort to formalize the county’s process for working with utilities and development projects now and in the future.

In the coming weeks or months, there is expected to be a change to the county’s ordinance that will require any future project developers

to complete a number of permits and applications recently approved by the commission.

Among the newly created permits and applications are a haul road agreement, a utility permit, a right-of-way permit and a claim/bond application, just to name a few. Each has their own requirements and terms, as well as penalties should those terms be ignored.

The permits and application forms were drafted by the county’s Road and Utility Policy Committee – a committee formed last October after a misunderstanding developed between Foster County and Garrison Diversion regarding open-cuts of county roads.

The committee’s creation was an effort to prevent any other misunderstanding from occurring in the future.

In other business of the Foster County Commission, a special meeting has been scheduled for 9 a.m. on Tuesday, June 24 in the Foster County Courthouse, where they will meet directly with representatives of Canadian Pacific Kansas City Railway as efforts to come to an agreement on reimbursement for road damages caused by the Bortulac train derailment continue.

Meanwhile, during their regular meeting on Tuesday, June 17, commissioners accepted the resignation of Dianne Straley from the Deputy Auditor/Treasurer position and carried a motion to begin advertising to fill the vacancy.

Commissioners also carried a motion to purchase a new software for the county’s Tax Equalization Office. They also discussed ongoing 9-1-1 addressing issues within the county, and how they can begin to shift that responsibility from their tax equalization director to the county’s emergency manager, per their Joint Powers Agreement with Stutsman County.

The commission also approved a \$26,500 bid from the City of Elgin for their Stratos Oil Distributor.

The county’s next regular meeting is scheduled for 3:30 p.m. on Tuesday, July 1 in the basement of the Foster County Courthouse.

### **\$1.8B Garrison Dam spillway project to be largest in US Army Corps' history**

The project is slated to begin in 2030 and should improve water flows, especially during extreme flood years, branch chief says.



The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers from the Omaha District and contractors tour the Garrison Dam spillway near Riverdale, North Dakota, on Oct. 11, 2023, in preparation for a spillway safety modification project, the largest dam project in the federal agency's history.

Contributed / Delanie Stafford, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

June 19, 2025 at 5:55 AM

RIVERDALE, N.D. — The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will repair and improve Garrison Dam's spillway for \$1.8 billion, the largest dam safety modification project in the federal agency's history.

Crews are slated to begin work on the multiyear project in 2030, said Andrew Barry, dam and levee safety branch chief for the Corps' Omaha District. Work should improve spillway flows during extreme flood years, he said.

"We have other projects around the nation that are in the hundreds of millions of dollars range," Barry said. "This one is quite a bit larger than most of them. It's the largest reinvestment that we've had in this dam since it was originally constructed."



U.S. Sen. John Hoeven, R-N.D., said he is working to secure funding for the project as a member of the Senate Energy and Water Appropriations Committee. He said he has ensured \$45 million for preconstruction engineering and design. He called it a high priority and critical infrastructure.

“If it ever failed, there are thousands and thousands of people downstream that could be very severely affected,” Hoeven told The Forum.

The dam was built from 1947 to 1953, with the goal of controlling flooding on the Missouri River. The 11,300-foot structure between Pick City and Riverdale, about 70 miles northwest of Bismarck, is also North Dakota’s sole hydropower generator.



The Garrison Dam spillway can fit the Denver Broncos' Empower Field, the University of Nebraska's Memorial Stadium and the Fargodome, according to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Contributed / U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Garrison Dam holds back Lake Sakakawea, which, at 685 square miles, is the second largest reservoir by surface area in the country, the Corps said. By volume, it is the third largest, with nearly 23.8 million acre feet, or 1.9 trillion gallons, of water, according to the Corps.

Houston, at 640 square miles, could fit inside Lake Sakakawea. The massive body of water would cover about three-quarters of Rhode Island.

The lake has roughly 1,320 miles of shoreline, making it longer than California's coast, according to the Corps.

The spillway, located at the east end, has 28 gates and could fit the Denver Broncos' Empower Field, the University of Nebraska's Memorial Stadium and the Fargodome.

Lake Sakakawea provides ample boating and fishing opportunities, as well as other outdoor recreation. It has numerous bays, camping sites and beaches. Lake Sakakawea State Park sits northwest of the dam.

The dam is a reliable source for agriculture, electricity, recreation and tourism, Hoeven said. The Garrison Dam National Fish Hatchery produces 10 million fish for hundreds of bodies of water, he noted.

"It is actually an economic engine, not just for North Dakota but for the country," he said.



Col. Robert Newbauer, far left, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Omaha District commander, and Andrew Barry, far right, dam and levee safety branch chief for the Corps' Omaha District, tour the Garrison Dam spillway gates near Riverdale, North Dakota, on Oct. 11, 2023.



### Why the updates?

For the first time since the dam started operating, the Corps opened Garrison's spillway gates on June 1, 2011, letting out an additional 30,000 cubic feet of water per second. Excessive amounts of snow melted into the dam and filled it to capacity, forcing the Corps to open the gates and let water flow down the Missouri River.

Opening the dam dislodged manhole covers and damaged the subdrain system under the spillway's concrete slab, Barry said. As the Corps investigated the damage, engineers discovered floods more extreme than in 2011 could put the spillway at risk of failure, he said. The Corps did a safety modification study in 2023 and determined several steps to improve the spillway, he said.

That includes replacing the spillway's drainage system, reinforcing the concrete overlay that will help with extreme flows and raising abutment monoliths to prevent water from overtopping the dam, among other things, according to the Corps.

The original design was set up to let out up to 827,000 cubic feet per second, Barry said. After the updates are finished, the spillway will allow up to 1.15 million cubic feet per second, he said.

"We're designing to make up to be able to pass that new flow," he said.

The project isn't expected to close any roads, Barry said. North Dakota Highway 200 runs on top of the dam, which is 210 feet tall at its maximum height.

