

GARRISON DIVERSION CONSERVANCY DISTRICT
PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE

10:30 AM

AGENDA

- I. Call to Order & Pledge of Allegiance
- II. Roll Call
- III. Public Comment Period
- IV. Reading and Consideration of Minutes
 - A. **>December 16, 2025**
- V. Strategic Communications Task Order
 - A. **>TO 1.53 - 2027 Strategic Communications Services**
- VI. Public Relations Activities
 - A. Submitted Articles
 - 1. >ND Water October 2026
 - 2. >ND Water July 2026
 - 3. >ND Water June 2026
 - 4. >ND Water April 2026
 - 5. >ND Water March 2026
 - 6. >ND Water January 2026
 - B. Submitted News Releases
 - 1. >Water Supply Assistance Grant Awards
 - a) 8-20-26 – Garrison Diversion Awards \$219,483 in WSAG
 - b) 6-08-26 – Garrison Diversion Awards \$261,656 in WSAG
 - 2. >5-8-26 – ANS Awareness – GDCCD/NDGF
 - C. Garrison Diversion & RRVWSP News Articles
 - 1. >10-7-26 Bismarck Tribune
 - 2. >10-3-26 Herald Press
 - 3. >9-28-26 Gov. Armstrong News Release
 - 4. >6-8-26 Foster County Independent
 - 5. >6-3-26 Minot Daily
 - 6. >4-21-26 The Beacon
 - 7. >4-17-26 Bismarck Tribune

8. >3-17-26 Sen Hoeven News Release
 9. >3-12-26 Minot Daily
 10. >3-11-26 Sen Hoeven News Release
 11. >2-12-26 Op Ed. R Haase
 12. >2-8-26 St Louis Post-Dispatch
 13. >2-5-26 AgDaily
 14. >2-3-26 Missouri Times
 15. >1-22-26 AgDaily
 16. >1-15-26 Sen Hoeven News Release
 17. >1-10-26 Bismarck Tribune
 18. >12-22-25 Foster County Independent
 19. >12-15-25 Foster County Independent
- D. RRVWSP Newsletter
1. >2026 Newsletter Analytics
 2. >3rd Quarter 2026
 3. >2nd Quarter 2026
 4. >1st Quarter 2026
- E. Upcoming Conferences and PR Events
1. GDCCD/HDR Joint Social – December 8, Bismarck
 2. >63rd Annual Joint Water Convention & Irrigation Workshop – Dec. 8-10, Bismarck
 3. Red River Basin Commission Conference – Jan. 19-21, Grand Forks
 4. 41st Annual ND Rural Water Expo – Feb. 2-4, Bismarck
- F. Other Business

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

25-33

GARRISON DIVERSION CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE

**Video Conference
December 16, 2025**

A meeting of the Public Relations Committee of the Garrison Diversion Conservancy District was held on December 16, 2025, by video conference. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Boote at 8:30 a.m.

DIRECTORS PRESENT

Committee Chairperson Nikki Boote
Director Greg Bischoff
Director Steve Forde
Director Brandon Krueger
Secretary Kimberly Cook

DIRECTORS ABSENT

Board Chairman Jay Anderson
Director Margo Knorr
Director Alan Walter

OTHERS PRESENT

Duane DeKrey, General Manager, Garrison Diversion Conservancy District, Carrington, North Dakota
Kip Kovar, District Engineer, Garrison Diversion Conservancy District, Carrington, North Dakota
Lisa Schafer, Executive Assistant, Garrison Diversion Conservancy District, Carrington, North Dakota
Heather Syverson, Communications Strategist, Advanced Engineering & Environmental Services (AE2S) Communications

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

READING OF THE MINUTES

Motion by Director Forde to dispense with a reading of the July 17, 2025, Public Relations Committee minutes and approve them as distributed. Second by Director Bischoff. Upon voice vote, motion carried.

2026 STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS TASK ORDER

Kimberly Cook, Communications Director, Garrison Diversion, called on Heather Syverson, Communications Strategist, AE2S Communications, to review the 2026 Strategic Communications Task Order GF 1.50.

Ms. Syverson referenced the communications task order (Annex I) for \$73,598, a decrease of approximately \$30,000 from the previous year, due to reduced project activities and no legislative requirements. She notes the task order includes basic services such as social media, newsletters, videography, graphic design, and educational materials.

Motion by Director Bischoff to recommend approval of the 2026 Strategic Communications Task Order GF 1.50 in the amount of \$73,598 to the Executive Committee for approval. Second by Director Forde. Upon roll call vote, the following directors voted aye: Boote, Bischoff, Forde and Krueger. Those voting nay: none. Absent: J. Anderson, Knorr and Walter. Motion carried.

PUBLIC RELATIONS ACTIVITIES

Submitted Articles - - Ms. Cook reviewed copies of articles submitted to the *ND Water* magazine for the months of October, November and December on behalf of Garrison Diversion.

News Releases - - Ms. Cook also reviewed news releases prepared by Garrison Diversion and submitted to local and daily newspapers relating to Garrison Diversion's Recreation Grant and Water Supply Assistance Grant programs.

News Articles - - Ms. Cook called attention to various news articles published from August through December in state and local newspapers relating to Garrison Diversion and the RRVWSP.

Red River Valley Water Supply Project (RRVWSP) Newsletter - - Ms. Cook next referenced the third and fourth quarter RRVWSP newsletter for 2025. She also reviewed the 2025 newsletter analytics, noting the newsletter has consistently high open rates, which have been as high as 52%.

Ms. Syverson provided insights into recent newsletter performance, noting lower open and click rates for the latest quarter but expecting improvements since the fourth quarter newsletter was just recently posted.

Meetings and Conferences - - The committee discussed upcoming events, including the RRVWSP Educational Session being held in Fargo on December 17 and the Red River Basin Commission Conference scheduled in January at Winnipeg.

Ms. Cook mentioned the completion of Garrison Diversion's 2024 Annual Report and the creation of new display pieces for public relations events.

OTHER

Motion by Director Bischoff to adjourn the meeting. Second by Director Krueger. Upon voice vote, motion carried.

The meeting concluded at 8:50 a.m.

(SEAL)

Nikki Boote, Chairman

Kimberly Cook, Secretary



Black & Veatch Corporation

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

Task Order GF 1.50 – 2026 Strategic Communications Services

Effective Date – January 1, 2026

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

I. PROJECT BACKGROUND.....	1
II. TASK ORDER OBJECTIVES.....	2
III. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS.....	2
IV. BASIC SERVICES.....	3
V. DELIVERABLES.....	4
VI. SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF OWNER.....	4
VII. FEE.....	5
VIII. PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE	5
IX. DOCUMENTS INCORPORATED BY REFERENCE AND ATTACHMENTS	5
X. ACCEPTANCE.....	5

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 (BWTP). 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 Project's overall 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 working with Garrison Diversion's in-house staff.

II. TASK ORDER OBJECTIVES

1. With the RRVWSP project under construction and the GDCD and the Lake Agassiz Water Authority (LAWA) seeking significant funding from the State of North Dakota in the 2027 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 2026 legislative interim, which will include working with staff, LAWA, and public affairs consultants to develop messaging in support of the 2027 legislative request from the State of North Dakota.
3. 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 presentations, industry conferences, and special events.
5. Tracking and reporting of project media coverage as well as quarterly newsletter and social media analytics.
6. Providing website maintenance as requested for the RRVWSP, Garrison Diversion, and the 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 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:

- Task 1 – Strategic Communications Planning and Management
- Task 2 – Content Development
- Task 3 – Graphic Design
- Task 4 – Videography
- Task 5 – Website Maintenance

1. Task 1 – Strategic Communications Planning and Management

Task 1 includes overall management of Project Development related to communications and public outreach, the strategic development of and deployment of communication efforts for various audiences, Communications Team meetings with Garrison Diversion staff, and analytics report development for the newsletter, social media, and websites.

2. Task 2 – Content Development

Task 2 includes working with Garrison Diversion staff and LAWA members to plan, coordinate, strategize, and create communications materials to be disseminated as articles, news releases, handouts, mailers, presentations, and website content to educate and engage stakeholders, end users, affected landowners, legislators, the media, and the public on key areas of the Project. This includes the quarterly RRVWSP newsletter, weekly social media posts, as well as on-call communications assistance. This task includes working with Garrison Diversion staff, LAWA members, and public affairs consultants to respond to requests for information during the legislative interim, in support of the current biennium and the upcoming 2027 legislative session.

Media monitoring and strategic message development to respond to media inquiries, misinformation, and media coverage opportunities are also included in this task. Additionally, the task includes the annual costs of the Constant Contact email marketing account utilized to send the newsletter, event invitations, and other Project updates, as well as Meltwater, a program that tracks traditional media and social media sentiments about the Project, Garrison Diversion, and LAWA.

3. Task 3 – Graphic Design

Task 3 includes the development of graphic illustrations in support of the RRVWSP in presentations, maps, flyers/handouts, videos, websites, invitations, poster boards, and conference booths. This task also includes graphic design services as described above to provide an extension of staff on an on-call basis.

4. Task 4 – Videography

Task 4 includes the development of videos in support of the RRVWSP for placement on websites, presentations, social media, and the RRVWSP newsletter. This task also includes videography services as described above to provide an extension of staff on an on-call basis.

5. Task 5 – Website Maintenance

Task 5 provides on-call website maintenance services for Garrison Diversion, LAWA, and RRVWSP sites as needed. Services include fixing issues that may develop with the three sites, as well as aiding Garrison Diversion staff with creating, removing webpages, or adding new functions to the sites on an as-needed basis. The annual cost of website hosting services and fees for the RRVWSP, Garrison Diversion, and LAWA websites are included.

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 X, as well as analytics reports.
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 14 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 seventy-three thousand five hundred ninety-eight dollars (\$73,598).

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, 2026, with anticipated completion on or before December 31, 2026.

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 sign and date this document. You will receive an electronic copy via email upon execution of the required signatures.

By:
Duane DeKrey, General Manager
Garrison Diversion Conservancy District

By:
Paul Boersma, Vice President
Black & Veatch Corporation

Dated: _____

Dated: _____



Garrison Division Conservancy District
Task Order GF 1.50 Communication Services
BV Project No. xxxxxx
5941

ATTACHMENT A
Fee Estimate Worksheet

35941		Position	PM	Com I	Com II	Com III	Com I	Com II	Com III	AE2S Level of Effort (hrs)	Labor Detail	Labor Cost	Travel	Printing	Misc	Survey Equip	Recording Fees / Repro	Sub1 Markup	Total Expense	AE2S Level of Effort (hrs)	AE2S Labor Cost	Direct Expense	TOTAL
Task	Lead Firm																						
IV. BASIC SERVICES																							
1	AE2S	Strategic Communications Planning and Management	40	60	36	8	0	144	\$24,324.08		\$400	\$0	\$0	\$1,237	\$1,636	144	\$24,324	\$1,636	\$25,960				
A	AE2S	Client Communications / Meetings	32	32	32	8	0	104	\$17,631	\$400				\$902	\$1,302	104	\$17,631	\$1,302	\$18,933				
B	AE2S	Analytics and reporting	0	12	0	0	0	12	\$1,823					\$91	\$91	12	\$1,823	\$91	\$1,914				
C	AE2S	Communications strategy	8	16	4	0	0	28	\$4,870					\$244	\$244	28	\$4,870	\$244	\$5,113				
2	AE2S	Content Development	12	84	4	0	0	100	\$16,158.38		\$0	\$3,662	\$0	\$990	\$4,653	100	\$16,158	\$4,653	\$20,811				
A	AE2S	Quarterly digital newsletter production	0	32	0	0	0	32	\$4,861					\$276	\$938	32	\$4,861	\$938	\$5,800				
B	AE2S	Media monitoring and potential responses	4	16	0	0	0	20	\$3,389		\$3,000			\$87	\$87	12	\$3,389	\$87	\$6,708				
C	AE2S	Facebook, Twitter, Youtube oversight & monitoring	0	8	4	0	0	12	\$1,739					\$182	\$182	24	\$3,646	\$182	\$3,828				
D	AE2S	Quarterly social media planning, scheduling	0	24	0	0	0	24	\$3,646					\$126	\$126	12	\$2,524	\$126	\$2,650				
E	AE2S	Interim legislative support	8	4	0	0	0	12	\$2,524														
3	AE2S	Graphic Design	0	8	24	80	0	112	\$13,554.64		\$0	\$300	\$0	\$693	\$993	112	\$13,555	\$993	\$14,547				
A	AE2S	Graphic design	0	8	24	80	0	112	\$13,555		\$300			\$693	\$993	112	\$13,555	\$993	\$14,547				
4	AE2S	Videography	0	8	32	4	0	44	\$5,861.58		\$600	\$0	\$0	\$323	\$923	44	\$5,862	\$923	\$6,785				
A	AE2S	Videography	0	8	32	4	0	44	\$5,862		\$600			\$323	\$923	44	\$5,862	\$923	\$6,785				
5	AE2S	Website Maintenance	0	8	0	0	20	28	\$4,253.76		\$0	\$979	\$0	\$0	\$262	\$1,241	28	\$4,254	\$1,241	\$5,494			
A	AE2S	Website Maintenance	0	8	0	0	20	28	\$4,254					\$979	\$262	\$1,241	28	\$4,254	\$1,241	\$5,494			
		Total for Basic Services	52	168	96	92	20	428	\$64,152.44		\$1,000	\$300	\$4,641		\$0	\$0	\$3,505	\$9,446	428	\$64,152	\$9,446	\$73,598	

Task Order GF 1.53 – 2027 Strategic Communications Services

Task Order Effective Date: January 1, 2027

TASK ORDER EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

REQUEST

Consideration and approval of a task order in the amount of \$101,000 for professional services to develop, implement, and support the Red River Valley Water Supply Project's (RRVWSP) communication program.

NEED AND BENEFIT

The task order in a continuation of the communication services completed for the RRVWSP and Garrison Diversion Conservancy District since 2017.

The benefit of this task order is to allow Garrison Diversion to maintain communications and outreach activities throughout year, including the 2027 North Dakota legislative session.

TASK ORDER SUMMARY

The services to be provided by the communications and management team are fully described in the attached Task Order. The following summarizes each of the major tasks.

Basic Services:

	Fee
1) Strategic Communications Planning and Management	\$30,738.00
2) Content Development	\$32,579.00
3) Graphic Design	\$21,229.00
4) Videography	\$10,109.00
5) Website Maintenance	\$6,345.00
Totals	\$101,000.00

Special Services: There are no unique or specialized services required under this Task Order.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The RRVWSP will be seeking significant funding from the State of North Dakota during the 2027 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. Elements of this final design Task Order are:

- Coordination of legislative outreach materials with Garrison Diversion staff, Lake Agassiz Water Authority (LAWA) staff, and public affairs consultants,
- Assisting Garrison Diversion staff with education, advocacy, and outreach to provide updated information about the project,
- Planning and support for events that elevate the status of the RRVWSP, Garrison Diversion, and LAWA,
- Tracking and reporting of project media coverage as well as quarterly newsletter and social media analytics, and
- On-call website maintenance for RRVWSP, Garrison Diversion, and LAWA websites.

PROJECT SCHEDULE

The Task Order covers communications and outreach professional services for Garrison Diversion for the 2027 calendar year.



Black & Veatch Corporation

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

Task Order GF 1.53 – 2027 Strategic Communications Services

Funding Source – GDCD General Fund

Effective Date – January 1, 2027

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

I. PROJECT BACKGROUND.....	1
II. TASK ORDER OBJECTIVES.....	2
III. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS.....	2
IV. BASIC SERVICES.....	3
V. DELIVERABLES.....	4
VI. SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF OWNER.....	4
VII. FEE.....	5
VIII. PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE.....	5
IX. DOCUMENTS INCORPORATED BY REFERENCE AND ATTACHMENTS.....	5
X. ACCEPTANCE.....	5

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 co-sponsors Garrison Diversion Conservancy District (Garrison Diversion, Owner) and Lake Agassiz Water Authority (LAWA), 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 plan. 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 project under construction and seeking significant funding from the State of North Dakota during the 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 2027 legislative session, which will include working with Garrison Diversion staff, LAWA staff, 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. 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, LAWA, and the Project, including industry conferences and unique 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 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 includes the development of messaging in support of the legislative requests in support of the RRVWSP as well as creation of materials including testimony, presentations, graphics, videos, and handouts related to the 2027 legislative session. This includes working with Garrison Diversion staff, LAWA staff, 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 and LAWA staff and 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 includes the creation of four quarterly social media plans for Facebook, as well as daily monitoring for comments and the development of responses, plus graphic design for social media posts.

6. Task 6 – Website Maintenance

On-call website maintenance services provided for the Garrison Diversion, Lake Agassiz Water Authority, and Red River Valley Water Supply Project sites. This includes fixing any issues that may develop with the three sites, as well as providing help to Garrison Diversion and LAWA 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 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, LAWA, 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 14 calendar days after receiving 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 One Thousand Dollars (\$101,000).

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, 2027, with anticipated completion on or before December 31, 2027.

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) 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

DRAFT



Garrison Diversion Conservancy District

Task Order GF 1.53 - 2027 Strategic Communications Services

BV Project No. xxxxxx

Black & Veatch and Subconsultants

Task	Lead Firm	Position	Expense Detail	Sub Consulta	Sub Consult	Expense Detail		TOTAL	TOTAL	TOTAL	TOTAL
		Task Description						BV Level of Effort (hrs)	BV Labor Cost	Direct Expense	Fee
			Misc	AE2S Hours	AE2S Sub Costs	AE2S Sub Markup	Total Direct Expense				
IV. BASIC SERVICES											
1	AE2S	Strategic Communications Planning and Management	\$178	152	\$29,104	\$1,456	\$30,738	0	\$0	\$30,738	\$30,738
A	AE2S	Client Communications / Meetings	\$178	120	\$23,492	\$1,175	\$24,845	0	\$0	\$24,845	\$24,845
B	AE2S	Analytics and reporting		12	\$1,962	\$98	\$2,060	0	\$0	\$2,060	\$2,060
C	AE2S	Communications strategy		20	\$3,650	\$183	\$3,833	0	\$0	\$3,833	\$3,833
2	AE2S	Content Development	\$0	162	\$31,027	\$1,552	\$32,579	0	\$0	\$32,579	\$32,579
A	AE2S	Quarterly digital newsletter production		40	\$7,216	\$361	\$7,577	0	\$0	\$7,577	\$7,577
B	AE2S	Media monitoring and potential responses		20	\$6,650	\$333	\$6,983	0	\$0	\$6,983	\$6,983
C	AE2S	Facebook, Twitter, Youtube oversight & monitoring		12	\$1,962	\$98	\$2,060	0	\$0	\$2,060	\$2,060
D	AE2S	Quarterly social media planning, scheduling		24	\$3,925	\$196	\$4,121	0	\$0	\$4,121	\$4,121
E	AE2S	Legislative support		66	\$11,274	\$564	\$11,838	0	\$0	\$11,838	\$11,838
3	AE2S	Graphic Design	\$0	152	\$20,218	\$1,011	\$21,229	0	\$0	\$21,229	\$21,229
A	AE2S	Graphic design		152	\$20,218	\$1,011	\$21,229	0	\$0	\$21,229	\$21,229
4	AE2S	Videography	\$0	56	\$9,628	\$481	\$10,109	0	\$0	\$10,109	\$10,109
A	AE2S	Videography		56	\$9,628	\$481	\$10,109	0	\$0	\$10,109	\$10,109
5	AE2S	Website Maintenance	\$0	32	\$6,043	\$302	\$6,345	0	\$0	\$6,345	\$6,345
A	AE2S	Website Maintenance		32	\$6,043	\$302	\$6,345	0	\$0	\$6,345	\$6,345
PROJECT TOTALS			\$178	554	\$96,020	\$4,802	\$101,000	0	\$0	\$101,000	\$101,000



Garrison Diversion Conservancy District
Task Order GF 1.53 - 2027 Strategic Communications Services
BV Project No. xxxxxx

Task	Lead Firm	Position	PM II	Com III	Com III	Com I	Com III	Labor Detail	Labor Detail	Expense Detail	Expense Detail	Expense Detail		TOTAL	TOTAL	TOTAL	TOTAL
		Task Description	Sr Consultant	Project Manager	Digital Storyteller	Graphic Designer	Website Developer	AE2S Level of Effort (hrs)	Labor Cost	Travel	Printing	Misc	Total Expense	AE2S Level of Effort (hrs)	AE2S Labor Cost	Direct Expense	Fee
1	AE2S	Strategic Communications Planning and Managem	44	60	40	8	0	152	\$28,704	\$400	\$0	\$0	\$400	152	\$28,704	\$400	\$29,104
A	AE2S	Client Communications / Meetings	40	40	32	8		120	\$23,092	\$400			\$400	120	\$23,092	\$400	\$23,492
B	AE2S	Analytics and reporting		12				12	\$1,962				\$0	12	\$1,962	\$0	\$1,962
C	AE2S	Communications strategy	4	8	8			20	\$3,650				\$0	20	\$3,650	\$0	\$3,650
2	AE2S	Content Development	16	118	12	16	0	162	\$27,352	\$0	\$0	\$3,675	\$3,675	162	\$27,352	\$3,675	\$31,027
A	AE2S	Quarterly digital newsletter production		40				40	\$6,541			\$675	\$675	40	\$6,541	\$675	\$7,216
B	AE2S	Media monitoring and potential responses	4	16				20	\$3,650			\$3,000	\$3,000	20	\$3,650	\$3,000	\$6,650
C	AE2S	Facebook, Twitter, Youtube oversight & monitoring		8	4			12	\$1,962				\$0	12	\$1,962	\$0	\$1,962
D	AE2S	Quarterly social media planning, scheduling		24				24	\$3,925				\$0	24	\$3,925	\$0	\$3,925
E	AE2S	Legislative support	12	30	8	16		66	\$11,274				\$0	66	\$11,274	\$0	\$11,274
3	AE2S	Graphic Design	0	8	24	120	0	152	\$19,918	\$0	\$300	\$0	\$300	152	\$19,918	\$300	\$20,218
A	AE2S	Graphic design		8	24	120		152	\$19,918		\$300		\$300	152	\$19,918	\$300	\$20,218
4	AE2S	Videography	0	8	40	8	0	56	\$8,828	\$800	\$0	\$0	\$800	56	\$8,828	\$800	\$9,628
A	AE2S	Videography		8	40	8		56	\$8,828	\$800			\$800	56	\$8,828	\$800	\$9,628
5	AE2S	Website Maintenance	0	8	0	0	24	32	\$6,043	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	32	\$6,043	\$0	\$6,043
A	AE2S	Website Maintenance		8			24	32	\$6,043			\$0	\$0	32	\$6,043	\$0	\$6,043
Total for Basic Services			60	202	116	152	24	554	\$90,846	\$1,200	\$300	\$3,675	\$5,175	554	\$90,846	\$5,175	\$96,020

Top O' the Day Golf Scramble Drives Scholarship Success in Carrington

By Kimberly Cook

The greens at the CrossRoads Golf Course in Carrington were filled with friendly competition, camaraderie, and a shared commitment to education as golfers gathered for the 22nd Annual Top O' the Day Golf Scramble, benefiting the Dushinske & Jamison Water Resources Scholarship Endowment.

This year's event drew an impressive 142 golfers and was supported by 18 sponsors, whose generosity helped make the tournament another successful fundraising effort. The annual scramble has become a treasured tradition, bringing together participants from across the region to enjoy a day on the course while investing in future generations through scholarship support.

For more than two decades, the tournament has served as both a premier summer golf event and an important fundraiser, bringing together community members, businesses, and supporters for a day dedicated to a worthy cause.

Players competed for top honors in the popular scramble format, with teams showcasing both skill and teamwork throughout the day. Tournament winners were Tyler and Ashley Reisenauer and Arick and Sabrina Scherr. The championship team posted a remarkable score of 55, earning top honors and first-place prize money.

The third-place team of Ryan Anderson, Alex Belquist, Tyler Cook and Lucas Schumacher carded a score of 57 to secure a place among the tournament's top finishers.

One of the tournament's unique traditions is recognizing the team that finishes in the place equivalent to number of years running. This year's 22nd-place team recorded a score of 65 and included: Tom Erdmann, Shawn Gaddie, Brent Bogar and Spencer Halvorson.

In addition to the team competition, golfers had plenty of opportunities to test their skills during special contests held throughout the course. These games added an extra layer of fun and friendly rivalry to the day.



22nd Place

Tom Erdmann
Brent Bogar
Shawn Gaddie
Spencer Halvorson

- **Hole #2** Shortest Drive Men: *David Lang*
- **Hole #4** Jamison Family Closest-to-the-Pin Second Shot: *Caleb Rogelstad*
- **Hole #7** Longest Drive Women: *Sabrina Scherr*
- **Hole #11** Chipping Contest: *David Reisinger*
- **Hole #11** Longest Drive Men: *Tanner Sperling*
- **Hole #14** Closest-to-the-Pin Second Shot: *Kent Hewitt*
- **Hole #15** Shortest Drive Women: *Alison Ritter*
- **Hole #18** Longest Putt: *Cooper Erickson*
- **Hole #18** Tees in a Jar: *Jay Anderson*
- **Putting Contest:** *Kim Johnson*

While competition provided plenty of excitement, the event's true purpose remained at the forefront. Proceeds from the scramble support the Dushinske & Jamison Water Resources Scholarship Endowment, helping students pursue further educational opportunities.

Organizers extend their sincere appreciation to every golfer, sponsor, and supporter who helped make this year's event a success. With strong participation and enthusiastic sponsor support, the 22nd Annual Top O' the Day Golf Scramble once again demonstrated how a day on the golf course can make a lasting impact far beyond the final hole.

THANK YOU

The success of the 22nd Annual Top O' the Day Golf Scramble would not have been possible without the support of the event's sponsors:

- Advanced Engineering & Environmental Services
- American Pipe
- Apex Engineering Group
- Bank Forward/Insure Forward
- Bartlett & West, Inc.
- Black & Veatch
- Burian & Associates
- Carstensen Contracting
- Dakota Central
- First International Bank & Trust
- Gate City Bank – Carrington/Jamestown
- Legacy Financial Partners
- ND Irrigation Association
- ND Rural Water Systems Association
- David & Connie Sprynczynatyk
- 201 Aesthetics
- Ulteig
- Vogel Law Firm



1st Place

Tyler and Ashley Reisenauer
Sabrina and Arick Scherr



3rd Place

Lucas Schumacher - Alex Belquist
Tyler Cook - Ryan Anderson

Garrison Diversion AWARDS \$219,483 through the Water Supply Assistance Grant Program

Access to a reliable water supply is essential for homes, farms, ranches, and businesses across North Dakota. To help make new water connections more affordable and support critical water infrastructure needs, the Garrison Diversion Conservancy District (Garrison Diversion) continues to invest in communities through its MR&I (municipal, rural, and industrial) Water Supply Assistance Grant Program.

The program helps offset the cost of connecting new customers to rural water systems within Garrison Diversion's member counties. Funding is available for residential, livestock, and business water hookups, making it easier for residents and producers to access high-quality rural water services.

In addition, the grant program assists municipalities and water districts facing extraordinary operation, maintenance, and replacement (OM&R) expenses. These funds can help address emergency situations that threaten water delivery, create health and safety concerns, or have the potential to damage other infrastructure if left unaddressed.

"Rural water enhances the quality of life for North Dakotans and strengthens our communities," said MR&I Committee Chair Larry Kassian. "Garrison Diversion is proud to support this vital program and contribute to the well-being of our district."

At its August meeting, the MR&I Committee approved \$219,483 in grant funding for 38 rural water users throughout the district. These grants will support new water service connections for homes, livestock operations, and businesses across the region.

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

- Barnes Rural Water District - \$7,318 for one customer hookup
- Cass Rural Water Users District - \$6,048 for one customer hookup
- Central Plains Water District - \$17,888 for four customer hookups
- East Central Regional Water District - \$118,090 for 16 customer hookups
- Greater Ramsey Water District - \$5,340 for one customer hookup
- McKenzie County Water Resource District - \$5,826 for three customer hookups
- McLean-Sheridan Rural Water District - \$5,648 for one customer hookup
- North Prairie Regional Water District - \$6,870 for two customer hookups
- Southeast Water Users District - \$21,375 for four customer hookups
- Stutsman Rural Water District - \$25,080 for five customer hookups

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

Eligibility requirements state the service location must be 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.

For complete program guidelines and application materials, visit www.garrisondiversion.org

The Past, Present AND Future of Garrison Diversion Conservancy District

By Kimberly Cook

For more than 60 years, Garrison Diversion Conservancy District (Garrison Diversion) has helped shape water initiatives in North Dakota. From irrigation and drought protection to community water supplies and recreation, Garrison Diversion's role remains essential to sustaining the state's quality of life.

A Brief History

The term "Garrison Diversion" is often used interchangeably to refer to the Garrison Diversion Conservancy District and the Garrison Diversion Unit (GDU) Project. In simple terms, the GDU Project is a federal water project, and Garrison Diversion is the state-created agency responsible for helping implement and manage that project. Over time, the scope of Garrison Diversion has evolved, but its core purpose — supporting water needs across North Dakota — remains unchanged.

The GDU Project traces its roots to the Flood Control Act of 1944, later renamed the Pick-Sloan Missouri Basin Program. This federal initiative led to the construction of dams along the Missouri River to provide flood control, navigation, irrigation, and hydropower.

As part of the plan, the federal government promised the state of North Dakota more than one million acres of irrigation to compensate for farmland lost to flooding due to the construction of the dams. However, further studies revealed that soils in northwestern North Dakota were not suitable for large-scale irrigation under federal standards. In response, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation revised the project. Instead of irrigating those areas, the plan shifted to divert water from the Missouri River via Lake Sakakawea near Garrison Dam to the eastern part

of the state. This revised approach became known as the "Garrison Diversion." Key milestones include:

- **1955:** Creation of the Garrison Diversion Conservancy District by the North Dakota Legislature under N.D. Century Code (CH. 61-24).
- **1965:** Congressional authorization to construct major project features of the Garrison Diversion Unit Principal Supply Works, including the McClusky and New Rockford Canals, Snake Creek Pumping Plant, and Oakes Test Area.
- **1986 and 2000:** Major federal reforms reshape the project's direction through the Reformulation Act and Dakota Water Resources Act.

Garrison Diversion's Role Today

The mission of Garrison Diversion is clear: *"To provide a reliable, high-quality, and affordable water supply to benefit the people of North Dakota."*

Garrison Diversion represents 28 member counties across North Dakota. Each county supports the conservancy district through a one-mill levy and elects a representative to its board for four-year terms. While dependable drinking water is a central goal, Garrison Diversion's work also supports agriculture, natural resource conservation, drought mitigation, water supply, and recreational opportunities statewide.

Supporting Agriculture and Natural Resources

Irrigation plays an important role in strengthening North Dakota's agriculture sector. Garrison Diversion supports irrigation development through partnerships with the North Dakota Irrigation Association. A key irrigation asset is the McClusky Canal, originally built as part of the GDU Project. Today, it serves as a water source for expanding irrigation in central North Dakota. Since 2010, irrigation development along the canal has grown significantly. Nearly 8,000 acres are currently irrigated.

In addition to agriculture, Garrison Diversion actively works with state and federal partners to protect and enhance natural resources through wildlife habitat mitigation, trail development, including portions of the North Country Trail, and environmental conservation efforts.



Constructing the Red River Valley Water Supply Project

One of Garrison Diversion's most important current initiatives is the Red River Valley Water Supply Project (RRVWSP). The project addresses a critical challenge: water supply in central and eastern North Dakota is often limited and unreliable, especially during drought conditions.

Construction began again this spring on the buried pipeline that will transport Missouri River water from the McClusky Canal to the Sheyenne River system. When complete, the RRVWSP could benefit nearly half of North Dakota's population by ensuring water availability when local sources fall short. Construction started in December 2020, and progress continues as pipeline installation and system design move forward.



Managing the Municipal, Rural, and Industrial Water Supply Program

Access to clean, reliable water is essential for communities, farms, and businesses. Garrison Diversion plays a key role in delivering that access through the Municipal, Rural, and Industrial (MR&I) Water Supply Program. Working alongside the North Dakota Department of Water Resources, Garrison Diversion helps administer hundreds of millions of authorized federal funding to benefit water supply infrastructure projects all over the state. To date, the MR&I program has awarded more than \$511 million to expand and improve water systems across North Dakota.

Garrison Diversion also operates a Water Supply Assistance Grant Program to help offset the cost of rural water hookups. The grant money can be utilized to support repairs and upgrades to critical water infrastructure and address urgent health, safety, or system reliability concerns.

In May, the Garrison Diversion MR&I Committee approved \$261,656 in Water Supply Assistance Grants.

The spring 2026 Water Supply Assistance Grant Program recipients include:

- Barnes Rural Water District: \$58,565 for six projects
- Cass Rural Water Users District: \$23,193 for three projects
- Central Plains Water District: \$6,006 for two projects
- East Central Regional Water District: \$32,430 for four projects
- McKenzie County Water Resource District: \$41,721 for six projects

- North Prairie Regional Water District: \$20,000 for two projects
- South Central Regional Water District: \$44,726 for six projects
- Southeast Water Users District: \$14,922 for four projects
- Stutsman Rural Water District: \$20,093 for seven projects

Investing in Recreation

Garrison Diversion also supports outdoor recreation. A standout example is the Chain of Lakes Recreation Area, four lakes located along the McClusky Canal. The “chain” includes East Park Lake, West Park Lake, Heckers Lake, and New Johns Lake. The popular lakes area offers fishing, camping, boating, hunting, and hiking supported by canal water that helps maintain stable lake levels.

Each year, 20% of the Garrison Diversion one-mill levy is dedicated to a Matching Recreation Grant Program, which has funded park improvements and playgrounds, campgrounds and trails, as well as community recreation facilities. Since 1990, approximately \$12.4 million has been awarded for recreation projects.

Operating and Maintaining Critical Infrastructure

Garrison Diversion is responsible for the operations and maintenance (O&M) of key GDU Project facilities through a cooperative agreement with the Bureau of Reclamation,

which owns the McClusky Canal, New Rockford Canal, and Snake Creek Pumping Plant.

Garrison Diversion employs skilled staff including a professional engineer, master electricians, certified diesel mechanic, painting and coating specialists, vegetative management specialists, and several heavy equipment operators. The O&M team members are based throughout central North Dakota including Carrington, McClusky, New Rockford, and Coleharbor. They maintain a fleet of equipment such as dozers, loaders, backhoes, trucks, excavators, and other specialized equipment.

Their expertise in canal maintenance, earth moving, and construction allows Garrison Diversion’s O&M staff to support federal and state agencies like the Bureau of Reclamation, North Dakota Department of Water Resources and the Game and Fish Department, as well as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Looking Ahead

As water demands grow, Garrison Diversion’s role is more important than ever. By investing in infrastructure, partnerships, and long-term planning, Garrison Diversion continues to protect and enhance the quality of life for people across the state.

Learn more by visiting garrisondiversion.org and follow Garrison Diversion on Facebook at *GDCCD.ND*.

Photo credit: Robin Wahl, Turtle Lake



Thankful for North Dakota's Drought Protection Investment

By Kimberly Cook

North Dakotans are in an enviable position in 2026. Not only are we one of just two states not experiencing drought conditions this spring, but we're also well on the way to protecting nearly half the state's population from the effects of droughts.