"There will be quite a bit of construction traffic," he said.



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers staff and contractors stand Oct. 11, 2023, along the Garrison Dam spillway near Riverdale, North Dakota.

If Garrison Dam were to fail during an extreme flood, it could have national impacts, Barry said. The Corps estimates the dam would release about 3.2 million cubic feet of water per second, which could destroy dams downstream, he said. Flooding would impact communities along the Missouri River and possibly the Mississippi River down to New Orleans, Barry said.

“The estimated loss of life and damage to infrastructure would be equivalent to the losses from a major hurricane,” he said. “The consequences are driving a lot of the decisions that we’re making on this dam.”

Before the large spillway project begins, the Corps will also dredge and place riprap at the spillway. The Corps awarded a \$23.8 million contract for the project, which will wrap up in April 2028, according to a Friday, June 6, news release from Hoeven.

The contractors will dredge the base of the spillway’s slope, Barry said. Riprap will be placed on the east bank of the spillway, he added.

Dredging and riprap placement will help make water flow more efficiently through the spillway, but it isn’t part of the \$1.8 billion project, Barry said.

Dredging removes sediments and debris from the bottom of water bodies, according to the Corps. Riprap is a layer of loose stones that is placed on lake or river bottoms, with the goal of preventing erosion, the Corps said.

Most of the dredging project will happen next year, though some minor work could occur this summer, such as setting up staging areas and stockpiling riprap, said Corps spokesman Delanie Stafford.



# Reception’s cascading wreckage

*Spilt champaign.*

I’ve often thought --if only the champaign hadn’t spilled over the wedding table and into the laps of the bride’s mother and grandmother -- the wedding reception, doomed from the start, might have been saved, remembered and cherished.

But, unfortunately, the night took a turn for the worse when one of the waiters, pirouetting around like a ballerino, balancing his tray of champaign glasses high over his head, stepped and slipped on a side dish of ‘pate’ – the rave-drawing appetizer similar to caviar but brushed to the floor by the groom’s father, thinking disgustedly it was chopped liver – spilling backward on the wedding table, creating a tapestry of colorful events that to this day are hard to describe, even for the bartender, who had a grand view of the

evening’s cascading wreckage.

I happened to be the bartender, of course.

The bride’s mother came down and into the VFW’s lower level an hour earlier, hoping and praying the wedding reception would be a sophisticated and elegant experience; the day so far had been a disaster.

It was bad enough that the kids’ punch was spiked with gin at breakfast, and the flowers delivered to the wrong church, but when the best man got lost on his way to the church, prompting the bride’s ex-boyfriend to stand in, the bride’s mother lost her cool. She got hysterical and mistakenly called the fire department, not the police.

“Can you believe it?” she cried. Hard to believe, I agreed.

I should have expected the night would prove to be even more

calamitous.

It was getting late when the newly married couple announced they were leaving; the fire department was waiting to escort the happy couple through town.

Seemingly on cue, the inebriated bride’s ex-boyfriend, forgotten for the most part, suddenly made his appearance, barging out of the kitchen holding his hand outward, fingers spread, as if to say, ‘Hold it right there.’

Some in the crowd mistakenly thought he had his right thumb pointed upward, his forefinger pointed at the groom, like he was holding a pistol.

Crushed that his ex-girlfriend was marrying someone else, he simply wanted to ‘wish them well,’ instead, he was hit with a slingshot of raspberry ice cream, right smackdab in the chest, coloring the front of his Sunday-go-to-church

white shirt a blood red. Off to the left and stuffing the slingshot in his pants was the groom’s rascally young son.

“My god,” the bride’s grandmother screamed. “He’s been shot.”

“Shooter on the premise,” yelled the groom’s father, a volunteer neighborhood police officer.

Long story short: The bride and groom escaped unscathed, the confused ex-boyfriend was pulled back into the kitchen, the crowd that had been spread-eagled on the floor got to their feet and order was restored.

An hour later the bride’s frayed mother emerged, standing at the end of the bar, shaken to the core.

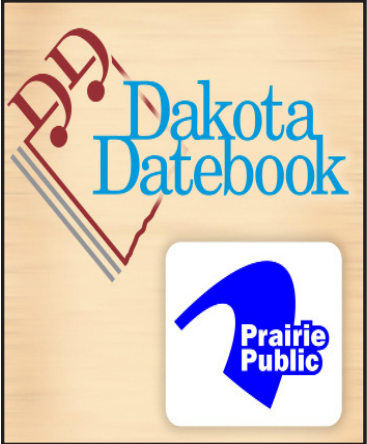
I had to smile; she looked a little worse for wear

It’s not the end of the world, I told her.

But it is the end of the night.



NEIL O. NELSON



“Dakota Datebook” is a radio series from Prairie Public in partnership with the State Historical Society of North Dakota and with funding from the North Dakota Humanities Council.

### Diphtheria, the dreaded bacterial disease

May 9, 2025 – Dakota Territory experienced an immigration boom in the 1880s, but those new settlers often faced difficulties in establishing homesteads.

Disease was a formidable obstacle, and fears of contagion filled parents whenever a child fell ill. The Grand Forks Herald for this date in 1888 told of the “Dakota Boom” of settlers and of those on the area’s “sick list.”

Near Wahpeton, a farmer named John Radke was on the sick-list when he, his wife, and all of their nine children contracted the dreaded diphtheria. Diphtheria was a severe bacterial infection that caused fever, swollen glands, a sore throat and weakness. The infection created a clogging, grayish membrane of dead cells that blocked the windpipe, making its victims struggle to breathe. Death came when diphtheria toxins paralyzed the lungs and heart

Children were most susceptible. If one in a family had the insidious contagion, all would catch it. In that era, doctors figured that nine of ten infected children would die, as quickly as within 36 hours, for this was before immunizations became available in the 1920s. The parents had difficulty helping their children because diphtheria left them too enfeebled.

All infected clothing and bedclothes would be burned to destroy the germs. Sometimes, the entire home was burned.

Farmer John Radke was in a desperate situation, and the Richland County overseer of the poor went to visit him, writing this description:

“I found six of his seven children sick with diphtheria. Two children had died of the same sickness shortly before my arrival at the place. The family was nearly destitute of everything, and I had to order all the necessities of life, even bedclothes. Three more children died of diphtheria in quick succession and the father and mother being up day and night to attend to the sick, I found it necessary to hire parties to take care of the stock and do the chores for him. At the present time, the four remaining children have recovered from the sickness.”

Radke, being a proud man, paid all the grocery bills and promised to repay the county for everything when autumn came, after he harvested his crops. The county government accepted Radke’s repayment plan.

The Radkes might have recovered materially after diphtheria visited their homestead, but the heartache and sense of loss for those five children would never leave their wounded hearts.

## OPINION

**WE WELCOME YOUR OPINIONS.** The best way to send us a letter to the editor, or to offer a text for this opinion segment is via email to: [healdpress@midconetwork.com](mailto:healdpress@midconetwork.com). We consider everything offered, but cannot print everything received. Name, phone number and signature is required in all correspondence for publication.

Letter to the Editor



# Reader shares struggle with easement, eminent domain

This is in response to a news article about the sale of the New Rockford Canal.

I write from the perspective of someone who had to deal with Garrison Diversion for the last 15 years with it ending up being settled by Eminent Domain Proceedings.

Having dealt with Garrison Diversion, I can only imagine what havoc and anguish this caused the land owners by the taking of their property for the New Rockford Canal, and what happened to the value of the property they were left with. Then being forced to watch day after day the destruction of this property, and finally having to live with the ultimate fact that this was all for nothing.

There is a book, “The Promise of Water - The North Dakota Garrison Diversion Project” by Rob Silberman. This book tells the history of the project. In this book it states examples of harassment, intimidation, and threats that were used on property owners.

One example in the book states “There are many horror stories of callous treatment by Bureau of Reclamation Agents of farmers whose land was taken for right-of-way. When a farmer complained that his farm would be cut into three parts by the Canal and he would have to reduce his cattle herd by a third. He was then told, “To us you’re just a dot on the map. When you get in the way, we move you.”

In the 2008 time frame I received an envelope in the mail with a nice glossy pamphlet. It was from Garrison Diversion. It contained an easement option to sign. It stated the terms of the easement and the compensation. It also stated that it needed to be

signed as soon as possible and returned. This was for what they were calling the Red River Valley Water Supply Project.

Because land owners knew nothing about this, and because of the inquiries they were getting, Garrison Diversion decided they would meet with landowners in Bowdon, ND, to discuss it. At this meeting the landowners were told by Garrison Diversion that this is how it would be. When a landowner questioned why they were not part of the negotiations, the director of Garrison Diversion at the time said “We don’t need to negotiate and if you don’t take our offer we will use Eminent Domain.”

Fast forward now to August 2022. Garrison Diversion was still pursuing an easement on my land. I joined a group of fellow land owners that also had concerns about the easement and compensation being offered. We hired an attorney and felt we should go to the Legislature and see if they could help us. On September 20th, 2022 there was a Water Topics Overview Committee meeting in Minot, ND. Our attorney and some of us testified. After the meeting I got the chance to talk with Rep. Nelson, my representative in the 14th District.

When we got to the topic of compensation he asked what we thought and what we could live with. I told him \$25 million minimum for the total coverage of all the easements. This amount would only be half of what would be offered if a private oil or gas line was being installed. Paraphrasing his response: That was a lot of money and that wasn’t in the cards. My response was it’s what would be fair for what you are getting and only

a small percentage of the \$2-3 billion plus that they will be spending on this project.

Moving on to February 3rd, 2023, this is testimony given by Garrison Diversion’s Director at the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee hearing.

‘We’re a public utility, we’re not an oil company. We can’t decide we want to do something and just pay whatever we have to to get it. We have a fiduciary responsibility to the taxpayer to try to come to a fair price. If they don’t believe we’re offering them a fair price for them and for us, the only option is Eminent Domain.”

So the next time Rep. Nelson catches my attention is when he’s on the floor of the House on April 21st, 2023 apparently cleaning up for Garrison Diversion and its board. A \$28 million pumping station was built that was not needed. Apparently, this was okayed by Garrison Diversion and was passed by their board. Where was the fiduciary responsibility of Garrison Diversion’s Director to the taxpayers when this pumping station was being built?

I am aware of the narrative that Garrison Diversion has been promoting for the last 3 years, which in my opinion is just trying to cover their mistake, by saying that this pumping station can be used as a backup or for other purposes. Are we not lucky as taxpayers that this mistake was made!

- \$25 million for the land owners? We were told, “No!”
- \$28 million for a pumping station that was not needed? It was paid.

Looking at Garrison Diversion’s website, they state this project will save \$33 billion

if there is a 1930s style drought, which they all but guarantee by 2050.

Savings of \$33 billion, but \$25 million to treat the landowners fairly is out of line.

### Definition of Eminent Domain

Eminent domain is the power of the government to take private property for public use, provided just compensation is paid to the property owner. This power, granted under the Fifth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, allows federal, state, and local governments to . seize property for public benefit, such as for roads, utilities, or public buildings.

The key phrase in this definition is just compensation, and who gets to decide it. Over the last 60-70 years, what ties Garrison Diversion’s land grab together is Eminent Domain.

Eminent Domain was put into statutes and weaponized at the time Garrison Diversion was created. When requesting help from the Senior Senator of North Dakota, the Governor of North Dakota, along with the Legislature of North Dakota, they did nothing. The only thing they left us with was Eminent Domain. In our case, when Garrison Diversion had their appraisal done, it seems Garrison Diversion gave the appraiser a number and the appraiser worked the appraisal around that number. We were advised by our lawyers that we should probably settle, because they could not find an appraiser that would take our case. This seems to be common practice when it comes to Eminent Domain.