A MUCH-NEEDED DROUGHT PROJECT

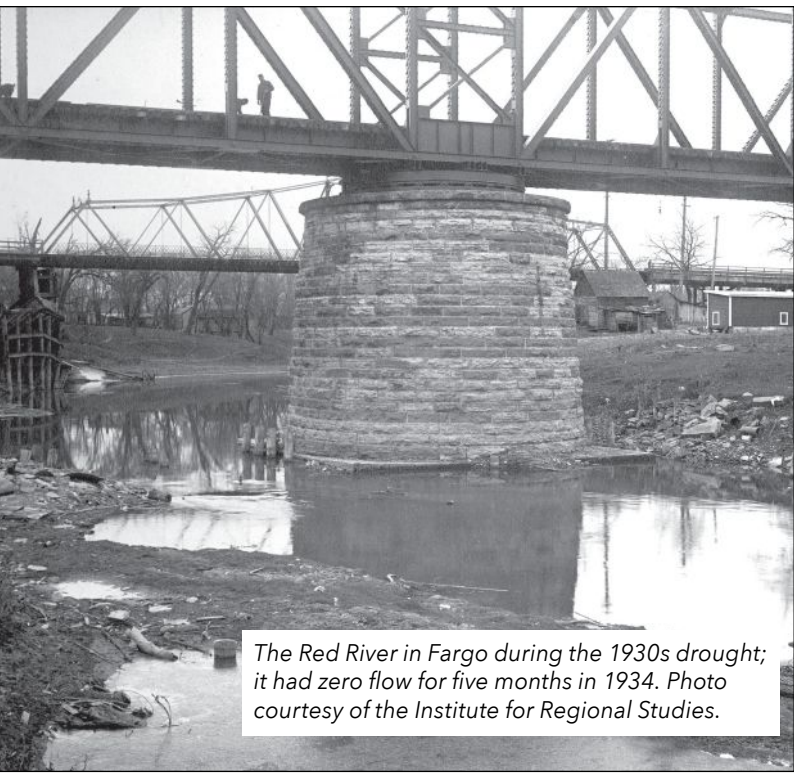
"I give a lot of credit to the state of North Dakota for recognizing the importance of implementing a long-term solution to protect central and eastern North Dakota from the devastating effects of future droughts," says Duane DeKrey, Garrison Diversion Conservancy District (Garrison Diversion) General Manager. Garrison Diversion is a co-sponsor of the Red River Valley Water Supply Project (RRVWSP) along with the Lake Agassiz Water Authority. "The estimated financial impact of a drought similar to the 1930s Dust Bowl is \$33 billion over 10 years. That would impact the entire state's economy."



Lake Agassiz
Water Authority



RED RIVER VALLEY
WATER SUPPLY PROJECT



The Red River in Fargo during the 1930s drought; it had zero flow for five months in 1934. Photo courtesy of the Institute for Regional Studies.

“The state has been an excellent partner in this drought mitigation project,” says Merri Mooridian, Deputy Program Manager of RRVWSP Administration and Garrison Diversion Administrative Officer. “Thanks to support from Sen. John Hoeven and Sen. Kevin Cramer, the federal government has also stepped up with \$150 million for the Eastern North Dakota Alternate Water Supply, a project that complements the RRVWSP by using existing Bureau of Reclamation infrastructure.”

The RRVWSP will provide an emergency and supplemental water supply to communities and rural water systems in central and eastern North Dakota by conveying water from the Missouri River via a 125-mile buried pipeline. When construction wraps up, nearly half of the state’s population will benefit from the additional water supply.

The RRVWSP has been in the works since the year 2000, when it was conceived as a federal, state and local project. However, without federal authorization, a state and local version of the project was developed due to the dire need for water resiliency. Construction began in 2021 thanks to support from the North Dakota State Water Commission (now called the Department of Water Resources). The project is anticipated to be complete by 2032.

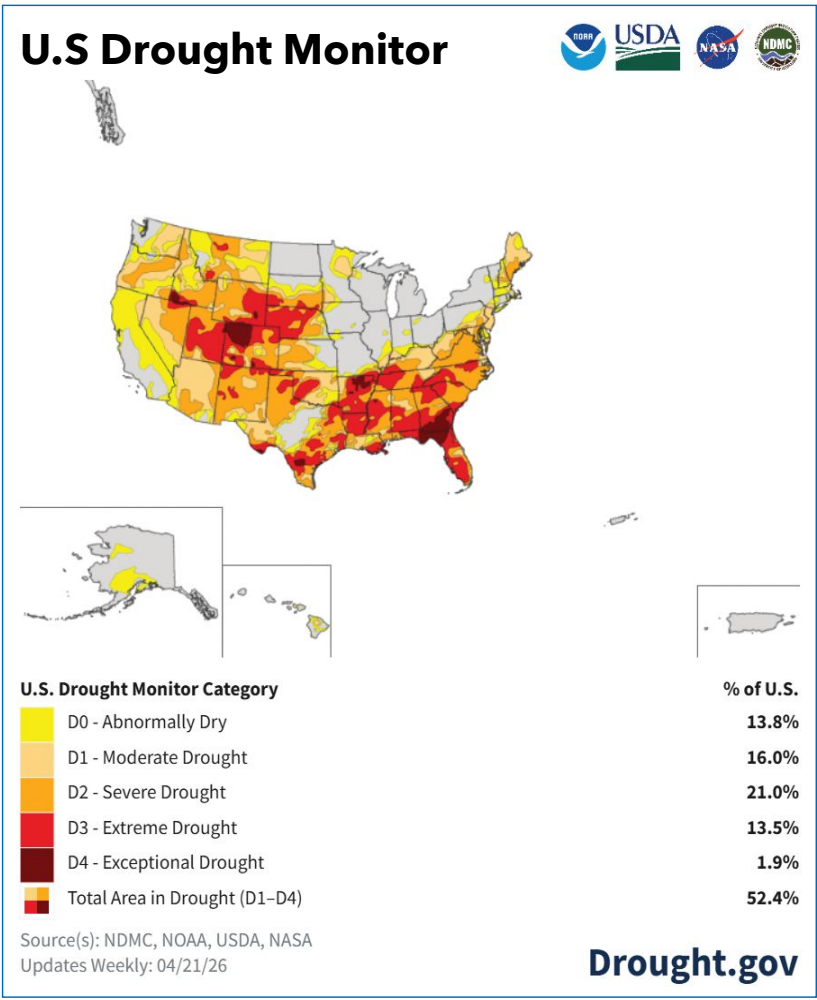
“It will be a relief when the construction wraps up and communities and rural water systems receive

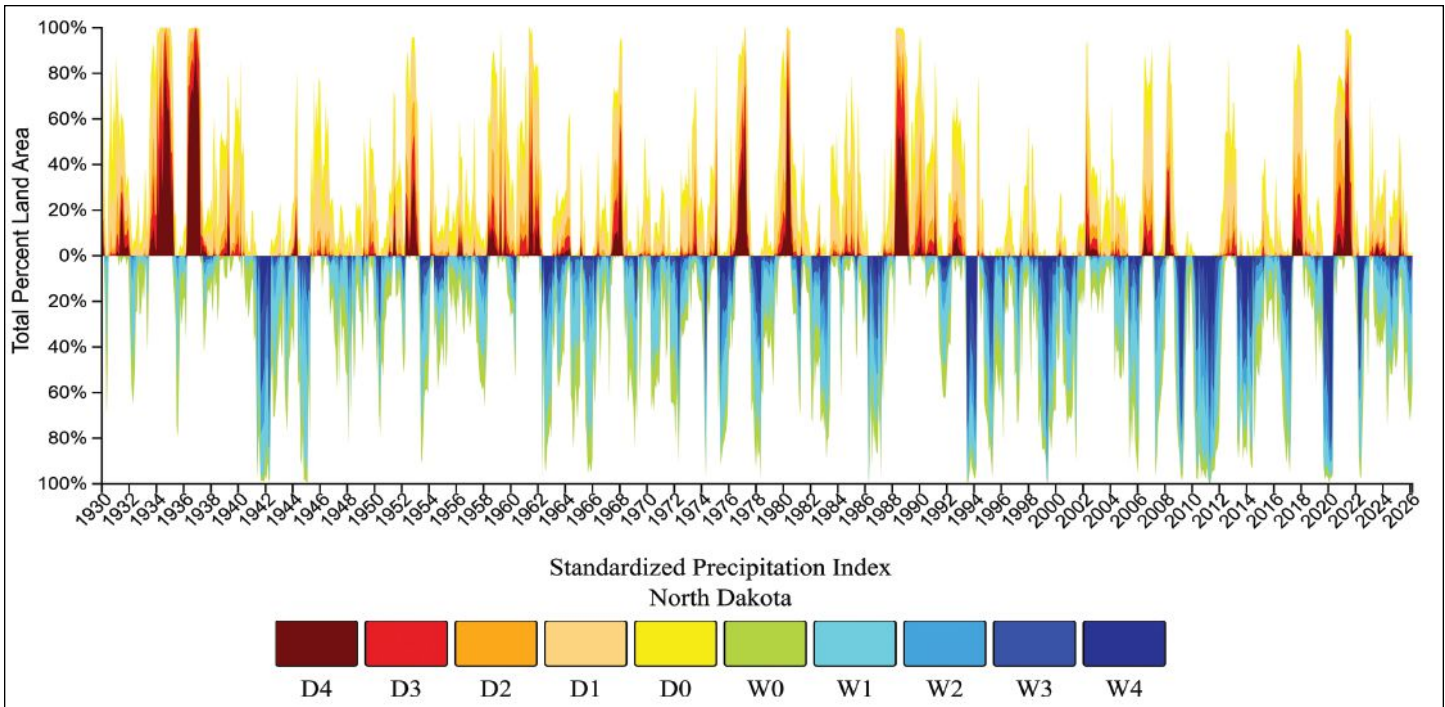
water from the Red River Valley Water Supply Project. This is a historic project, one that I’m certainly proud to have worked on during my career at Garrison Diversion,” says Kip Kovar, Deputy Program Manager for RRVWSP Engineering and Garrison Diversion Engineer.

Drought Conditions Across the U.S.

Having a project like the RRVWSP in place to protect North Dakota’s residents and economy is a true blessing when one considers what other states are facing. More than half of the United States experienced drought conditions during the spring of 2026. Though conditions may fluctuate by the time this article is published in June, a substantial improvement is unlikely as the nation heads into what are typically the hottest and driest months of the year.

In April, nearly 100% of Colorado was in a drought with 57.9% in the extreme or exceptional category. Some of the lowest recorded winter snowpack levels, combined with little rain and higher-than-normal spring temperatures, created a statewide emergency. In an effort to





The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) National Centers for Environmental Information created the Standardized Precipitation Index to illustrate how much observed precipitation deviates from the climatological average.

cut water use by 20%, the city of Denver issued watering restrictions along with a rule requiring restaurants to serve tap water to customers only on request, instead of automatically providing it to guests.

North Dakota's neighboring states are also experiencing drought conditions, though not to the same degree as Colorado. Fifty-seven percent of Montana, nearly 52% of South Dakota, and about one-fifth of Minnesota saw drought conditions this spring.

The U.S. Drought Monitor listed North Dakota and Michigan as the only two drought-free states as of April 21. Though we've been lucky so far in 2026, North Dakota is no stranger to serious dry spells. In fact, drought is an unfortunately common occurrence in our state. A historic drought during the 1930s affected water supplies and agriculture. Moderate droughts also occurred in the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Many people may remember the short but intense droughts in 2012, 2017, 2020, and 2021.

NORTH DAKOTA'S HIGHLY VARIABLE CLIMATE

North Dakota's climate is highly variable, with the potential for droughts and floods occurring during back-to-back years. In 2011, several areas of the state

experienced serious flooding, including Fargo and Minot. Even climatologists were surprised by the summer drought that followed in 2012.

In the chart above, the dark red areas indicate extremely dry conditions while the dark blue shows extremely wet periods. This illustration makes it easy to see how North Dakota continuously seesawed between wet and dry periods from 1930 through 2026.

"Our constant back and forth between too much and too little water highlights the importance of being prepared, which the state of North Dakota has helped its residents achieve by supporting drought and flood projects across the state," says DeKrey. "We should all be thankful to our state and federal delegation for supporting projects like the Red River Valley Water Supply Project. We're miles ahead of a lot of other states right now in terms of drought mitigation efforts."

Hopefully, North Dakota will remain drought-free as we head into the summer months. Though construction is underway and making steady progress, we are still a few years from being able to rely on the RRVWSP for an emergency and supplemental water supply.

Three RRVWSP Construction Contracts Awarded, 2025-2027 Biennium Funding Confirmed



As contractors prepare for the 2026 construction season of the Red River Valley Water Supply Project (RRVWSP) transmission pipeline, the State of North Dakota's interim Water Topics Overview Committee received an update on the Project's status. On March 26, Duane DeKrey, Garrison Diversion Conservancy District (Garrison Diversion) General Manager, shared a RRVWSP status update, plus work plans for the remainder of the 2025-2027 biennium. Garrison Diversion is a co-sponsor of the RRVWSP with Lake Agassiz Water Authority (LAWA).

"This year's construction season will begin with 30 miles of pipeline installed to date, with plans to construct 14 miles during the 2026 season," DeKrey says.

Garrison Diversion requested construction bids for Contracts 6B, 6C, and 7A last fall. The LAWA and Garrison Diversion boards of directors each voted to award the three contracts to Carstensen Contracting Inc. The combined value of the three contracts is \$184,701,941. Carstensen is based out of Dell Rapids, South Dakota, and has worked on other RRVWSP transmission pipeline contracts.

Current contracts include:

- **Contract 5C:** 8.1 miles from Bordulac Township to Bucephalia Township in Foster County. 1 mile remaining to be constructed in 2026, plus land restoration.
- **Contract 5D:** 10 miles of pipeline and a trenchless crossing of Pipestem Creek in western Foster County and eastern Wells County are complete. Land restoration begins in 2026.
- **Contract 6A:** 7.1 miles of pipeline from James River to Eastman Township in Foster County. 2.65 miles already in the ground, with restoration planned once construction wraps up.



- **Contract 6B/6C:** 17.6 miles of pipe in McKinnon, Sutton and Revere Townships in Foster and Griggs Counties, with three 96-inch diameter trenchless crossing of jurisdictional wetlands and one 96-inch diameter trenchless crossing of a BNSF railroad. Begins in 2026.
- **Contract 7A:** 6.5 miles of pipeline from Revere Township to Cooperstown in Griggs County, including three 96-inch diameter trenchless crossings of jurisdictional wetlands. Begins in 2026.

During the most recent legislative session, North Dakota lawmakers approved \$205 million in the Department of Water Resources budget for the RRVWSP, which represents the State's 75% cost share for the 2025-2027 biennium. LAWA represents the end users of the Project, who are responsible for the 25% local share. The local portion for the biennium is \$68.333 million, the majority of which will be paid by the RRVWSP's largest users, the cities of Fargo and Grand Forks.



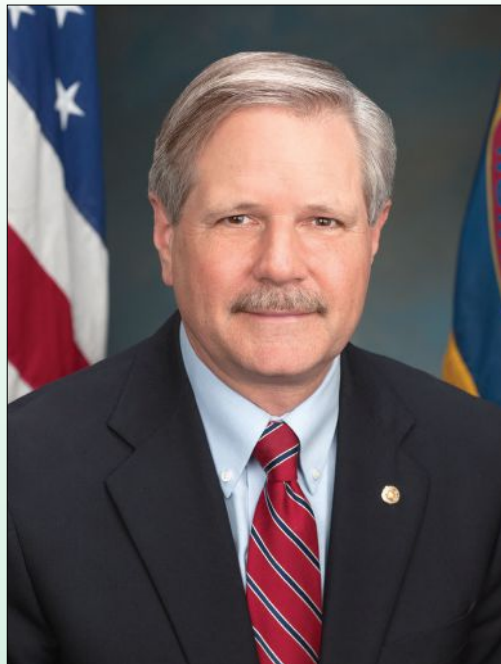
RED RIVER VALLEY WATER SUPPLY PROJECT

ENDAWS Receives Federal Approval and \$50M Appropriation

Thanks in large part to U.S. Senator John Hoeven, a federal project that will complement the state-led Red River Valley Water Supply Project (RRVWSP) has received the official green light and federal funding approval. As a member of the Senate Energy and Water Development Appropriations Committee, Sen. Hoeven was the driving force behind securing authorization and \$50 million for the Eastern North Dakota Alternate Water Supply (ENDAWS) project within the fiscal year (FY) 2026 appropriations legislation. In February, President Donald Trump signed the \$1.2 billion appropriations package, which includes funding for ENDAWS.

“The federal ENDAWS project brings real savings to the Red River Valley Water Supply Project, reducing its construction costs by \$200 million and saving \$4 million in annual operating costs,” said Sen. Hoeven.

By utilizing existing federal infrastructure, including the Snake Creek Pumping Plant and McClusky Canal, ENDAWS will drastically reduce construction costs. Another benefit of using existing infrastructure is the



Senator John Hoeven

reduced operational costs due to a lower elevation and shorter pumping distance to convey water from the McClusky Canal to the transmission pipeline.

Sen. Hoeven also reintroduced his bipartisan legislation in March with a goal of fully funding ENDAWS. If approved, the FY2026 Energy and Water appropriations bill will amend the Dakota Water Resources Act (DWRA) to increase authorizations under the Municipal, Rural, and Industrial (MR&I) water supply grant program for North Dakota and the five Tribal Nations in the state. The amendment is necessary because North Dakota reached the state MR&I authorization

cap at the end of fiscal year 2024. Because of this, the state and the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) have reallocated significant MR&I resources to cover federal responsibilities under the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909. Specifically, Sen. Hoeven is working to ensure the biota water treatment costs are fully accounted for, as they are the federal government’s responsibility.

“When the Garrison and Oahe dams were built,

If you’re interested in learning more about the RRVWSP, visit www.rrvwsp.com to sign up for the RRVWSP quarterly newsletter to stay up to date on the project’s latest developments.

North Dakota lost 550,000 acres of prime farmland, but the amounts originally authorized under the Dakota Water Resources Act of 2000 were insufficient to compensate our state for this loss. As we work to fund water supply projects like ENDAWS, our legislation would correct this shortfall, ensure North Dakota receives the federal support it is owed, and help advance more resilient, drought-tolerant water supplies for communities across our state,” said Sen. Hoeven. The legislation is cosponsored by Senators Kevin Cramer of North Dakota and Alex Padilla of California. Representative Julie Fedorchak of North Dakota will introduce a companion to the bill in the House of Representatives.

“This legislation is critical for ensuring reliable water supplies for North Dakota’s communities and Tribal Nations. They included some funding for the Eastern North Dakota Alternate Water Supplies Project (ENDAWS). We need to increase existing funding authorizations to further support ENDAWS and other critical water infrastructure projects across the state. I look forward to passing these amendments and ensuring the federal government fulfills this obligation it owes to North Dakota for damming the Missouri River,” said Sen. Cramer.

“North Dakota was promised more than a million acres of irrigation as part of the Pick-Sloan project, yet that promise was never fully realized,” Rep. Fedorchak said. “The Dakota Water Resources Act Amendments move us closer to fulfilling that commitment by strengthening water systems for our communities and Tribal Nations and making sure the federal government follows through on its commitments to our state.”

The full text of the DWRA amendments can be viewed on Sen. Hoeven’s website, www.hoeven.senate.gov.

INTRODUCING Scott Mehring Garrison Diversion Field Services Supervisor

After 19 years with the Garrison Diversion Conservancy District (Garrison Diversion), Scott Mehring is likely one of the most recognizable staff members. The Field Services Supervisor is Garrison Diversion’s eyes and ears on the ground for the construction of the Red River Valley Water Supply Project (RRVWSP).



“I think it’s amazing that I have the opportunity to work on such a historic project,” Scott says. “It feels great knowing I had a role in delivering water to so many North Dakotans.”

Scott works with the engineers, consultants, and contractors working on the drought mitigation project that will serve nearly half of North Dakota’s population when it is constructed. Everyone from landowners to county township board members reaches out to him when they have questions or issues.

One of Scott’s main responsibilities is managing quality control on land restoration. Before construction began, the project co-sponsors, Garrison Diversion and Lake Agassiz Water Authority (LAWA), developed guiding principles for the RRVWSP. One of the principles is landowner respect. Scott takes this responsibility seriously as he works to ensure the pipeline and associated infrastructure are constructed with care and respect for the land, its owners, and renters. He is also mindful of ensuring the land is restored or reclaimed in an effective and timely manner.

“Since I’m here year-round, I get to know people in the areas where construction is happening. This has been a benefit, because folks know they can come to me to discuss any issues they’re having,” says Scott. “I spend a decent amount of my time working with landowners and townships.”

When he’s not at work, Scott is focused on his family. He and his wife, Shannon, have been married for 30 years. They have three children: Shae is a pharmacist in Larimore, Kaydn is a sixth-grade teacher in Carrington, and their son Taylen is a junior in high school. In addition to spending time with family, Scott enjoys being outdoors, especially playing golf.

Honoring Water Advocates

Each year at the Annual Joint North Dakota Water Convention and Irrigation Workshop, the water industry recognizes individuals who have put forth great effort and have dedicated their time and knowledge to North Dakota's water industry.

This year, two individuals from Garrison Diversion received awards at the convention. Duane DeKrey, general manager of Garrison Diversion, was honored with the Commodore Award and Stacey Gussiaas, Garrison Diversion's Administrative Assistant, was honored with a Water Wheel Award.

COMMODORE AWARD Duane DeKrey

DeKrey received the Commodore Award for his leadership and commitment to water resource development in the state. He now holds the rank of Commodore in the North Dakota Mythical Navy.

Garrison Diversion has benefited from DeKrey's leadership for more than 10 years. As the general manager, he oversees a staff of 31, reports directly to its 28-member board of directors, and balances an annual budget of \$200 million. He spent 10 sessions in the North Dakota Legislature, the first as a Senator from District 31 and the remaining nine sessions as a Representative from District 14, serving on the House Natural Resources Committee and the Judiciary Committee. DeKrey previously was the deputy director of the North Dakota Game and Fish Department and served more than 35 years with the ND National Guard. He shares his expertise with several other water entities, including the Lake Agassiz Water Authority, North Dakota Water Users Association, North Dakota Water Education Foundation, Upper Missouri Water Association and Groundwater Management Association. DeKrey is also active in the Kiwanis Club, Federated Church board, American Legion and American Veterans Club. He and his wife, Jan, have three grown children.



WATER WHEEL AWARD Stacey Gussiaas

Gussiaas received the Water Wheel Award for her service and dedication to water supply across North Dakota. She has been a cornerstone of the Garrison Diversion Conservancy District since January 1996, serving as Administrative Assistant with unwavering dedication and professionalism. Her detail-oriented approach and exceptional organizational skills ensure that office operations run smoothly.

For more than two decades, Gussiaas has also led the North Dakota Water Education Foundation's scholarship fundraiser, the Top O' the Day Tee-Off scholarship golf scramble, guiding it to success for 21 years. Through her leadership in coordinating workers, outreach, logistics, and sponsorships, she has helped provide meaningful support to the Dushinske & Jamison Water Resources Scholarship students and their futures.

A graduate of Mayville State University with an Associate of Arts degree, Gussiaas applies her education to enhance office processes and event outcomes. She is widely respected for her professional demeanor, her commitment to service, and her ability to build strong relationships with colleagues.

Her contributions in the office reflect her skill and dedication to the mission and people she serves.

"Congratulations on this recognition, Stacey. We are proud to have you as a colleague and friend," says Duane DeKrey, Garrison Diversion general manager.



Garrison Diversion Board of Directors Held Executive Committee Members Election

The Garrison Diversion Conservancy District (Garrison Diversion) board 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 holds elections for positions on the 10-member Executive Committee, which monitors the financials, federal matters and overall operations of Garrison Diversion. This year, the board elected Kyle Blanchfield, Ramsey County, to his first term and re-elected Larry Kassian, Burleigh County, and Brian Orn, Sargent County, to each serve another term on the Executive Committee.

Each Executive Committee member chairs a committee and is eligible for two, three-year terms.



KYLE BLANCHFIELD *Ramsey County*

Kyle Blanchfield has represented Ramsey County since 2021. He will now head the Engineering & Operations Committee and serve on the MR&I Committee. He is passionate about serving North Dakota citizens and utilizing our water resources.

"North Dakota's future is tied to water resources and the ability to effectively manage it. Garrison Diversion has always been the dream to accomplish this goal and can be the entity to accomplish this needed mission," says Blanchfield. "Garrison Diversion has accomplished so much in its history, but the citizens of North Dakota are counting on it to do so much more."

Blanchfield is the owner of Woodland Resort on Devils Lake and is active in multiple community organizations. He lives in Devils Lake with his wife, Karin.



LARRY KASSIAN

Burleigh County

Larry Kassian was elected by Burleigh County constituents to serve on Garrison Diversion's board. After receiving his degree in civil engineering from NDSU, Kassian was employed at Bartlett & West Engineers where he stayed for more than 20 years. A career move led him to become the executive director for the South Central Regional Water District, from which he has since retired. Kassian chairs the MR&I Committee, which focuses on providing water supply grants to North Dakota residents. Kassian resides in Bismarck with his wife, Connie.



BRIAN ORN

Sargent County

Brian Orn has served Sargent County since 2021 and now chairs the Agriculture Committee. He received a degree in agricultural economics from North Dakota State University and has worked in the insurance business his entire career. Orn now owns, and is an agent with, the Bjorn Crop Insurance Agency in Stirum. He lives in Stirum with his wife, Lindy.

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



Wrapping Up 2025, Looking Ahead to 2026

The crews working on the Red River Valley Water Supply Project (RRVWSP) enjoyed a longer than typical construction season thanks to mild spring and fall weather in 2025. Construction activities continued into December with a total of 12 miles of transmission pipe installed to date this year. That brings the total amount of pipe in the ground to 29.75 miles of the 125-mile pipeline.

Carstensen Contracting, Inc. worked on installing 72-inch transmission pipeline for Contracts 5D and 6A this year. Contract 5D includes 10 miles of pipeline

and a trenchless crossing of Pipestem Creek in western Foster County and eastern Wells County. All 10 miles are installed on Contract 5D. There are 7.1 miles of pipeline in Contract 6A, of which 2.65 miles are in the ground. This portion of the project runs from the James River to Eastman Township in Foster County. Carstensen Contracting crews will return in 2026 to finish restoration on 5D and continue pipeline installation on 6A.

Oscar Renda Contracting will return in 2026 to install the one mile remaining on the eight-



mile 5C contract and initiate the land restoration process. Garney Construction finished the restoration on Contract 5B this year.

“We were blessed with weather that cooperated this year, which allowed us to make a lot of progress on the transmission pipeline,” says Kip Kovar, Deputy Program Manager for RRVWSP Engineering and Garrison Diversion Conservancy District Engineer. “Now we’re looking ahead to awarding Contracts 6B, 6C, and 7A.”

The three projects will extend the buried transmission pipeline east. Contract 6B includes a 9.2-mile stretch of pipe from McKinnon Township to Sutton Township in Foster and Griggs Counties. It involves one 96-inch diameter trenchless crossing of a jurisdictional wetland. Contract 6C runs 8.4 miles from Sutton Township to Revere Township in Griggs County. 6C also incorporates two 96-inch diameter trenchless crossings of jurisdictional wetlands and one 96-inch diameter trenchless crossing of a BNSF railroad. Contract 7A is 6.5 miles of pipeline from



Revere Township to Cooperstown in Griggs County, including three 96-inch diameter trenchless crossings of jurisdictional wetlands. The results of the bid process will be announced in the first quarter of 2026 RRVWSP newsletter.

Lake Agassiz Water Authority Election: Lisbon Secures Seat on Board of Directors



Lake Agassiz Water Authority (LAWA) held elections in September during the North Dakota League of Cities conference. Under state law, the LAWA board of directors includes one seat for a city located east of Highway 1 with a population of less than 5,000. The city of Lisbon won the seat previously held by the city of Mayville. Mayor Tim Meyer was officially appointed to represent Lisbon on the LAWA Board in October. City Council member Benjamin Gemar was named Lisbon’s alternate on the LAWA board.

Also during the LAWA election at the League of Cities conference, the board of directors seats held by the cities of Fargo, Grand Forks, West Fargo, Valley City, and Carrington were reelected. In February 2026, LAWA will hold elections for the board’s water system members at the North Dakota Rural Water Systems Association’s 40th Annual Water Expo in Fargo. The following water systems currently hold seats on the LAWA Board: Southeast Water Users District, Northeast Regional Water District, East Central Regional Water District, Cass Rural Water Users District, Walsh Rural Water District, Moorhead Public Service, and McLean-Sheridan Rural Water District. The cities of Wahpeton, Devils Lake, and Hunter are associate members of LAWA.

INTRODUCING

Tim Meyer, LAWA Board Member



There is a new face on the Lake Agassiz Water Authority (LAWA) board of directors. Lisbon's mayor, Tim Meyer, knows his city's needs very well. He spent the past 20 years serving on the Lisbon City Council – eight as a councilman and the past 12 as mayor. Tim's involvement in LAWA is a natural progression in his regional water initiatives involvement.

"The city of Lisbon and Southeast Water Users have a partnership with the water treatment plant in Lisbon. The raw water currently is supplied to the treatment plant by three rural wells and three wells within the city of Lisbon. The city serves as the operator of the water plant. I serve on this joint board as mayor of Lisbon," he explains. Tim also previously served on the Devils Lake Outlet Advisory Board.

"As a LAWA director I look forward to being a voice for the smaller communities: finding solutions for financial challenges smaller users face to remain part of the Red River Valley Water Supply Project, learning more about the long-range plans for operating the project once it's complete and finding solutions for these issues by working with all entities involved," says Tim.

The Lisbon mayor says once the RRVWSP is completed, the supplemental and emergency water supply will provide domestic and industrial opportunities for current and future generations. "I have seen the Sheyenne River here down to a trickle, to a level you could walk across. I have also been involved in the farming industry for years, and I have seen the effects of drought. The RRVWSP is a very wise investment for the State of North Dakota with the State Legislature taking the initiative to fund the project," he says before adding, "This project gives the State of North Dakota the rights to the Missouri River water before downstream entities claim this water."

Outside of his LAWA and mayoral duties, Tim has worked for Titan Machinery for 42 years as a service manager. He and his wife of 38 years, Elise, have twins named Justin and Abbey who turned 30 this year. Abbey and her husband, John, have provided Tim and Elise with two wonderful grandchildren named Vernalee and Nolan. Aside from spending time with his family, Tim enjoys woodworking, house projects, and being outdoors in his yard.

For more information:
 Kimberly Cook
kimberlyc@gdcd.org

For Immediate Release:

Garrison Diversion Awards \$219,483 in Water Supply Assistance Grants

CARRINGTON, ND (August 20, 2026) --- 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 enhances the quality of life for North Dakotans and strengthens our communities," said MR&I Committee Chair Larry Kassian. "Garrison Diversion is proud to support this vital program and contribute to the well-being of our district."

In August, the MR&I Committee awarded \$219,483 to 38 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:

- **Barnes Rural Water District** - \$7,318 for one customer hookup
- **Cass Rural Water Users District** - \$6,048 for one customer hookup
- **Central Plains Water District** - \$17,888 for four customer hookups
- **East Central Regional Water District** - \$118,090 for 16 customer hookups
- **Greater Ramsey Water District** - \$5,340 for one customer hookup
- **McKenzie County Water Resource District** - \$5,826 for three customer hookups
- **McLean-Sheridan Rural Water District** - \$5,648 for one customer hookup
- **North Prairie Regional Water District** - \$6,870 for two customer hookups
- **Southeast Water Users District** - \$21,375 for four customer hookups
- **Stutsman Rural Water District** - \$25,080 for five customer hookups

There are two grant application periods each year. The next deadline for new customer hookup applications is **May 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 service location must be 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.

For more information:
 Kimberly Cook
kimberlyc@gdcd.org

For Immediate Release:

Garrison Diversion Awards \$261,656 in Water Supply Assistance Grants

CARRINGTON, ND (June 8, 2026) --- 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 enhances the quality of life for North Dakotans and strengthens our communities," said MR&I Committee Chair Larry Kassian. "Garrison Diversion is proud to support this vital program and contribute to the well-being of our district."

In August, the MR&I Committee awarded a program high \$261,656 to 40 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:

- **Barnes Rural Water District** - \$58,565 for six customer hookups
- **Cass Rural Water Users District** - \$23,193 for three customer hookups
- **Central Plains Water District** - \$6,006 for two customer hookups
- **East Central Regional Water District** - \$32,430 for four customer hookups
- **McKenzie County Water Resource District** - \$41,721 for six customer hookups
- **North Prairie Regional Water District** - \$20,000 for two customer hookups
- **South Central Regional Water District** - \$44,726 for six customer hookups
- **Southeast Water Users District** - \$14,922 for four customer hookups
- **Stutsman Rural Water District** - \$20,093 for seven customer hookups

Additionally, the City of Binford received a grant for \$14,986

There are two grant application periods each year. The next deadline for new customer hookup applications is **May 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.

Contact: Kimberly Cook
Phone: 701.652.3194
Email: kimberlyc@gdcd.org

For immediate release:

Garrison Diversion Supports Aquatic Nuisance Species Awareness

CARRINGTON, ND (May 8, 2026) – In light of National Invasive Species Awareness Week May 3-9, the Garrison Diversion Conservancy District, together with the ND Game & Fish Dept., urges citizens to take some time to learn more about Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS).

ANS are non-native plants or animals threatening North Dakota's aquatic resources. ANS have a limited range in North Dakota, and it is up to water users to keep it that way. If established, ANS could cost taxpayers and local businesses millions in control and mitigation measures. Eurasian watermilfoil, flowering rush, golden clams, and zebra mussels can clog pipes and slow water flows in irrigation and drainage ditches. ANS can have adverse effects on the ecology of our lakes and rivers and impede recreational activities.

With ANS on the rise over the past ten years, prevention and education are the greatest tools to preserve and protect our aquatic resources for the future. Take time to talk to your friends, family, and fellow water recreationists about the importance of keeping ANS out of our waterbodies. Remember to clean, drain and dry all watercraft, heavy equipment, and watersports gear before working or recreating. Remove vegetation and residual moisture every time.

Know and follow the ANS regulations before enjoying North Dakota's aquatic resources. To learn more about ANS, please visit the North Dakota Game and Fish Department or the Department of Water Resources websites. Together we can preserve and protect our water resources!

N.D. fights proposed limits on Missouri River water usage

Missouri River water dispute escalates over provision in congressional bill

By GRANT COURSEY Bismarck Tribune, Oct 7, 2026

North Dakota's longstanding dispute with Missouri over water usage from the Missouri River has a new front: a section of a congressional bill that threatens to limit states' ability to divert water from the river.

Section 119 of the 2026 [Water Resources Development Act](#) would prohibit water from being diverted or exported from the Missouri River or any of its tributaries for use outside Missouri River states unless approved by all the governors of those states.

North Dakota Gov. Kelly Armstrong and North Dakota's U.S. Rep. Julie Fedorchak said the section would essentially give nine other governors veto power over North Dakota water projects involving the Missouri River.

Armstrong told the Tribune: "Requiring consensus of all of the governors under every circumstance is a really good way to get nothing done ever."

"Having to prove that every cubic millimeter of water that we divert from the Missouri River doesn't ever leave the state seems like a burden that I'm not comfortable putting on North Dakota ag producers and our water resources guys," he continued later.

Armstrong led a [joint letter](#) signed by the governors of Colorado, Montana, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming opposing the section.