### The Long Con

In a Con, the key players are the perpetrator (also known as the con man, scammer, or confidence man), the victim (often called the mark), and potentially accomplices or shells. The perpetrator is the one pulling the strings, while the victim is the one being manipulated. Accomplices or shells are people who help the perpetrator carry out the con.

From the start of Garrison Diversion, there seems to have been a lot of missteps and miscalculations over 70

### Our Letters to the Editor Policy

The Herald-Press welcomes letters. It’s an excellent way to share your opinions. However, certain limitations exist on what we’ll publish. Letters MUST include the writer’s name, signature, address and phone number as a means of verification.

Anything the publisher deems libelous, or anything of a personal nature between private individuals or businesses will not be published.

All letters are subject to editing at the publisher’s discretion.

Letters must have a specifically local context. Mass mailings, form letters, or letters of a commercial nature will generally be discarded.

The Herald-Press does not warrant the accuracy of information in letters we publish, nor do opinions expressed in letters necessarily represent the opinions of The Herald-Press, its publisher or its staff.

Letters of a political nature, which address contestable issues about a candidate, will not be published.



# New Rockford Canal doomed by too many environmental concerns

## NEW ROCKFORD CANAL

Continued from page 1

permanent flood created by the building of the Garrison Dam and the lost economic benefit that the lost farmland generated.

As construction advanced on the Garrison Diversion Unit throughout the '70s and '80s, it became increasingly apparent that major issues, such as environmental concerns, the acquisition of lands, economics of irrigation and Canadian concerns about water flowing from the Missouri River Basin into the Hudson Bay Basin, would require reworking the project if it were to be completed.

In 1984, construction on the Garrison Dam was halted, and a high-level commission was appointed by the Secretary of Interior to study and recommend a change in direction.

Falling victim to the change in plans, the discarded Lonetree Dam and Reservoir, for all intents and purposes, ended the dream of the New Rockford Canal moving Missouri water east.

Lonetree was the project's principal regulating reservoir; without it, future expansion was limited. Lonetree Dam and Reservoir remained an authorized features of the commission plan, but when President George Bush Sr., in 1990, failed to include any funding for the Garrison

Diversion Unit project in his 1991 budget, the New Rockford Canal became as dry as the land it divided through Wells and Eddy counties.

Today, in the year 2025, the federal government appears ready to wash its hands of the New Rockford Canal altogether.

Stories, photo  
by Neil O. Nelson

## New Rockford Canal for sale

Of beer and more beer.

An aging elevator and roof.

Windows and doors.

More fireworks than you can shake a sparkler at.

And a canal for sale.

The Wells commissioners learned Tuesday that the New Rockford Canal is for sale.

"The government (apparently) wants to get rid of it," said auditor Dan Stutlien.

The county auditor had little else to report on the federal government's intention to part ways with the New Rockford Canal, a feature of the Garrison Diversion Unit Principal Supply Works program, that begins on the east side of the Lonetree Wildlife Management Area, south and west of Harvey, and runs for 41.5 miles through Wells and Eddy counties.

Under the original Garrison Diversion Unit plan, the Lonetree Reservoir was to be a regulating reservoir connecting the McClusky Canal and the New Rockford Canal. The reservoir was deauthorized by the Dakota Water Resources Act of 2000 and, instead, was developed into a wildlife conservation area operated by the North Dakota Game and Fish Department.

The Garrison Diversion Operations & Maintenance (O&M) staff provides routine maintenance of the New Rockford Canal, including monitoring and inspection, building and equipment maintenance, rock and gravel hauling, and spraying for noxious weeds.

North Dakota was promised over a million acres of irrigation as compensation for the 300,000 acres of prime farmland lost to the

## NEW ROCKFORD CANAL

Continued on page 3



# SWC approves water project funding

By MDN STAFF

BISMARCK – The Northwest Area Water Supply project was awarded \$1.31 million for an intake and improvements at the Snake Creek Pumping Plant at Thursday's meeting of the North Dakota State Water Commission. The Ward County Water Resource District also was approved for \$153,750 for low head dams remediation.

The SWC approved funding for 23 water infrastructure projects across the state, totaling about \$34.3 million in cost-share support.

Additionally, the SWC approved a \$41 million loan for the Mouse River En-

hanced Flood Protection Project. This is the second flood project loan for the City of Minot, and it will be used to advance the MI-6 and MI-7 phases in the area of Roosevelt Park and Zoo. The Bank of North Dakota is providing the loan at 2% interest for up to 40 years, according to Minot Finance Director David Lakefield. Repayment is expected to come from Minot city sales tax collections.

The City of New Town was approved for \$153,000 for the Sand Hill Water Tower replacement project. The Western Area Water Supply Authority (WAWSA) received \$926,679 for Williston Regional Water Treatment Plant improvements, \$300,000 for the McK-

enzie County Water Resource District System 4 Part 4, and \$5.95 million for the Northwest Rural Water District-East Williston County Road 9 expansion.

The City of Williston was awarded \$489,282 for the Sloulin Drive improvement project.

The SWC also unanimously passed a resolution of appreciation for former Department of Water Resources Director Andrea Travnicek, recognizing her commitment to managing North Dakota's water resources and her leadership on numerous initiatives during her tenure, including key studies, public education campaigns and advancing research into managed aquifer recharge.

## Andrea Travnicek joining Burgum in Interior

APRIL BAUMGARTEN  
The Forum

A North Dakotan who worked in former Gov. Doug Burgum's Cabinet is expected to follow him to Washington to serve as one of his top officials.

Andrea Travnicek has been nominated as the U.S. assistant secretary of the Interior, according to documents received this week by the U.S. Senate and Natural Resources Committee. If approved, she would serve under Burgum, who was recently appointed Interior secretary.

U.S. Sen. John Hoeven, R-North Dakota, congratulated Travnicek in a statement.

"She was a trusted adviser when I was governor and brings a wealth of

knowledge to this position having previously served as a deputy assistant secretary at Interior," he said. "As a member of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, we'll work to confirm her nomination as quickly as possible."

It's unclear when the committee is expected to review the nomination. The Senate must approve her nomination.

Born in Minot, Travnicek earned her bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees from North Dakota State University. Her latest position in government was as the North Dakota Water Resources director under the Burgum administration. The former governor appointed her in August 2021.

After three years in the

post, Travnicek stepped down this year to pursue other opportunities, according to a news release from Gov. Kelly Armstrong's office. Armstrong succeeded Burgum, who decided not to seek a third term in office.

Travnicek also headed the North Dakota Department of Parks and Recreation under Burgum from May 2020 until her appointment to Water Resources.

Travnicek is not a stranger to the U.S. Department of Interior. She worked in various leadership roles for the department from 2017 into 2020, including deputy assistant secretary of land and minerals management.

She served as a senior policy adviser on natural

resources under North Dakota Govs. Hoeven and Jack Dalrymple from 2010 to 2016.

She also worked for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in California, according to her biography.

Aside from Burgum, Travnicek was the only North Dakotan listed for a federal nomination as of Thursday, Feb. 6. President Donald Trump tapped Burgum to lead the Interior Department, which oversees agencies that deal with Native American affairs, land management, wildlife, national parks and energy permitting.

The Senate approved Burgum's nomination last week in a 79-18 vote.

**Jamestown Sun:** [Council approves allowing Jamestown to participate in Red River Valley Water Supply Project - Jamestown Sun | News, weather, sports from Jamestown North Dakota](#)

## **Council approves allowing Jamestown to participate in Red River Valley Water Supply Project**

By [Masaki Ova](#), February 4, 2025

JAMESTOWN — The Jamestown City Council unanimously approved on Monday, Feb. 3, allowing the city of Jamestown to participate in the Red River Valley Water Supply Project.

The city of Jamestown can sign up for up to 11 cubic feet per second for industrial water. Jamestown can reduce that amount of industrial water 11 cfs based on its need but the city cannot increase it once the water distribution is sold out to other communities participating in the project.

The city of Jamestown will need to decide if it still wants to participate in the project in 2027.

Mayor Dwaine Heinrich was also authorized to sign the project participation agreement.

The Red River Valley Water Supply Project will bring Missouri River Water to communities in eastern and central North Dakota. The project will provide an emergency water supply to central and eastern North Dakota during times of drought, according to the project's website. The project will also provide an additional supply of industrial water that exceeds the current supply.

In a 2016 development agreement, Jamestown signed up for 11 cfs of industrial water.

Steve Burian, president and CEO of Burian & Associates, said the Lake Agassiz Water Authority developed an assurance policy for participants of the project. The goal of the assurance policy is to reduce financial risk for participants while the project is built and initially operated.

The assurance policy allows a participant in the project to be eligible to be reimbursed for principal payments for their nomination within the first 10 years of operation if the participant decides to no longer be served by the project.

"At that point any principal costs you've made up to that point will be reimbursed to you," Burian said. "You'd still have to make any interest payments, and you'd have to make any operation maintenance costs, but any principal payments that you've made up to that point would be reimbursed to you."

The projected annual cost for the city of Jamestown to participate in the project once the project participation agreement is executed is over \$112,000 in 2028, Burian said. The projected annual cost to participate in the project will increase to more than \$378,000 in 2034.

Burian said the city of Jamestown's first payment will be in 2028. He said the city of Jamestown will be able to opt out of the project before 2028.

"So you really have a three-year period here to do further reflection on the project," he said. "Then after that three-year period, we anticipate the cost starting."

Participants in the project include Fargo, Grand Forks, Hillsboro, Mayville, Carrington, Cooperstown, Valley City, Washburn, McLean-Sheridan Rural Water District and Dickey, LaMoure and Sargent counties, Burian said.

Burian said the water supply for Dickey and LaMoure counties will need to come from the James River.

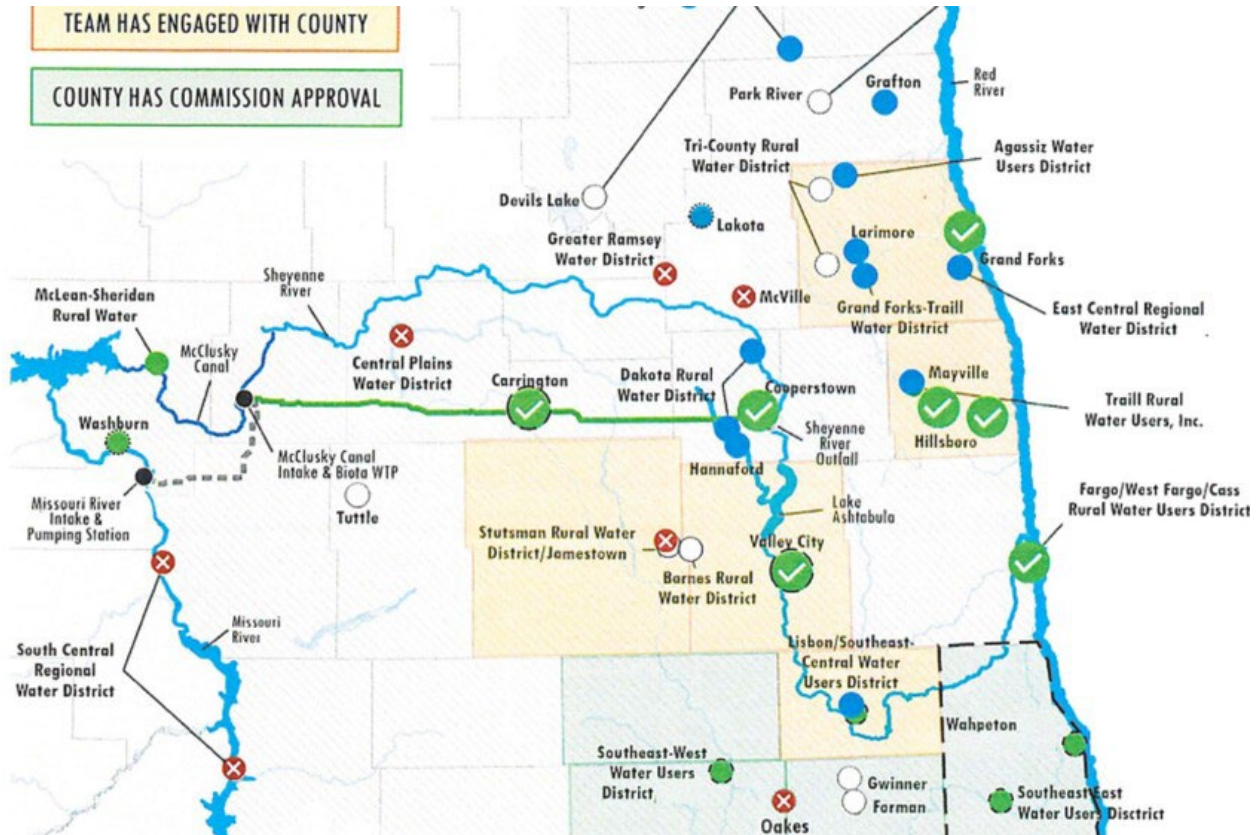
Heinrich said the only real cost until 2028 would be administrative costs.