The letter was sent Sept. 28 to the chairmen and ranking members of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works.

Missouri Department of Natural Resources Director Jake Buxton told the Tribune that Armstrong's letter emphasizes why Section 119 is "critically" needed.

"Given what we see happening in the Colorado River, the joint letter organized by North Dakota should make the blood run cold of anyone who uses water released from the Missouri River reservoirs, including power plants, the public that relies on municipal drinking water, and navigators on the Missouri and Mississippi rivers," Buxton said.

"The water in the Missouri River is not for sale to solve the water problems of other Western basins."

Fedorchak, one of only nine representatives to vote [against the bill](#) Sept. 16 in the House, said the added section even prevents the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers from studying a proposed water project without the consent of Missouri River state governors.

"That is an unacceptable infringement on our established water rights and a big — and unnecessary — hurdle for North Dakota communities planning for their future," Fedorchak said.

She told the Tribune her office had worked with fellow Upper Missouri Basin representatives and senators to resolve the issue in committee before the bill came to the House floor, but she ultimately chose to vote no because the provision remained. She said she is working with North Dakota's U.S. senators to remove it.

The 2026 Water Resources Development Act came out of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, chaired by Missouri Rep. Sam Graves.

North Dakota's two U.S. senators said the language requiring the governors' consensus is not in the Senate version of the bill.

"I intend to keep it that way as we negotiate the final bill," said U.S. Sen. Kevin Cramer, R-N.D. "Diluting a state's water rights by making North Dakota's decisions subservient to the whims of others is illegal. States would be well within their right to sue over the provision and they would win. Rather than drifting toward fraught legal precedent, Section 119 should be scrapped so we can keep the Water Resources Development Act's passage on time."

U.S. Sen. John Hoeven, R-N.D., said the Senate's version of the bill was approved by committee in July.

"We are working to protect North Dakota's water rights and ensure the final legislation does not include any policies that attempt to limit our state's ability to utilize the river's water," Hoeven said.

Armstrong said he has concerns that a liberal interpretation of the bill's language could mean downriver states could challenge nearly any North Dakota water diversion project, including the state's project to divert Missouri River water to the Red River Valley to help with agriculture, an ongoing project the state has put hundreds of millions of dollars into.

"I don't know how it would apply to projects that already existed. I hope I never have to find out," Armstrong said.

Decades-long water war

He said the bill is part of a larger fight between upstream and downstream Missouri River states that has been going on as long as he has been in politics.

"I don't necessarily think we're always on an equal playing field under current law," Armstrong said. "I'm sure not tipping the scale to my friends in the southern states any more."

The two states have argued for decades over the proper usage of the Missouri River. North Dakota is concerned about retaining its authority to pull enough water out of the river for agricultural and drinking water needs, as well as keeping reservoirs full for recreation. Missouri is concerned upstream withdrawals threaten steady river flow downstream, affecting its use for barge shipping, farming and municipal needs.

Earlier this year, dueling opinion editorials were published in the Tribune by North Dakota and Missouri state officials over North Dakota's plans to divert water to the Red River Valley and whether the project sets a precedent for removing water from the Missouri River Basin. [Missouri argues](#) it does set a precedent that could be damaging to downriver states. [North Dakota argues](#) the project does not pull enough water out of the basin to make a significant impact on the river's flow, and that it has a legal right to engage in the project.

Armstrong said the ongoing conflict has flared up because of low water levels caused by a near-nationwide drought. He said the state's projections for water levels next year are even lower than this year for Lake Sakakawea.

"We have a tremendous recreation economy, agriculture economy, long-term diversion projects, Red River Valley water supply projects, that are all very, very important to a lot of North Dakotans, and I'm not interested in Missouri weighing in on those," Armstrong said. "They don't have autonomy over how we make decisions up here."

10-3-26

2A The Herald-Press, Saturday, October 3, 2026

Group opposes attempt to restrict states' authority to use river water

North Dakota Gov. Kelly Armstrong and the governors of Colorado, Montana, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming sent a joint letter to Congress last week opposing an attempt to restrict their authority to use Missouri River water in their states.

The governors oppose Section 120 of the 2026 Water Resources Development Act as passed by the U.S. House of Representatives on Sept. 16, which would prohibit water from being diverted or exported from the Missouri River or any of its tributaries for use outside Missouri River states unless approved by all the governors of Colorado, Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri and Wyoming. In addition, Section 120 would prohibit the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers from even studying the feasibility of such projects without the governors' unanimous consent.

Armstrong led the letter against Section 120 along with Gov. Jared Polis of Colorado, Gov. Greg Gianforte of Montana, Gov. Larry Rhoden of South Dakota, Gov. Spencer Cox of Utah and Gov. Mark Gordon of Wyoming.

"Neither the federal government nor any individual state gets to tell North Dakota how to use Missouri River water as it passes through our state," Armstrong said. "Our right to use Missouri River water as we deem necessary – whether it's for drinking water, irrigation, industrial uses or emergency water supplies during a drought – is clearly established in both state and federal law, and we will strongly resist any attempt to infringe on that authority. The path forward for the Missouri River needs to be shaped collectively by the basin

"Neither the federal government nor any individual state gets to tell North Dakota how to use Missouri River water as it passes through our state."

Gov. Kelly Armstrong

states working together, and we welcome every basin state to the table to find solutions that respect each state's individual rights and interests."

States have possessed primary authority over the allocation and use of water within their borders since at least 1877 when Congress passed the Desert Land Act, and eight western states – including North Dakota – protect ownership of the state's water resources to the people of their state through their constitutions, the letter notes.

The letter was sent to the chairmen and ranking members of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works.

"Imposing this language onto the Missouri River states through federal law violates principles under both the state and federal constitutions and statutes, as well as upends basic tenets of established water law principles," the letter states. "Such a provision is certain to invite protracted litigation as well as delay necessary infrastructure projects."

Armstrong leads governors in letter opposing attempt to restrict states' authority to use Missouri River water

«[All News](#) Monday, September 28, 2026 - 11:55 am

BISMARCK, N.D. – North Dakota Gov. Kelly Armstrong and the governors of Colorado, Montana, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming sent a [joint letter to Congress](#) today opposing an attempt to restrict their authority to use Missouri River water in their states.

The governors oppose Section 120 of the 2026 Water Resources Development Act as passed by the U.S. House of Representatives on Sept. 16, which would prohibit water from being diverted or exported from the Missouri River or any of its tributaries for use outside Missouri River states unless approved by all the governors of Colorado, Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri and Wyoming. In addition, Section 120 would prohibit the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers from even studying the feasibility of such projects without the governors' unanimous consent.

Armstrong led the letter against Section 120 along with Gov. Jared Polis of Colorado, Gov. Greg Gianforte of Montana, Gov. Larry Rhoden of South Dakota, Gov. Spencer Cox of Utah and Gov. Mark Gordon of Wyoming.

“Neither the federal government nor any individual state gets to tell North Dakota how to use Missouri River water as it passes through our state,” Armstrong said. “Our right to use Missouri River water as we deem necessary – whether it’s for drinking water, irrigation, industrial uses or emergency water supplies during a drought – is clearly established in both state and federal law, and we will strongly resist any attempt to infringe on that authority. The path forward for the Missouri River needs to be shaped collectively by the basin states working together, and we welcome every basin state to the table to find solutions that respect each state’s individual rights and interests.”

States have possessed primary authority over the allocation and use of water within their borders since at least 1877 when Congress passed the Desert Land Act, and eight western states – including North Dakota – protect ownership of the state’s water resources to the people of their state through their constitutions, the letter notes.

The letter was sent to the chairmen and ranking members of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works.

“Imposing this language onto the Missouri River states through federal law violates principles under both the state and federal constitutions and statutes, as well as upends basic tenets of established water law principles,” the letter states. “Such a provision is certain to invite protracted litigation as well as delay necessary infrastructure projects.”

Road talks dominate commission meeting

BY NATHAN PRICE

Foster County Commissioners are juggling numerous road concerns in the county.

An informational meeting has been scheduled for Thursday, June 11 at 2 p.m. to discuss turning the Murphy Road back to gravel, and at their regular meeting on Tuesday, June 2, commissioners were informed of road damage on the Kensal Highway after a semi caught fire.

The fire occurred on Thursday, May 28 at around 2:30 p.m. on the Kensal Highway between 4th and 5th Street South.

Carrington Fire Chief Ken Wangen said no one was injured in the blaze, but that the fire burned everything from the semi's drive axles back. There was extensive damage to the semi, and he said the trailer was a total loss.

Wangen said the cause of the fire was likely a mechan-

ical failure of some kind, which might have emanated from the drive axle.

"The driver had no warning," said Wangen. "He just looked in the mirror and saw smoke."

The driver pulled over on the west side of the road, and Wangen said a nearby cattail slough also caught fire.

Firefighters soon got control of both fires, but not before significant damage had been done to both the semi and the roadway it was traveling on.

Responding agencies included the Foster County Sheriff's Office, the Kensal Fire Department, the Carrington Fire Department and the Carrington Ambulance.

Nate Monson, Foster County Road Superintendent, told commissioners on Tuesday that he wasn't made aware of the fire or the road damage it caused until Monday, June 1.

See COUNTY, page 2



47

COUNTY —

Images Monson shared with the commission show a scorched road with clear divots where the vehicles' tires were contacting the roadway as they burned.

Wangen told the Independent after Tuesday's commission meeting that the aluminum rims of the semi's tires were melting into the road as they burned.

Commissioners were told by Monson on Tuesday that he's going to work on getting an assessment of what it would take to fix the road damage.

The cost would then be passed on to the trucking company that the semi belongs to, which was identified during the commission meeting by Monson as "All Day Trucking" out of Jamestown, N.D.

Also during Tuesday's meeting, the commission carried a motion to make a change order on the McHenry Road project. The order will be to have Knife River Materials mill and overlay a handful of spots identified by Monson on the Barlow Highway.

Monson said it would amount to approximately 2,000 feet of patchwork, which would cost about \$50,000.

He told commissioners it was a good price, lower than normal because Knife River is already in the county working to pave the McHenry Road near Grace City.

Monson also asked commissioners Tuesday to reject a "pavement patch" completed over a crossing created by Garrison Diversion on County Road 1605. The road is known locally as the Dump Ground Road.

Garrison Diversion cut the road two miles south of Highway 200 late last fall in order to place their water pipeline for the Red River Valley Water Supply Project. The cut was finally overlaid a few weeks ago.

Monson told commissioners that the pavement where they overlaid the crossing isn't flush with the rest of the highway, and although passable for now, he said there's concern it could get worse in the coming years.

He and the county's engineer, Mike Rivinius of Wold Engineering, recommended the commission have Garrison Diversion improve the crossing so that it rides better for motorists. Monson added that the crossing has a 2-year contractor warranty.

The commission unanimously carried a motion to have Wold Engineering draft a letter rejecting the pavement patch, as well as to have the engineering firm prepare a "utility crossing agreement" for pipeline crossings on the Dump Ground Road and Kensal Highway.

Before adjourning Tuesday's meeting, Commissioner Dave Utke suggested holding an informational meeting regarding the Murphy Road.

At their previous regular meeting, the commission carried a motion to advertise for bids to have the paved road turned back to gravel. Utke suggested allowing residents to comment on the potential project before the county moves to accept any bids, and the commission agreed.

The informational meeting has been scheduled for 2 p.m. on Thursday, June 11 in the Community Room of the Foster County Courthouse.

The county's next regular meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, June 16 at 8 a.m.

Foster County Independent
10-8-26

47

Purchases approved as NAWS water nears

By **JILL SCHRAMM**

Associate Editor
jschramm@minotdailynews.com

The Northwest Area Water Supply biota treatment plant near Max could begin startup in late August, with Lake Sakakawea water flowing

\$1.75

Vol. 110 No. 128



to Minot by September or October, according to information provided to the Minot City Council Monday, June 1.

With those dates nearing, the council approved purchasing equipment and vehicles for the plant. Funding will come from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, but the city must make the purchases and request reimbursement from the North Dakota Department of Water Resources (DWR). The council

approved a \$350,000 budget amendment for equipment that includes a ski steer, pickup, forklift, mower and two SUVs.

According to the Public Works Department's Utilities division, the equipment is needed to perform maintenance tasks such as grounds keeping and snow removal and to transport staff between Minot and Max.

The City of Minot is part of a three-way agreement with the DWR

and Bureau of Reclamation to operate and maintain the biota treatment plant. The city originally prepared a budget for fiscal years 2024-2026 that was approved by the bureau, but due to delays in start up of the plant, the purchase of larger equipment was held off until the beginning of operations was more clear, according to information provided to the council.



JILL SCHRAMM/MDN

The Northwest Area Water Supply biota treatment plant, shown near Max May 31, could be operational by August.

NEWS: STATE GOVERNMENT

Are Missouri and North Dakota in a water war?

A project to divert water away from the Missouri River in North Dakota has sparked a new fight in a decades-long conflict about how to manage the river's water in times of drought.

By Ceilidh Kern

Freelance reporter

April 21, 2026

REPUBLISH

 The Trust Project



The Missouri River at sunset, as seen from the Kansas City riverfront near the Town of Kansas Bridge. (Josh Merchant/The Beacon)

Author Mark Twain, a proud son of Missouri, once reportedly mused that “whiskey is for drinking; water is for fighting over.”

Natural resources officials in Missouri and North Dakota would seem to agree.

In a **February opinion piece**, Kurt Schaefer, director of the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, wrote that, “for more than three decades, the state of Missouri has engaged in a water war with North Dakota.”

TAKEAWAYS

The latest battle in that war, he said, is a series of projects in North Dakota that, once completed, will divert water out of the Missouri River to the Sheyenne River and Red River of the North, which run into Canada.

In an **opinion piece responding to Schaefer**, Reice Haase, director of the North Dakota Department of Water Resources, said that “North Dakota has never viewed Missouri River water as something to be won, but as a resource to be responsibly used.”

“Putting our water to beneficial use is not an act of hostility toward downstream states,” he added. “Rather, it is a responsibility to the people we serve.”

But Schaefer and others in the lower basin say this could set a precedent for future out-of-basin diversions and put the river — and those who rely on it — at risk.

Why is North Dakota diverting water?

The pipeline is meant to support municipal drinking water systems and irrigation in central and eastern North Dakota, Haase told The Beacon.

When the U.S. dammed the northern Missouri River in the 1940s, the government promised North Dakota irrigation and municipal water supply projects in the Red River basin — home to the state’s largest and third-largest cities, Fargo and Grand Forks, which experienced an “extreme shortage of water” in the 1930s, Haase said.

Those projects never materialized, in part because of opposition from lower-basin states, he said. While the Red River Valley has grown, he said that without the pipeline, another 1930s-like drought could put communities at risk.

Unable to secure federal funding, the state took on the project itself and has spent \$400 million so far, Haase said, adding that it will probably spend another \$400 million to \$500 million.

While state funding will cover most of the project, U.S. Sens. John Hoeven and Kevin Cramer of North Dakota secured \$158 million in federal funding for a portion of the pipeline.

Schaefer said Hoeven is also seeking \$120 million to prevent invasive species from crossing into Canada via the pipeline, as well as \$400 million to expand the project.

“This is part of a bigger picture, an upper-basin state really trying to lay the groundwork for a massive expansion of diversion of water out of the Missouri (River),” Schaefer said.

‘Robbing Peter to pay Paul’

In his opinion piece, Schaefer wrote that “reductions in the amount of water available downstream will harm Missouri agriculture, utilities, public water supplies, power plants (and) navigation.”

Shane Kinne, executive director of the Coalition to Protect the Missouri River, a group of lower-basin stakeholders, said that “when you start the process of moving water out of one basin into another, it comes back to robbing Peter to pay Paul.”

“You may be solving one issue, but you’re exacerbating another issue in another basin that will have to be resolved,” he said.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has already limited releases from upriver dams in recent several years due to drought. Kinne said that hurts Missouri power plants, many of which rely on the river for cooling water and would shut down without it.