"If we opt in, we can opt out until 2028," he said.

Councilman David Schloegel said he doesn't want the city to be on the hook for a bunch of money.

"By 2027, if we can't find any businesses (that would need industrial water), we can still leave," he said.

"I'm certainly open to leave the door open for as long as we can if it means we can come up with something great down the road."





Lynn Kaspari  
Editor  
Ransom County Gazette

When there is a substantial river running through your county from one end to the other, it can be an advantage, or a problem as many floods over the years have taught the locals.

At their December 17 regular meeting the Ransom County Commission heard about how the Sheyenne River could be an advantage, especially when trying to attract more economic development to the area.

Jay Anderson, a local representative for both the Southeast Water Users and Garrison Diversion was joined by Steve Burian of Burian & Associates to update the Commission on the work of the Red River Valley Water Supply Project.

The project is designed to bring Missouri River water east through the Sheyenne and onward to the Red.

The purpose of this is to have the necessary water to attract industry, primarily ag-based industry, to this portion of the state.

North Dakota has long restricted ag-based industry from locating in the state, but many of those restrictions have been lessened by recent legislatures.

If more industry is to spring up in eastern North Dakota, the area must have enough water to support it.

The demand is high with cities like Fargo, Grand Forks, and Wahpeton claiming a large share of this water as it comes down the river. Out-of-state interests are also in the hunt for the water from the Missouri.

But entities like Ransom County and the city of Lisbon are eligible to claim a portion of this water in the hopes of attracting more industry now and in the future.

Anderson said that Southeast Water Users has already committed to a significant portion. Ransom County and Lisbon have been approached but have not committed as of yet.

Time is running out.

Burian said that commitments must be made by July of this year or other interests like Fargo will grab what is left and then they would have control to use or sell to other entities down the road.

Anderson said that if the county and Lisbon would commit they could co-op with other entities like Southeast Water Users to provide enough water to attract and sustain industry.

Commissioner Todd Anderson repeated his skepticism over the aspect of potential flooding. Anderson has spent his entire life living near the Sheyenne and has seen his fair share of flooding.

Barian said that it is more likely that this water will be released into the Sheyenne during times of drought.

Entities who join now won't begin paying into the system until 2028 with the eventual start-up projected to begin in 2032.

Costs will change as other sources of federal and state funding are used for the project.

The commission took no action but plan to meet further and make a decision at a later date.

# RED RIVER VALLEY WATER SUPPLY PROJECT

## 2025 NEWSLETTER ANALYTICS



### AVERAGE INDUSTRY RATES FOR E-NEWSLETTERS

**32%**  
AVERAGE OPEN RATE

**2%**  
AVERAGE CLICK THROUGH RATE

**0.2%**  
AVERAGE UNSUBSCRIBE RATE

The quarterly RRVWSP Progress Report typically receives more engagement with recipients than an average industry newsletter. The Open Rate is the percentage of people who received the newsletter in their inbox and opened the email. The Click Through Rate measures the percentage of people who clicked on each article. The Unsubscribe Rate measures the percentage of people who received the newsletter and decided to opt-out from receiving future newsletters.

#### RRVWSP PROGRESS REPORT QUARTER 1

**EMAILS SENT: 567**

**OPEN RATE: 49.9%**

**ARTICLES & CLICK RATES:**

- Assurance Policy Spurs More User Signups- Click Rate 21.5%
- Legislative Session Update - Click Rate 20.5%
- Mayville, Hillsboro & Traill County Support RRVWSP: 16.9%
- Garrison Diversion Board Welcomes New Chairman - Click Rate 16%

**UNSUBSCRIBES: 0**

#### RRVWSP PROGRESS REPORT QUARTER 2

**EMAILS SENT: 568**

**OPEN RATE: 49.5%**

**ARTICLES & CLICK RATES:**

- Earliest RRVWSP Construction Start to Date - Click Rate 31.9%
- 2025 Legislative Wrap Up - 28.6%
- Introducing Alan Idso, LAWA Board Member - Click Rate 23.1%

**UNSUBSCRIBES: 1**

#### RRVWSP PROGRESS REPORT QUARTER 3

**EMAILS SENT:**

**OPEN RATE:**

**ARTICLES & CLICK RATES:**

- 
- 
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**UNSUBSCRIBES:**

#### RRVWSP PROGRESS REPORT QUARTER 4

**EMAILS SENT:**

**OPEN RATE:**

**ARTICLES & CLICK RATES:**

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- 
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**UNSUBSCRIBES:**

## 2025 Legislative Wrap-Up

With North Dakota's 2025 legislative session now in the rearview mirror, the co-sponsors of the Red River Valley Water Supply Project (RRVWSP) are adjusting the work plan for the 2025-2027 biennium to match the budget approved by the legislature. Garrison Diversion Conservancy District (Garrison Diversion) and Lake Agassiz Water Authority (LAWA) requested \$221 million from the Department of Water Resources Budget, House Bill 1020.

Ultimately, the legislature appropriated \$205 million for the RRVWSP. Governor Kelly Armstrong signed House Bill 1020 on May 17. "We are grateful for the amount approved by legislators, which allows us to continue moving this historic project forward," says Duane DeKrey, Garrison Diversion General Manager.

The \$205 million represents the State's 75% cost share for the upcoming biennium. End users of the emergency and supplemental water supply are responsible for the remaining 25% cost share.

"We appreciate the legislature's support to move the project forward in a timely manner," says Dr. Tim Mahoney, LAWA Chair and Fargo Mayor.

On June 13, the State Water Commission approved 26 water infrastructure funding requests for the 2025-2027 biennium, including \$150 million for the RRVWSP. One goal of the 2025-2027 work plan is to continue progress on the installation of the transmission pipeline. Currently there are more than 40 miles of shovel-ready pipeline. The upcoming biennium will also see the final designs of the biota water treatment plant, McClusky Canal Pump Station, main pump station, and ground storage reservoirs.

During the 2023 legislative session, lawmakers approved legislative intent for the RRVWSP totaling \$953 million in future funding. With the \$205 million approved this year, that leaves \$568 million for RRVWSP in future biennia.

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## Earliest RRVWSP Construction Start to Date

North Dakota's relatively mild and dry winter allowed construction crews to begin pipe installation on the Red River Valley Water Supply Project (RRVWSP) earlier than previous years. The early start comes on the heels of the 2024 construction season which saw the most pipe installed to date.

Carstensen Contracting Inc. was back in the field by mid-April to continue construction of Contract 5D which includes 10 miles of pipeline and a trenchless crossing of Pipestem Creek in western Foster County and eastern Wells County. Carstensen will also begin

Contract 6A this year. That contract includes the installation of a 7.1-mile transmission pipeline from the James River to Eastman Township in Foster County.

Garney Construction will work on land restoration, structure build out, hydrostatic testing, and soil haul off for Contract 5B, east of Carrington. Oscar Renda Contracting will continue working on Contract 5C this year, which includes approximately eight miles of pipeline and two major trenchless crossings east of Carrington, in Foster County.

When the RRVWSP transmission pipeline is complete, it will span from the McClusky Canal to the discharge structure, which empties into the Sheyenne River, located about six miles south of Cooperstown. The RRVWSP is projected to serve nearly half of North Dakota's population, from the central part of the state to the eastern side of the state.

To date, 19 miles of the 125-mile buried pipeline are installed.

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### **Introducing Alan Idso, LAWA Board Member**

There is a new face on the Lake Agassiz Water Authority (LAWA) Board of Directors. Alan Idso has served on the Cass Rural Water Users District Board of Directors for the past four years. When Mark Johnson retired from the Cass Rural Water Users and LAWA Boards earlier this year, Alan stepped into the LAWA Director role to represent Cass Rural Water Users.

"As a rural water user, I have always had some interest in how the water system delivers water to all of Cass County and beyond. I knew several of the board members before I joined the Cass Rural Water Users board and I thought this is a good group of people to work with. It was the right time for me to serve on the board," says Alan.

Rural water plays a role in multiple facets of Alan's life. A few years after he graduated from NDSU with a degree in Crop and Weed Science, he went to work for The Arthur Companies. Twenty-five years later, he's still with the organization and works in Ayr, North Dakota. In addition to his career and water board responsibilities, Alan has been the Treasurer/Clerk of Erie Township for more than 20 years. He lives on a farm site outside of Erie with his wife, Kari, and sons, Isaac and Ian. The Idso family tries to go on a few camping trips each year and Alan and the boys like to ride snowmobiles in the winter.

The impact the Red River Valley Water Supply Project (RRVWSP) will have on Cass County and beyond is not lost on Alan. The emergency and supplemental water supply is co-sponsored by LAWA and Garrison Diversion Conservancy District. Alan says the additional water supply will be of critical importance.



“With the continued population growth around the Fargo area, not to mention the entire Red River Valley, the demand for clean, quality water will continue to increase,” he explains. “Being highly dependent on precipitation to supply surface water for a growing population is a risk if the region enters a prolonged dry period. Having another source of water is critical to our state's population and economy.”

“In my area of the state, I don't think a lot of people realize that this project is being built and has pipe in the ground. Around Fargo people see all the construction associated with the FM Diversion project to redirect excess water around the city. But as people who work with water know, the Red River can run low just as easily as it can flood, and the Red River Valley Water Supply is an equal project to manage flow in our critical waterway,” explains Alan.

In his short time thus far on the LAWA Board, Alan says he has already learned a lot about the RRVWSP. “I look forward to continuing to learn more and being part of such an important project for North Dakota,” he says.

## **RRVWSP Assurance Policy Spurs More User Signups**

The Lake Agassiz Water Authority (LAWA) has developed an Assurance Policy for participants of the Red River Valley Water Supply Project (RRVWSP). The goal is to reduce financial risk for project participants while the project is under construction and initially operated. Since the RRVWSP Assurance Policy was announced in late 2024, the number of signed memorandums of commitment (MOCs) has increased substantially.