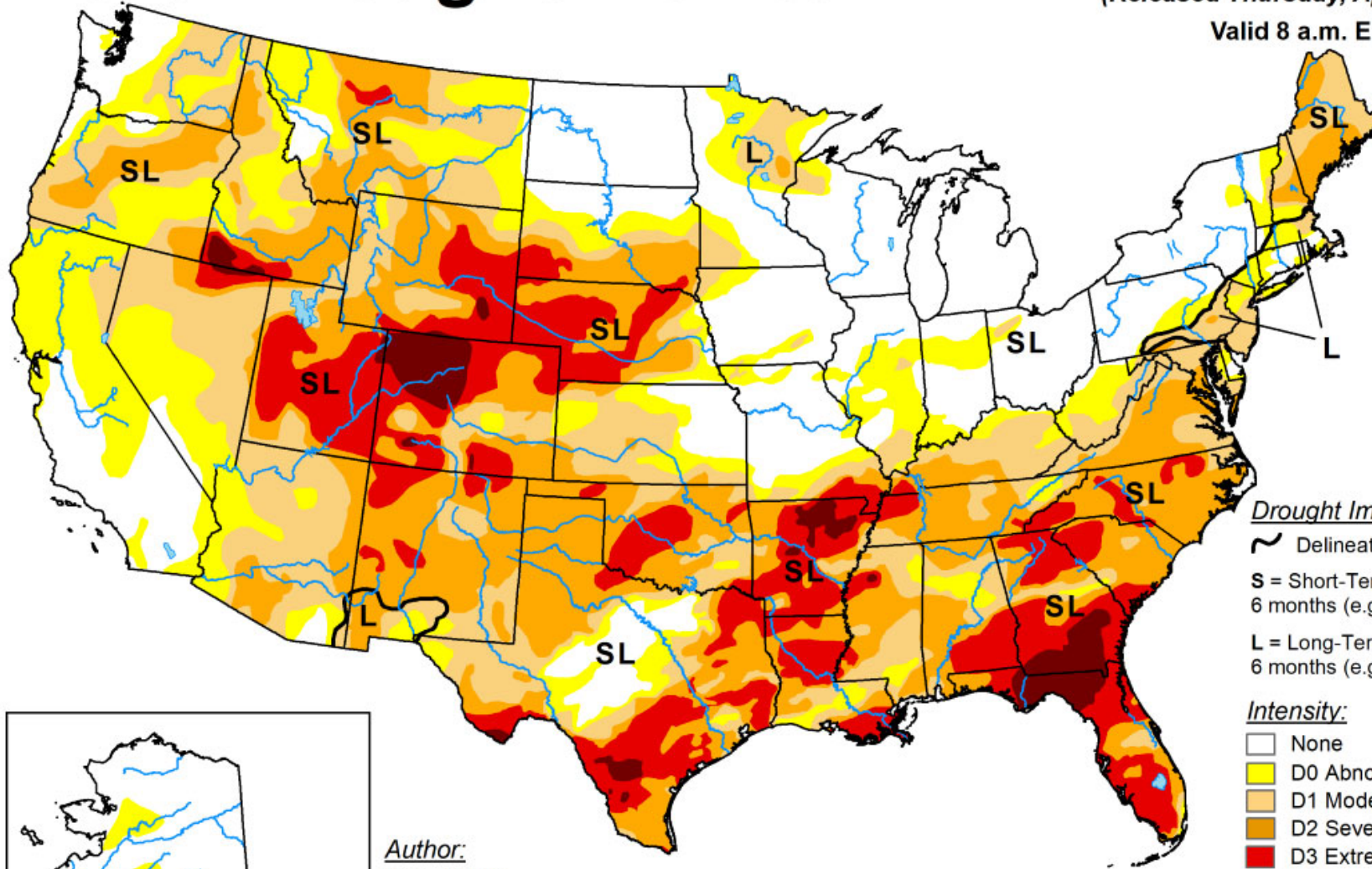
“Often, those plants are measuring their access to water in inches,” he said. “That just highlights that even the tiniest amounts of flow are really critical.”

U.S. Drought Monitor

April 14, 2026

(Released Thursday, Apr. 16, 2026)

Valid 8 a.m. EDT



Drought Impact Types:

- ~ Delineates dominant impacts
- S = Short-Term, typically less than 6 months (e.g. agriculture, grasslands)
- L = Long-Term, typically greater than 6 months (e.g. hydrology, ecology)

Intensity:

- None
- D0 Abnormally Dry
- D1 Moderate Drought
- D2 Severe Drought
- D3 Extreme Drought
- D4 Exceptional Drought

Author:

Brian Fuchs
National Drought Mitigation Center

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. For more information on the Drought Monitor, go to <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/About.aspx>



droughtmonitor.unl.edu

Low river levels also have implications for the state's businesses, Schaefer said.

"A million tons of sand and gravel are shipped by barge in and out of the Kansas City region on the Missouri River every year, and up to 300,000 tons of soybeans make their way to the world on the river, as do nearly 270,000 tons of asphalt, cement (and) concrete," he said.

Lower water levels limit how much barges can carry, raising costs, Kinne said.

There are also implications for municipal water systems, including Kansas City and St. Louis, which draw most of their drinking water from the Missouri River.

Dru Buntin, chief of water resources for Missouri DNR, said the **current drought** raises questions about sending water out of the basin.

"We have concerns about the precedent of sending water outside of the basin under what the Corps is saying is their 'surplus water authority,'" he said. "How is there surplus water to send out of the basin when we're already reducing releases downstream ... because of a lack of water in the reservoir?"

Setting a precedent

The North Dakota pipeline will be able to transport 165 cubic feet of water — around 1,230 gallons — per second. Haase said it would run at or near full capacity during times of drought.

Kinne said the concern isn't so much the impact of this project as what it might enable in the future.

“If you look at the North Dakota projects by themselves, you can argue they don’t have enough impact for us to be concerned,” he said. “The concern is the precedent that it sets, and these projects writing the playbook for other states and western states to access this water.”

As states in the western and southwestern U.S. **struggle to reach an agreement** on how to allocate water from the dwindling Colorado River, officials are increasingly concerned they may begin looking to the Missouri River to meet their needs.

Even states within the basin have eyed Missouri River water as a potential solution to water shortages in other areas of their state, with **Kansas and Army Corps officials studying the possibility of diverting the river to replenish the Ogallala aquifer.**

“If you look at the North Dakota projects by themselves, you can argue they don’t have enough impact for us to be concerned. The concern is the precedent that it sets, and these projects writing the playbook for other states and western states to access this water.”

— Shane Kinne, executive director of the Coalition to Protect the Missouri River

If western states do divert water from the Missouri River, “it could be devastating,” said Garrett Hawkins, president of the Missouri Farm Bureau.

“We understand that out west, the water situation is dramatically different, but we shouldn’t be looked at as the solution,” Hawkins said.

In 2025, Missouri lawmakers passed a law requiring a permit to export water and prohibiting the export of water via pipeline more than 30 miles beyond state borders.

Western “states are turning a thirsty eye to Missouri and other Midwestern states that are water-rich in order to get some of that water,” Rep. Colin Wellenkamp, a St. Charles Republican, **said during floor debate on the bill.**

Ken Royse, project manager for the Missouri River Joint Water Board, agreed. He told a North Dakota state legislative committee that out-of-basin transfers to western states are the biggest threat to the Missouri River system.

Missouri is “worried about the precedent being set, and we are too. I think North Dakota has the same concern,” Royse told The Beacon. “But our theory is, we’re a basin state. We contribute water, we contribute land. We should be able to take water out to the extent that we don’t damage our downstream neighbors.”

Schaefer said he remains concerned about both precedent and the impact of the current project, which is “using federal dollars to help one state really to the detriment of other states.”

“With North Dakota seeking over \$400 million to expand this project, we really don’t know ... how much is going to be diverted,” he said.

Bringing the states together

Both sides say more discussion and coordination is needed.

A number of organizations have formed over the years to bring basin states together to discuss river management, “but opportunities for meaningful, basin-wide dialogue have gone unrealized,” Haase wrote in his opinion piece.

“On several occasions, we convened meetings of Missouri River basin states to pursue collaborative river management, invitations that Missouri declined,” he wrote.

Schaefer denied those claims, telling The Beacon that “Missouri does attend those meetings,” as do Missouri agriculture and transportation groups.

In his piece, Haase also wrote that “Missouri later withdrew from the Missouri River Association of States and Tribes, narrowing avenues for coordination.”

Asked whether that was true, Schaefer didn’t appear to know what MoRAST was.

“I know that the state of Missouri participates in multiple groups ... If there’s some group that at some point Missouri was no longer a part of, I don’t know that,” he said.

But Missouri was never a part of the association to begin with, said Buntin, who was head of DNR before Schaefer.

“Missouri didn’t pull out — Missouri never joined MoRAST,” Buntin said.

“The upper-basin states formed MoRAST, and originally, Iowa and Nebraska joined, but then the 2011 floods happened, and Iowa and Nebraska dropped out of MoRAST because their governors felt like the organization wasn’t representing the interests of their states,” he added.

Missouri didn’t join the association because “we wanted it to be a consensus-based organization, (but) North Dakota and other upper-basin states disagreed with that approach,” Buntin said.

MoRAST is no longer active, and there aren’t any other active basinwide organizations aside from Missouri River Recovery Implementation Committee, which is focused on ecosystem restoration, Buntin said.

But the back-and-forth opinion pieces written by Schaefer, Haase, Kinne, Royse and others have started a new conversation.

Stakeholder groups from North Dakota, Missouri and other lower-basin states, as well as DNR officials, met in Kansas City in March to “sit down and talk about this instead of just arguing in the newspapers,” Royse said.

Buntin, who attended the meeting, said “it was a good first discussion,” adding that he’s since reached out to his “counterparts in North Dakota, who were not in attendance.”

He said he’d like to see states agree to not transfer water outside of a basin state, but also develop a process for reviewing transfers — and their impact to downstream states — before they’re greenlit.

“On the issue at hand here, of out-of-basin diversions, we’re just concerned about the precedent and where that ends and having some long-term protection in place,” he said.

To reach an agreement, the states will also have to reckon with their **fundamentally different water laws**.

Missouri follows eastern riparian water law, which allows landowners to use any water touching their property as long as it doesn’t harm downstream users.

North Dakota, meanwhile, operates under western prior appropriation doctrine, where the “first in time” is the “first in right,” even during shortages.

“Water within the borders of North Dakota belongs to the state of North Dakota,” Haase wrote in his opinion piece. “To suggest otherwise defies both common sense and the foundational principles of state sovereignty.”

But Buntin said the river’s interconnected nature complicates that view.

“We’re an eastern water law state, but we’re reliant upon rainfall that doesn’t fall in our state and is stored in lakes that aren’t in our state, (but) in western water law states,” he said.

Garrison Diversion denies Burleigh County request to leave district

Zachary Weiland Apr 17, 2026 0

The Garrison Diversion Conservancy District Board of Directors on Thursday denied a petition from Burleigh County asking to leave the district.

Board members voted near-unanimously to reject the petition, finding the county has benefited enough from its time in the district to deny the request to withdraw. County officials have long argued the opposite, saying the county pays more into the district than it receives in return.



The McClusky Canal flows in the foreground with the wider expanse of Lake Audubon in the distance.

Lauren Donovan

"Burleigh County has and will continue to be benefited whole or in part by the development of the (Garrison Diversion Unit)," Garrison Diversion Board Chair Jay Anderson said. "With that, there is no basis under the law presented by the Board of Directors for the exclusion of Burleigh County from the Garrison Conservancy District given past, current potential and future benefits within Burleigh County."

State law allows Burleigh County the opportunity to appeal the denial in state district court. A Garrison Diversion discussion item is on the Commission's Monday meeting agenda, but it's unclear whether the board will move to appeal.

Commissioner Steve Schwab, who has largely spearheaded the county's effort to leave, criticized the board for not properly notifying the county when it planned to make its decision so the county could send an employee to tape the meeting. When asked whether he expects the county to appeal, he said he is checking into it.

"It isn't over yet," Schwab told the Tribune. "They're not going to get away with abusing people in this county."

Thursday's decision comes after Burleigh County commissioners in December **narrowly approved a resolution** asking to leave the district. Commissioners have raised the issue during the past two budget cycles as they look to cut what they consider unnecessary spending. The Garrison Diversion Board last month held a **public hearing** at its Carrington headquarters on the petition.

The Garrison Diversion District was created in 1955 by the state Legislature to manage the **Garrison Unit Project**, which diverts water from the Missouri River to other parts of the state. Much of this water is used for irrigation or supplied to cities and rural areas through the state's **Municipal, Rural and Industrial (MR&I) Water Supply Program**.

Burleigh County officials maintain the county has paid far more into the district than it has received in return, and that withdrawing would provide property tax relief. According to the county's petition, Burleigh has paid about \$9.9 million in property taxes to the district since joining in 1988, while receiving roughly \$825,500 in grants between 1993 and 2022.

Counties in the district are required to levy one mill of property tax annually to support the district, equal to \$736,900 in this year's Burleigh County budget.

Burleigh County's petition also argued the county has not benefited from being in the district because many of the grants awarded fall outside the district's "original intent" when it was created. The district operates the **Matching Recreation Grant Program**, which dedicates 20% of the district's tax levy for recreational facilities such as playgrounds, walking paths and campgrounds.

The Garrison Diversion District has defended its benefit in Burleigh County. In March, Garrison Diversion General Manager Duane DeKrey said the district has awarded cost-share grants to nearly 30 projects in Burleigh County and maintains recreational facilities on the Chain of Lakes -- a group of four lakes along the McClusky Canal.

Bennett Johnson, an attorney for the district, said that several water projects in Burleigh County have received MR&I funding, including \$8.1 million for Bismarck's water treatment facility and over \$64.4 million for the South Central Regional Water District.

Garrison Diversion officials have also highlighted district-led irrigation efforts in Burleigh County. The district currently irrigates 75 acres along about 7 miles of the McClusky Canal in Burleigh County. DeKrey previously said Burleigh County farmers using the canal for irrigation have access to additional state and federal funding sources that lower costs.

"Irrigated acres can generate approximately five to six times the economic output of dry land acres, benefiting the individual producers as well as the rural communities of Burleigh County and its broader economy," Bennett said.

03.17.26

HOEVEN SECURES \$108 MILLION AWARD SUPPORTING ENDAWS, WORKED WITH INTERIOR DEPARTMENT & OMB TO ADVANCE FUNDING

Senator Crafted and Passed Language to Make ENDAWS Eligible for OB3 Water Project Funding

WASHINGTON – Senator John Hoeven, a member of the Senate Energy and Water Appropriations Committee, today announced he has secured a \$108 million award to support the Eastern North Dakota Alternate Water Supply (ENDAWS) project from the One Big Beautiful Bill (OB3). This includes \$100 million for construction of ENDAWS and \$8 million for repairs at the McClusky Canal and Snake Creek Pumping Plant, which will be utilized for the project.

- The OB3 included \$1 billion in funding for Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) water conveyance and storage projects.
 - Hoeven crafted and secured language in the bill to make ENDAWS eligible for this funding.
- Since the OB3 passed, Hoeven has been working with the Trump administration for additional funding for ENDAWS.
 - This includes the senator's efforts with the Interior Department and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to advance and finalize today's award.
- This funding builds upon the \$50 million and authorization that Hoeven secured for the project in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 appropriations legislation.
 - The authorization was needed to allow the project to use existing federal infrastructure.

ENDAWS will save the Red River Valley Water Supply Project (RRVWSP) \$200 million in construction costs and \$4 million in annual operating costs, resulting from less elevation lift and a shorter pumping distance. In addition, the project will bring a more reliable, drought-resistant water supply to central and eastern North Dakota, serving over 30 communities and rural water systems.

"This \$108 million award is a major step forward for ENDAWS and comes on the heels of the \$50 million and project authorization that we passed as part of the FY2026 funding legislation," said Hoeven. "We specifically passed language in the OB3 to make ENDAWS eligible for this pool of funding, and I appreciate all of the officials at the Interior Department and OMB who worked with us to get today's award across the finish line. This water project is critical to the future growth and prosperity of eastern North Dakota, and represents a real savings to our state's taxpayers. By utilizing the McClusky Canal we are able to reduce the construction costs of the Red River Valley Water Supply Project by \$200 million, while also reducing ongoing operating costs by \$4 million per year."

-###-

Bipartisan bill reintroduced for increased water funding in ND

MDN STAFF

WASHINGTON — U.S. John Hoeven this week reintroduced his bipartisan legislation to increase the authorization for the Municipal, Rural and Industrial water supply grant program, which is necessary to complete the



John Hoeven

Northwest Area Water Supply Project.

North Dakota reached the state MR&I authorization ceiling at the end of fiscal year 2024. Hoeven said his bill would amend the Dakota Water Resources Act (DWRA) to increase authorizations under the MR&I program for North Dakota and the five tribal nations in the state. It would help fulfill federal compensation that was promised to the state and tribes upon the construction of the Garrison Dam and Oahe Dam.

Hoeven said his bill would ensure that NAWS biota water treatment costs are fully accounted for, which are rightly the responsibility of the federal government. Although the DWRA authorized funding for non-reimbursable costs related to BWT facilities, no authorization ceiling was outlined. As a result, North Dakota and the

See BILL, A7

BILL

Cont. from A1

Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) have been forced to allocate significant MR&I resources to cover federal responsibilities under the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909, he said.

Hoeven previously secured the bill's approval by the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee during the 118th Congress, putting the legislation in a strong position to advance in the current Congress.

Hoeven's legislation is cosponsored by Sens. Alex Padilla, D-Calif., and Kevin Cramer, R-ND. Congresswoman Julie Fedorchak, R-ND, will introduce a companion to the bill in the House of Representatives.

03.11.26

HOEVEN REINTRODUCES LEGISLATION TO INCREASE FUNDING AUTHORIZATIONS FOR WATER SUPPLY PROJECTS IN NORTH DAKOTA

Senator's Bipartisan Bill Would Support Projects Like ENDAWS, NAWS

WASHINGTON – Senator John Hoeven this week reintroduced his bipartisan legislation to support more reliable, drought-resistant water supplies in North Dakota, while helping to fulfill federal compensation that was promised to the state and tribes upon the construction of the Garrison Dam and Oahe Dam. Specifically, Hoeven's bill would:

- Amend the Dakota Water Resources Act (DWRA) to increase authorizations under the Municipal, Rural, and Industrial (MR&I) water supply grant program for North Dakota and the five Tribal Nations in the state.
 - North Dakota reached the state MR&I authorization ceiling at the end of fiscal year (FY) 2024.
 - An increase is necessary to complete ongoing water supply projects, including the Northwest Area Water Supply Project (NAWS) and the Eastern North Dakota Alternate Water Supply Project (ENDAWS).
- Ensure that biota water treatment (BWT) costs are fully accounted for, which are rightly the responsibility of the federal government.
 - Although the DWRA authorized funding for non-reimbursable costs related to BWT facilities, no authorization ceiling was outlined.
 - As a result, North Dakota and the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) have been forced to allocate significant MR&I resources to cover federal responsibilities under the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909.

Hoeven previously secured the bill's approval by the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee during the 118th Congress, putting the legislation in a strong position to advance in the current Congress. The bill comes as part of Hoeven's ongoing efforts to fully fund ENDAWS, which uses existing federal infrastructure to save North Dakota taxpayers \$200 million in construction costs and \$4 million in annual operating costs for the Red River Valley Water Supply Project. Earlier this year, Hoeven secured \$50 million and authorization for ENDAWS in the FY2026 appropriations legislation, and he continues his efforts to advance additional funding for the project from a BOR water account he worked to shape and include in the One Big Beautiful Bill.

"When the Garrison and Oahe dams were built, North Dakota lost 550,000 acres of prime farmland, but the amounts originally authorized under the Dakota Water Resources Act of 2000 were insufficient to compensate our state for this loss. As we work to fund water supply projects like ENDAWS, our legislation would correct this shortfall, ensure North Dakota receives the federal support it is owed and help advance more resilient, drought-tolerant water supplies for communities across our state," said Senator Hoeven.

Hoeven's legislation is cosponsored by Senators Alex Padilla (D-Calif.) and Kevin Cramer (R-N.D.). Representative Julie Fedorchak (R-N.D.) will introduce a companion to the bill in the House of Representatives.

"This legislation is critical for ensuring reliable water supplies for North Dakota's communities and Tribal Nations. The FY2026 Energy and Water appropriations bill included some funding for the Eastern North Dakota Water Supplies Project (ENDAWS). We need to increase existing funding authorizations to further support ENDAWS and other critical water infrastructure projects across the state. I look forward to passing these amendments and ensuring the federal government fulfills this obligation it owes to North Dakota for damming the Missouri River," said Senator Cramer.

"North Dakota was promised more than a million acres of irrigation as part of the Pick-Sloan project, yet that promise was never fully realized," Representative Fedorchak said. "The Dakota Water Resources Act Amendments move us closer to fulfilling that commitment by strengthening water systems for our communities and Tribal Nations and making sure the federal government follows through on its commitments to our state."

The full text and a summary of Hoeven's legislation can be found [here](#) and [here](#), respectively.

Opinion: The Missouri River Is a Shared Resource, Not a Battleground

By Reice Haase, Director, North Dakota Department of Water Resources

In a recent opinion column, Missouri Department of Natural Resources Director Kurt Schaefer described Missouri's relationship with North Dakota over Missouri River water as a "water war." That characterization reflects Mr. Schaefer's perspective, but it does not reflect ours. North Dakota has never viewed Missouri River water as something to be won, but as a resource to be responsibly used. Our focus is on meeting water needs within a Missouri River system designed to serve many purposes within its states, not a single interest or geography.

Water within the borders of North Dakota belongs to the State of North Dakota. To suggest otherwise defies both common sense and the foundational principles of state sovereignty. All states were admitted to the U.S. on equal footing, making Missouri's position fundamentally inconsistent with the sovereign authority it would unquestionably claim over waters within its boundaries. Defending and putting our water to beneficial use is not an act of hostility toward downstream states. Rather, it is a responsibility to the people we serve, a responsibility we will continue to defend in full exercise of our state's sovereignty.

North Dakota's approach is shaped by a long history of broken promises from the federal government. Under the Flood Control Act of 1944, our state agreed to the construction of large federal reservoirs, including Garrison and Oahe Dams. In doing so, North Dakota sacrificed half a million acres of highly productive farmland, land with significant economic and cultural value, to support federal flood control, navigation, and hydropower objectives that continue to benefit the entire basin, including Missouri.

In return, North Dakota was promised a multipurpose water project to irrigate 1.2 million acres of farmland, provide municipal water, and improve water quality in the Red River of the North. Those federal commitments were never fully delivered. Our efforts today are not about expansion or exploitation, but rather fulfilling a long-recognized need to use our share of the river to benefit North Dakotans and to receive promised benefits for our contributions.

Much has been made of North Dakota's use of Missouri River water, but the reality is less dramatic than the rhetoric suggests. North Dakota uses about six-tenths of 1 percent of the water that flows through our state, a negligible volume in the context of the entire river system. Put another way, if the Missouri River's average annual volume at St. Charles, Missouri, were represented by a single gallon jug, North Dakota's use would amount to roughly half a tablespoon. At that scale, there is no impact on downstream navigation, public water supplies, power generation, or electric grid reliability. The Show-Me State will be unable to show otherwise.

North Dakota's use of Missouri River water is strategic and responsible. It reflects decades of planning funded through revenues that North Dakotans have deliberately invested into long-term water security. These investments are about strengthening the resilience of our communities and ensuring reliable drinking water, not about diminishing the river or disadvantaging our neighbors.

North Dakota has consistently sought cooperation, but opportunities for meaningful, basin-wide dialogue have gone unrealized. On several occasions, we convened meetings of Missouri River basin states to pursue collaborative river management, invitations which Missouri declined. Missouri later withdrew from the Missouri River Association of States and Tribes, narrowing avenues for coordination when basin-wide engagement mattered most.

Litigation, legislative conflict, and public posturing have produced limited results at significant public expense. The more productive path forward is for all states to take their rightful seat at the table and work together toward durable, basin-wide solutions that allow the Missouri River to continue serving everyone who depends on it.



Opinion: Federal dollars must not drain water from the Missouri River

By Kurt U. Schaefer | Feb 8, 2026

For more than three decades, the state of Missouri has engaged in a water war with North Dakota. During that time, Missouri's congressional delegation, our governor and our attorney general — regardless of party — have worked together to protect our water.

Missouri has always been vigilant about protecting the water in the Missouri River. As a young assistant attorney general 30 years ago, I witnessed the state, through legislation and litigation, vigorously oppose North Dakota projects diverting water away from the Missouri River. It was a hard fought battle then, and it remains one now.

Congress recently approved a measure that would provide \$50 million dollars to North Dakota to complete a project that will move water out of the Missouri River basin. This means federal tax dollars will divert Missouri River water away from the lower Missouri River basin to the Red River basin, which flows into Canada.

Reductions in the amount of water available downstream will harm Missouri agriculture, utilities, public water supplies, power plants, navigation and the greater inland waterway system. Lower releases for downstream uses can also result in increased water temperature, diminished water quality and impacts to Missouri fish and wildlife.

More than a year ago, Missouri Gov. Mike Kehoe flagged this \$50 million project, known as the Eastern North Dakota Alternate Water Supply (ENDAWS) Project. In September 2025, Kehoe sent a letter to North Dakota Sen. John Hoeven, clearly communicating Missouri's ongoing adamant opposition to any diversions of water out of the Missouri River basin.

We've seen what has happened out West where rivers have been diverted, depleted and diminished. The North Dakota diversions are the first, but they almost certainly won't be the last.

Missouri and its congressional delegation have a long history of opposing North Dakota's water diversion projects because the projects reduce water available for us as a downstream state and set a dangerous precedent. We must ensure this attractive target is not exploited by interests outside the basin. Missouri's opposition to the overall North Dakota project is a practical necessity to defend the interests of Missourians.

The massive federal reservoirs on the Missouri River store the largest volume of water of any river system in the country. In times of drought, the federal government reduces downstream releases based on the amount of water stored in upstream reservoirs.

Because of the current drought, the Corps of Engineers is releasing less water from the reservoirs in the winter, and Missouri power plants have had difficulty withdrawing cooling water from the river. This seriously threatens the reliability of Missouri's electric grid.

The water stored in the Missouri River system has already been substantially depleted due to existing in-basin uses. The ENDAWS project will only increase the frequency and magnitude of these drought restrictions, reducing flow support to the lower Missouri River.

If projects like the North Dakota diversions are allowed to move forward unchecked, other projects will follow, and the Missouri River will end up like the Colorado.

Nearly 25 years ago, U.S. Senator Kit Bond addressed the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, saying that disputes regarding management of the Missouri River are complex, but the political problem is quite simple. Eight states want the river managed to support their needs with little regard to how this impacts the other states in the river basin.

Missouri must oppose any federal funding or other actions that divert water from the Missouri River, and work with members from Iowa, Kansas and Nebraska to seek protections resulting in a fair balance between the upper and lower basin. We want to prevent future diversion projects that may be on a larger scale than what North Dakota is currently building with federal support.

Missouri has a strong congressional delegation, and we thank Rep. Sam Graves for the leadership he provides at a national level as chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. He, along with former Sens. Kit Bond and Roy Blunt, protected Missouri's interests by championing Missouri River issues for decades.

But our delegation can't do it alone. We need congressional champions in other lower-basin states to join Missouri in protecting the interests of downstream states.

Kurt U. Schaefer is director of the Missouri Department of Natural Resources and a former state senator.



[Op-ed: Our Missouri River ... Concerns in the Basin | AGDAILY](#)

By [Wade.Bachmeier.and.Ken.Royse](#) Published: February 05, 2026

An [opinion piece](#) published in January on AGDAILY discussed the danger of out-of-basin water transfers across continental divides — arguing that such transfers harm the ability of water users in other Missouri River Basin states to access and use such water.

The article was structured as a conflict between the Upper Basin States and the Lower Basin States. But it was clearly aimed at North Dakota, and it was meant to present a position for limiting Missouri River water use in North Dakota.

As often said, everyone can have their own opinion, but we all need to have the same facts. The facts are as follows:

- All the states of the Basin contribute water into the system. The Upper Basin states of Wyoming, Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota consistently contribute at least half of the total flow. No Upper Basin state, either individually or collectively, is taking any amount of water that does any harm to the other states' ability to also use such water. North Dakota uses less than half of 1 percent of the flow of the river and currently has plans, through the Red River Valley Water Supply project, for only another half of 1 percent. This is an amount so minimal that it would be hard to distinguish its absence by the time the river reaches St. Louis.
- All the states in the Missouri River Basin benefit from the federal government's construction of the six dams to control flows on the river authorized through [the 1944 Flood Control Act](#). However, the construction of those dams came at a cost — a cost borne solely by states in the Upper Basin. Construction of the dams resulted in a loss of 1.7 million acres of land in Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota. These Upper Basin states made these large land sacrifices, and resultant economic sacrifices, so that the entire Basin could benefit.
- North Dakota, for a trade of our lost land, was promised irrigation development of over 1.2 million acres along with power benefits. Today, 80 years after such promises, the federal commitment for such supported irrigation development has dropped to approximately 70,000 acres. A similar promise, also not fulfilled, was made to Montana and South Dakota.
- Benefits of the Pick Sloan Act included promises of flood control, water for domestic, municipal, and industrial use, as well as irrigation development, power

supply, recreation, fish and wildlife enhancements, and navigation support. All benefits noted, except for navigation, are enjoyed by all the states. But only the downstream states enjoy the navigation benefit.

- The tremendous benefit of hydro power is completely provided by dams located in the Upper Basin. But much of that benefit is not used by either the Upper or Lower Basin states, with export of that power delivered to states not in the Basin.
- Let's be clear on the issue of the navigation benefit. It is enjoyed primarily and almost solely by the state of Missouri, but it is not the priority of the Pick Sloan Act. In fact, the Pick Sloan Act clearly states that Navigation shall “not conflict with any beneficial consumptive use, present or future, in (other) States (of the Basin).” ([1944 Flood Control Act, Section 1.b.](#))



Courtesy of the Missouri River Joint Water Board

In North Dakota, to make maximum use and benefit of the river system, we must transport Missouri River water across our state and across a Continental divide, as is being done in other basins of our country. The Red River Valley Water Supply project will provide vital

drought resiliency to eastern North Dakota, including the largest and third largest cities in the state. Without the completion of this project, a significant portion of the population in North Dakota will not have adequate drinking water should the state suffer a 1930s style drought. This project creates only a phantom problem for the state of Missouri. At full capacity, the Red River Valley Water Supply Project will use 165 cubic feet per second (cfs). The average flow close to the outlet of the Missouri River in Missouri is more than 94,000 cfs. Therefore, the North Dakota project that, according to the authors of the previous article, threatens the lives and livelihoods will take less than 0.18% of the flows out of the river at its confluence with the Mississippi. A number so minute, the cries of doomsday fall flat.

This is just the latest in a coordinated effort by the state of Missouri to challenge any and all claims to Missouri River water. In fact, only a few years ago, a similar North Dakota water project planning to use 20 cfs of Missouri River water was challenged by the state of Missouri. Missouri contended that North Dakota's taking of 0.02 percent of the total flow out of the river would be a damaging depletion of the river. That lawsuit was rightfully and promptly dismissed by the courts. The amounts of water used by any Upper Basin states, both individually and collectively, is not unreasonable, nor do current plans for additional water needs put any unreasonable restrictions on water use on the Lower Basin states.

But in a larger sense it makes no difference the extent, degree, or amount of water any state, inclusive of all our Basin states, withdraw from the river system for their own self-determined needs. What is important is mutual recognition and respect among our Basin neighbors for all of us to have a fair use of this important resource. We in the Upper Basin don't come to the Lower Basin and tell any of them how much water to use, how to use it, or where to use it. We say, yes, put it to the highest and best use so long as such use does not interfere with the prior rights of the other users in the Basin, and, importantly, recognizes the sacrifices made by the Upper Basin states so we all can pursue the benefits of the Pick Sloan Act.



Courtesy of the Missouri River Joint Water Board

The challenge the Upper Basin and Lower Basin both have is to be diligently aware of efforts to export the river system water to the west, out of the states that make up our Basin. The states that contribute water to the system, and particularly the states that made the large land sacrifices for the Pick Sloan Act, should, without questions or challenge, have reasonable use of the river within their respective states.

We should recognize that the real threat to our Basin are those efforts to take large amounts of water out of the Basin states. That should be our common shared concern. Let's not be distracted or divided by any efforts that may interfere with the fair usage of this great river resource that we share.

Wade.Bachmeier.is.the.chairman.of.the.Missouri.River.Joint.Water.Board.(MRJWB);The.MRJWB.is.a.North.Dakota.political.subdivision.made.up.of.county.water.boards.with.interest.in.the.Missouri.River.that.provides.a.cooperative.and.coordinated.effort.in.addressing.the.management?conservation?protection?development?and.control.of.water.resources.in.the.Missouri.River.Basin;

Ken.Royse.is.the.program.manager.for.the.MRJWB's.EAE.Program.– .Educate?Advocate?and.Engage.– .for.the.Missouri.River.system.in.North.Dakota;The.program.supports.the.MRJWB's.mission.by.educating.the.public.on.the.importance.of.the.Missouri.River?

advocating concerns to state and federal stakeholders and engaging with all who rely on or enjoy the benefits of the river system;

The Missouri Times

[Opinion: We can't afford to lose Missouri River water - The Missouri Times](#)

Opinion: We can't afford to lose Missouri River water

By Kurt U. Schaefer on February 3, 2026

For more than three decades, the State of Missouri has engaged in a water war with North Dakota. During that time, Missouri's Congressional delegation, our Governor and our Attorney General – regardless of party – have worked together to protect our water.

Missouri has always been vigilant about protecting the water in the Missouri River. As a young assistant attorney general 30 years ago, I witnessed the state, through legislation and litigation, vigorously oppose North Dakota projects diverting water away from the Missouri River. It was a hard fought battle then, and it remains one now.

Congress recently approved a measure that would provide \$50 million dollars to North Dakota to complete a project that will move water out of the Missouri River basin. This means federal tax dollars will divert Missouri River water away from the lower Missouri River basin to the Red River basin, which flows into Canada.

Reductions in the amount of water available downstream will harm Missouri agriculture, utilities, public water supplies, power plants, navigation and the greater inland waterway system. Lower releases for downstream uses can also result in increased water temperature, diminished water quality and impacts to Missouri fish and wildlife.

More than a year ago, Missouri Governor Mike Kehoe flagged this \$50 million project, known as the Eastern North Dakota Alternate Water Supply Project. In September 2025, Kehoe sent a letter to North Dakota Senator John Hoeven, clearly communicating Missouri's ongoing adamant opposition to any diversions of water out of the Missouri River basin.

We've seen what has happened out West where rivers have been diverted, depleted and diminished. The North Dakota diversions are the first, but they almost certainly won't be the last.

Missouri and its Congressional delegation have a long history of opposing North Dakota's water diversion projects because the projects reduce water available for us as a downstream state and set a dangerous precedent. We must ensure this attractive target is not exploited by interests outside the basin.

Missouri's opposition to the overall North Dakota project is a practical necessity to defend the interests of Missourians. The massive federal reservoirs on the Missouri River store the largest volume of water of any river system in the country. In times of drought, the federal government reduces downstream releases based on the amount of water stored in upstream reservoirs.

Because of the current drought, the Corps of Engineers is releasing less water from the reservoirs in the winter, and Missouri power plants have had difficulty withdrawing cooling water from the river. This seriously threatens the reliability of Missouri's electric grid.

The water stored in the Missouri River system has already been substantially depleted due to existing in-basin uses. The ENDAWS project will only increase the frequency and magnitude of these drought restrictions, reducing flow support to the lower Missouri River. If projects like the North Dakota diversions are allowed to move forward unchecked, other projects will follow, and the Missouri River will end up like the Colorado.

Nearly 25 years ago, U.S. Senator Kit Bond addressed the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, saying that disputes regarding management of the Missouri River are complex, but the political problem is quite simple. Eight states want the river managed to support their needs with little regard to how this impacts the other states in the river basin.

Missouri must oppose any federal funding or other actions that divert water from the Missouri River, and work with members from Iowa, Kansas and Nebraska to seek protections resulting in a fair balance between the upper and lower basin. We want to prevent future diversion projects that may be on a larger scale than what North Dakota is currently building with federal support.

Missouri has a strong Congressional delegation, and we thank Congressman Sam Graves for the leadership he provides at a national level as Chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. He, Senator Kit Bond and Senator Roy Blunt protected Missouri's interests by championing Missouri River issues for decades.

But our delegation can't do it alone. We need Congressional champions in other lower-basin states to join Missouri in protecting the interests of downstream states.

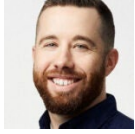
[Kurt U. Schaefer](#)

Director of the Missouri Department of Natural Resources. His legal career has spanned three decades, including serving as a former state senator and assistant attorney general.



Op-ed: Time to Take Missouri River Water Transfers Seriously

Op-ed: It is time to take Missouri River water transfers seriously



By Shane Kinne, Coalition to Protect the Missouri River Published: January 22, 2026

Recent legislative action is putting farmers' access to ag markets at risk, not to mention drinking water supplies and energy production.