LAWA is a co-sponsor of the RRVWSP alongside Garrison Diversion Conservancy District and represents the end users of the project. The development of the RRVWSP Assurance Policy is the result of conversations with potential participants who had concerns about investing in the emergency and supplemental water supply, but ultimately not needing it. The policy is limited to 10 years from the date the RRVWSP becomes operational. The drought mitigation project is expected to be constructed by 2032.

“The Assurance Policy works like this – a user that decides to no longer be served by the project within the first decade of the project’s operation will be eligible to be reimbursed for the principal payments for their nomination,” explains Dr. Tim Mahoney, LAWA Chair and Fargo Mayor. “Allowing users’ nominations to be relinquished provides opportunities for other participants to access more water from the project. LAWA or LAWA member entities will reimburse the outgoing participant for their principal contributions toward the project.”

When a participant signs an MOC, they are nominating for (or committing to) a specific amount of water from the RRVWSP. For instance, if a RRVWSP user nominates for 2 cubic feet per second (cfs) and decides within the 10-year period the water is not needed, the 2 cfs of water becomes available to other RRVWSP users.

If no other RRVWSP users want the relinquished water nominations, the Cities of Fargo and Grand Forks have committed to assuming unwanted nominations along with the associated financial commitments proportional to their vested interests in the project. The two cities are the largest of the 17 RRVWSP participants.

The RRVWSP will utilize a 72” diameter buried pipeline with a capacity of 165 cfs. To date, 152.37 cfs, are spoken for.

The following participants have signed MOCs: the Cities of Carrington, Cooperstown, Fargo, Grafton, Grand Forks, Hillsboro, Jamestown, Lisbon, Mayville, Valley City, Wahpeton, Washburn; McLean-Sheridan Rural Water District and Southeast Water Users District; as well as Dickey, LaMoure, and Sargent Counties. Richland County has approved joining the RRVWSP but has not yet submitted a signed MOC.

## Trail County Leaders Anticipate RRVWSP Participation Will Bring Big Benefits

Hear Hillsboro City Commission President Levi Reese, Mayville City Council Member and LAWA Director Bill Bohnsack, and Traill County Economic Development Executive Director Jim Murphy talk about the anticipated benefits of both cities' participation in the RRVWSP. [Click here to watch the video.](#)

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## 2025 Legislative Session Update

North Dakota's 2025 legislative session is past the halfway point and Red River Valley Water Supply Project (RRVWSP) representatives from Garrison Diversion Conservancy District (Garrison Diversion) and Lake Agassiz Water Authority (LAWA) have been busy supporting the project at the Capitol. Garrison Diversion and LAWA are co-sponsors of the state RRVWSP.

The Department of Water Resources Budget, House Bill 1020, continues to go through the legislative process. The House version proposes \$260 million in funding for the project. The funding represents the state's 75% cost share amount for the 2025-2027 biennium. "With that amount, we can continue to construct the Red River Valley Water Supply Project at a level that will allow us to complete it within the 10-year build schedule," says Brandon Bochenski, LAWA Vice Chairman and Grand Forks Mayor. The Cities of Fargo and Grand Forks are the largest of the 17 cities, water systems, and counties signed up to receive water from the RRVWSP.

End users of the emergency and supplemental water supply would be responsible for the remaining 25% cost share totaling \$86.7 million for the upcoming biennium. The funding would come from the state's Water Infrastructure Revolving Loan Fund (WIRLF), which includes a 40-year repayment at 2% interest. The state and local shares together total \$346.7 million for the 2025-2027 biennium.

"Some of the ways we can increase affordability is to increase the number of end users to spread costs out more, seek federal funding, and maintain the cost-efficient 10-year construction schedule," says Merri Mooridian, Deputy Program Manager of RRVWSP Administration and Garrison Diversion Administrative Officer.

The requested \$260 million in HB 1020 reflects the funding needed to accomplish the work plan for the upcoming biennium. The work plan includes the installation of 40 miles of buried pipeline and the final design of the biota water treatment plant, McClusky Canal Pump Station, main pump station, and ground storage reservoirs.

The Senate will now be considering HB 1020.

During the 2023 legislative session, state lawmakers approved legislative intent for the RRVWSP totaling \$953 million in future funding. The legislature is scheduled to wrap up by May 9<sup>th</sup>, which is the 80<sup>th</sup> day of the 2025 legislative session.

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## **Garrison Diversion Board Welcomes New Chairman**

Garrison Diversion Conservancy District (Garrison Diversion) Board of Directors has a new Chairman. After a four-year term, Ward County Director Alan Water passed the gavel to Jay Anderson of Ransom County in January. Anderson is a long-time Director who has been heavily involved in the water industry in North Dakota since 1994.

Anderson recognizes a lot of positive things have come from developing water systems across the state. “What we do at Garrison Diversion is important and I’m glad to work with other very knowledgeable Board members with diverse backgrounds who are willing to be involved and have purpose being involved with this Board,” says Anderson.

He served on the Ransom-Sargent Rural Water Board from 1994 to 2006. In 1994, he helped start the Central area of the Southeast Water Users District. He currently serves as a Director on the Southeast Water Users Board and is a past President. He was elected to the Garrison Diversion Board in 2013 and serves on the Red River Valley Committee.

“I think the Red River Valley Water Supply Project is one of the most vital and important water projects the state has seen and will have a bigger impact than we can even estimate. I think there is great potential here with the Missouri River,” he says.

Counties, water systems, and cities in southeast North Dakota will benefit from the RRVWSP as the drought mitigation project will meet the area’s emergency, supplemental, and industrial water supply needs. In fact, the following entities in Anderson’s neck of the woods have signed memorandums of commitment (MOCs) to join the RRVWSP: Southeast Water Users District, Sargent County, Dickey County, and Lisbon, while Richland County’s MOC is pending.

“We are happy to welcome Jay as the new Chair,” says Duane DeKrey, Garrison Diversion General Manager. “And we thank Alan for the past four years as the head of the Board.”