Appropriations bill [HR 6938](#), recently passed by Congress, includes a measure that provides \$50 million dollars to the state of North Dakota to complete a project that will move water out of the Missouri River Basin. The bill is now sitting on President Donald Trump's desk waiting for his signature. We can't control rain, but we can control how we manage what has been given to us. As the drought-stricken Missouri River Reservoir System places increasing strain on its users, it is clear that the consequences extend far beyond the region.

Currently, low winter flows threaten the utility and drinking water supplies from the Omaha region all the way to the mouth of the river in St. Louis. Access to water is crucial for maintaining our electric grid and ensuring the continuous flow of drinking water, particularly during periods of peak demand, such as the coldest weeks of the year.

Although spring forecasts indicate that Basin runoff is returning closer to normal, years of cumulative deficits have left the reservoir system significantly depleted and slow to recover. Current projections for spring indicate the navigation flow support season will begin 5,000 cubic feet per second below full service, the lowest starting level since the 2023 navigation season. This poses a serious challenge for shippers attempting to move affordable agricultural inputs into the region and transport grain and other commodities to market.

With the agricultural economy already reeling from economic pressure, every available route to market is essential.



A barge travels down the Missouri River. (Image courtesy of the Coalition to Protect the Missouri River)

Unfortunately, HR 6939 will make the situation worse. North Dakota justifies the move to address its need to access a reliable, drought-proof water supply for its growing population. However, taking water from one drought-stricken basin to solve the needs of another is hardly a sustainable solution. This is water that will never return to a system that desperately needs it.

And this is just the start.

This is not a new issue, but it represents the latest and most troubling development in a fight the state of Missouri and its stakeholders have waged for years. It sets a dangerous precedent that Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska, and Kansas must take seriously, and one that the Upper Basin states should not ignore.

Imagine a frigid winter night in your home with your family. Your electricity flickers, and your phone buzzes with a notification that your area is experiencing brownouts or blackouts due to low Missouri River flows and associated ice jams impacting a utility's ability to properly cool its generators.

You are experiencing an emergency that impacts your family's safety and farm livelihood, all while knowing that critical water is being exported for use in another basin. This is a game of inches, and every inch matters.

It is short-sighted to transfer water out of the Missouri River Basin to solve water challenges in another basin. You've heard the old saying "robbing Peter to pay Paul" — and that is exactly what this is. What happens when our neighbors to the west decide to make big moves, attempting to solve their water challenges with Missouri River water? Then it isn't

only the Lower Basin states that would have concern. It would lead to major allocations of water leaving our system before any state the Missouri River flows through can access it.

This is not merely a regional concern. During periods of low water, the Missouri River can supply 70 percent or more of the flow to the Middle Mississippi River, one of the nation's most critical shipping corridors. On average, 65 million metric tons of bulk agricultural commodities move by barge through this system to New Orleans-area terminals, yet it has faced repeated low-water challenges in recent years.

With every inch of water being critical, it is nonsensical to allow water to leave a system that is a vital part of the U.S. supply chain.



A view of the Missouri River and adjacent farm fields near the town of Craig, Montana.
(Image by davidrh, Shutterstock)

Congress has recently invested significantly in repairing the Missouri River navigation channel. This has led to increased reliability and increased shipping on the river, even in low-water years. All users benefit from this resiliency.

It would be a shame to throw away that momentum and opportunity by ignoring the threat of water being transferred out of the Missouri River Basin. It is a threat to the economy, to drinking water, and to anyone who relies on electricity for their daily life.

It is time for the leaders of the lower Missouri River Basin states to take this issue head-on before it is too late. We stand ready to work with the governors of the states of Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska, and Kansas and their Congressional delegations as they protect those who live, work, and rely on the Missouri River for life and sustenance.

Shane Kinne is Executive Director of the Coalition to Protect the Missouri River. CPMR is a diverse organization that represents those that live and work on and adjacent to the

Missouri River. Its membership includes Missouri River ports, navigation interests, energy production, water supply, and agriculture groups.

01.15.26

HOEVEN SECURES \$50 MILLION FOR ENDAWS, \$100–\$120 MILLION FOR LOCAL COST SHARE OF RED RIVER VALLEY FLOOD PROTECTION BOTH MEASURES GENERATE MILLIONS IN SAVINGS FOR NORTH DAKOTA TAXPAYERS

WASHINGTON – Senator John Hoeven, a member of the Senate Energy and Water Appropriations Committee, secured two major provisions advancing critical water projects for eastern North Dakota in the appropriations legislation passed by the U.S. Senate today. These include:

- **\$50 million for the Eastern North Dakota Area Water Supply (ENDAWS) project**, and ability to use existing infrastructure which will **save \$200 million**.
- Hoeven-sponsored legislation directing the Corps to apply \$100–120 million in federal **savings to reduce the local cost share of flood protection in the Red River Valley**.

“By passing legislation to create the first-in-the-nation public-private partnership (P3) and providing the federal funding upfront, the federal portion of flood protection for the Red River Valley is ahead of schedule and under budget. With this legislation in place, those savings will go to the diversion authority, providing \$100–120 million that North Dakota taxpayers won’t have to pay,” said Hoeven.

“At the same time, we secured \$50 million to start ENDAWS, which combined with authority to use existing infrastructure will save taxpayers \$200 million. We are effectively bringing one historic effort, the Fargo-Moorhead Diversion, to a close while getting rolling on another project critical to the future of the region, and importantly with the legislation we secured today, we will save North Dakota taxpayer dollars on these projects without increasing federal costs. We look forward to reviewing these important provisions next week in Fargo with the Fargo Moorhead Diversion Authority and Garrison Diversion Conservancy District,” Hoeven said.

“On top of that, we secured support for important national security, water development and public safety initiatives across the state. This includes additional funding for the spillway safety project at the Garrison Dam, which is essential to the long-term integrity of the dam.”

Advancing ENDAWS

- Hoeven has been working to fully fund ENDAWS, which uses water from the Bureau of Reclamation’s (BOR) Snake Creek Pumping Station and the McClusky Canal to bring a more reliable, drought-resistant water supply to central and eastern North Dakota.
- The legislation enables North Dakota to use existing BOR infrastructure. The Garrison Diversion Conservancy District estimates that this alternative water supply would reduce project costs for the state-led Red River Valley Water Supply Project (RRVWSP) by \$200 million while also saving on operating costs.
- The funding secured today follows Hoeven’s efforts with the North Dakota delegation to secure a completed Environmental Impact Study (EIS) and a signed Record of Decision (ROD) for ENDAWS, which were issued in 2021.

\$100–120 Million for Red River Valley Flood Protection

- This is the **17th piece of legislation** passed by Hoeven to advance flood protection for the Fargo-Moorhead region. Previously, Hoeven passed legislation to construct comprehensive flood protection utilizing a first-in-the-nation, public-private partnership (P3) and secured the **full \$750 million federal cost share up front** in 2022, enabling the Army Corps to complete its work ahead of schedule and under budget.
- The Army Corps estimates the cost for the federal portion of the project will be significantly lower than \$750 million, and any remaining balance is to be transferred to the local sponsors, but not until the project is closed out in 2031.
- Accordingly, Hoeven’s legislation passed today accelerates this funding. The goal is to get \$100–120 million in federal support to the diversion authority this year, reducing the cost to construct the local side of the project.

The legislative package includes the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 appropriations bills for Energy and Water Development (EWD); Commerce, Justice and Science (CJS); and Interior-Environment. In addition to the funding for eastern North Dakota, Hoeven worked as a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee to advance the following priorities in these bills:

Water Development

- \$18.5 million in Planning, Engineering and Design (PED) funding to support the Garrison Dam Safety Modification Project. Hoeven has secured \$45.7 million for the project’s design phase to date.
- \$14.1 million for the Army Corps Section 594 program, which supports small water infrastructure projects like sanitary sewer systems in rural areas.

National Security

- Includes \$1.91 billion to advance nuclear modernization on systems which will be deployed at Minot Air Force Base, including developing the warheads for:
 - The Air Force's Long Range Stand Off (LRSO) missile.
 - The Sentinel intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM).

Public Safety

- A total of \$5.5 million for the continued operation and expansion of the Advanced Training Center (ATC) at Camp Grafton and address law enforcement needs in Indian Country.
- Continues Hoeven's SURVIVE Act, which sets aside \$97.5 million, or 5 percent, from the U.S. Department of Justice Crime Victim Fund to assist with tribal victim services.
- \$44 million for the Regional Information Sharing System (RISS) Program, which supports secure communications and information sharing services to combat multi-jurisdictional crime.

Commerce

- National Rural Export Center: Maintains \$1 million for the National Rural Export Center in Fargo and up to \$1 million for the Rural Export Centers nationwide.

-###-

Burleigh exit from Garrison Diversion delayed

Diversion board to hold hearing on county's request

ZACHARY WEIAND
Bismarck Tribune

The Garrison Diversion Conservancy District Board of Directors on Friday delayed deciding on a petition from Burleigh County asking to leave the district.

Instead, the board voted to schedule a public hearing on the request, allowing

Burleigh County officials to present evidence and argue their case for removal. District staff will work with the county to set a date and time for the hearing.

The Garrison Diversion District was created in 1955 by the state Legislature to manage the Garrison Unit Project, which diverts water from the Missouri River to other parts of the state. There are 28 counties in the district, and each is responsible for levying one mill of property tax to support the district. Burleigh County has been a member since 1988.

The Burleigh County Commission in December narrowly approved a resolution asking to leave the district. Commissioners have raised the issue during the past two budget cycles as they look to cut what they consider unnecessary spending.

Under state law, counties may petition to leave the district by outlining specific reasons they believe membership has not provided sufficient benefit. The district's

Please see **DIVERSION**, Page A2

A2 | SATURDAY, JANUARY 10, 2026

Diversion

From A1

board then determines whether to grant the request. If denied, the county may appeal the decision in state district court.

Burleigh County says it has paid more than it received

Burleigh County officials argue the county has paid far more into the district than it has received in return, and that withdrawal would provide property tax relief. According to the county's petition, Burleigh has paid about \$9.9 million in property taxes to the district since joining, while receiving roughly \$825,500 in grants between 1993 and 2022.

Counties in the district are required to levy one mill of property tax annually to support the district, equal to \$736,900 in this year's Burleigh County budget.

During Friday's meeting, Tami Norgard, an attorney for Garrison Diversion, stated that a hearing on the petition request would provide the district with another opportunity to defend its value to Burleigh County. Some of these benefits, she said, include the district's Matching Recreation Grant Program, which dedicates 20% of the district's tax levy for recreational facilities.

The district also provides irrigation, she said, and manages the McClusky Canal, about 8 miles of which flows through northern Burleigh County.

"There's some non-monetary benefits (Burleigh County) receives," she said.

Garrison Diversion Ward County Director Alan Walter argued that Burleigh County receives the most benefit from the district because it is "completing the program" promised by the federal government when Garrison Dam was built. He said the dam's flood control has allowed Bismarck to expand into areas — mainly on the city's southern edge — that once saw annual flooding.

"There is no way I would ever vote Bismarck or Burleigh County out of this committee," Walter said.

Reach Zachary Weiand at 701-250-8264 or zachary.weiand@bismarcktribune.com.

Gussiaas honored with Water Wheel Award at 2025 Joint N.D. Water Convention and Irrigation Workshop

Foster County 12/22/2025

Stacey Gussiaas of Carrington was honored with the Water Wheel Award at the 62nd annual Joint North Dakota Water Convention and Irrigation Workshop on December 11 in Bismarck.

The Water Wheel Award is a joint award given by the North Dakota Water Users Association and the North Dakota Water Resource Districts Association in recognition of distinctive leadership and perseverance for the protection, development

and management of North Dakota's water resources, thereby fostering a better quality of life for our people.

Gussiaas has been a cornerstone of the Garrison Diversion Conservancy District since January 1996, serving as Administrative Assistant with unwavering dedication and professionalism. Her detail-oriented approach and exceptional organizational skills ensure that office operations run smoothly. For more

than two decades, Gussiaas has led one of the North Dakota Water Education Foundation's scholarship fundraisers, the Top O' the Day Tee-Off scholarship golf scramble, guiding it to success. Through her leadership in coordinating workers, outreach, logistics and sponsorships, Gussiaas has helped provide meaningful support to the Dushinske & Jamison Water Resources Scholarship students and their futures. A graduate of

Mayville State University with an Associate of Arts degree, Gussiaas applies her education to enhance office processes and event outcomes. She is widely respected for her professional demeanor, her commitment to service, and her ability to build strong relationships with colleagues. Gussiaas' contributions in the office reflect her skill and dedication to the mission and people she serves.

City inks financing agreement with Garrison Diversion

Ctown Independent 12/15/25

BY LEASA A. LURA

The City of Carrington along with seven other cities, entered into an interim financing agreement at their meeting last Monday with Garrison Diversion Conservancy District over the Red River Valley Water Supply Project.

The city's total principal will be 0.8050%, or \$550,049.22.

Mayor Tom Erdmann told the council that this amount will change over time due to the fact that the pipeline running from Kensal to the outlet hasn't been bid yet.

During the meeting, held on Monday, Dec. 8, the council held the second reading of Ordinance 284 which

relates to real and personal property transfers. Motion passed.

The council also approved the library board's recommendation to appoint Nicole Harildstad and Alissa Morgan to 3-year terms beginning in January.

In other business:
Committee Reports



RED RIVER VALLEY WATER SUPPLY PROJECT

2026 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: 572

OPEN RATE: 44.9%

ARTICLES & CLICK RATES:

- ENDAWS Receives Federal Approval & Funding - Click Rate 27%
- Three RRVWSP Construction Contracts Awarded, 2025-2027 Biennium Funding Confirmed - Click Rate 22%
- Introducing Scott Mehring, Garrison Diversion Field Services Supervisor - Click Rate 13%
- LAWA Board of Directors Election Results - Click Rate 28%

UNSUBSCRIBES: 2

RRVWSP PROGRESS REPORT QUARTER 2

EMAILS SENT: 571

OPEN RATE: 47.4%

ARTICLES & CLICK RATES:

- Thankful for North Dakota's Investment in Drought Protection - Click Rate 23%
- RRVWSP Pipeline Construction Moves into Griggs County - 25%
- Introducing Jeff Breker, LAWA Board Member - Click Rate 21%
- LAWA Thanks LaVonne Althoff for 22 Years of Service - Click Rate 18%

UNSUBSCRIBES: 0

RRVWSP PROGRESS REPORT QUARTER 3

EMAILS SENT: 572

OPEN RATE: 44.8%

ARTICLES & CLICK RATES:

- Fall 2026 User Meetings - Click Rate 27%
- Introducing Spencer Halvorson, LAWA Executive Director - Click Rate 27%
- 2026 Construction & Bidding Update - Click Rate 32%

UNSUBSCRIBES: 0

RRVWSP PROGRESS REPORT QUARTER 4

EMAILS SENT:

OPEN RATE:

ARTICLES & CLICK RATES:

-
-
-

UNSUBSCRIBES:

Fall 2026 User Meetings

The Lake Agassiz Water Authority (LAWA) is scheduling meetings with prospective users of the Red River Valley Water Supply Project (RRVWSP) in late 2026. The goal of the meetings is to provide rural water systems, cities, and counties with updates on construction progress and cost projections. The RRVWSP is co-sponsored by LAWA and Garrison Diversion Conservancy District.

Regional & Individual Meetings Planned

“We want to visit with each User that has shown interest in participating in this generational project,” says Spencer Halvorson, LAWA Executive Director. “We are at a point in the project where we need to firm up the commitments and determine where the water will ultimately be going.”

Halvorson says several regional meetings will be scheduled this fall to bring community and water system leaders together to hear updates and answer questions. Follow-up meetings will be scheduled with individual systems to discuss their unique service needs, confirm water nominations, and outline their estimated costs.

Federal, State & Local Partnership

The State of North Dakota has legislatively committed \$953 million to the RRVWSP. For the 2025-2027 biennium, \$205 million is included for the RRVWSP in the Department of Water Resources budget. That funding represents the State’s 75% cost share for the current biennium. The local portion for the biennium is \$68.3 million, which is paid largely by the Cities of Fargo and Grand Forks and an initial contingent of communities that have signed interim financing agreements.

The project has also had significant success in securing federal funding, as the State’s congressional delegation helped secure \$150 million for the Eastern North Dakota Alternate Water Supply (ENDAWS), a project that complements the RRVWSP. ENDAWS will utilize existing federal infrastructure to drastically reduce construction and operational costs. Senator John Hoeven has a goal of providing an additional \$304 million for the ENDAWS project.

“As of 2026, financial commitments to the project at the state, federal, and local levels exceed \$800 million,” says Merri Mooridian, Deputy Program Manager of RRVWSP Administration and Garrison Diversion Administrative Officer. “The cooperative effort between local users, the State of North Dakota, and the federal government coming together for a common goal has been amazing.”

Potential RRVWSP Recipients

Twenty-four rural water providers, cities, and counties signed Memorandums of Commitment (MOC) since 2024. The systems that move forward with RRVWSP participation will be asked to sign a Water Supply and Distribution Agreement.

The following previously signed an MOC to indicate their interest in the RRVWSP: the Cities of Carrington / Carrington JDA, Cooperstown, Fargo / West Fargo / Cass County, Grafton, Grand Forks, Hillsboro, Jamestown, Lisbon, Mayville, Valley City, Wahpeton, Washburn; Agassiz Water Users District, East Central Regional Water District, McLean-Sheridan Rural Water District, Northeast Regional Water District, Southeast Water Users District, and Walsh Rural Water District; as well as Dickey, LaMoure, Richland, Sargent, and Traill Counties.

Introducing Spencer Halvorson, LAWA Executive Director

The Lake Agassiz Water Authority (LAWA) hired its first employee in June this year, 23 years after the North Dakota State Legislature created the water authority. Spencer Halvorson is LAWA's new Executive Director.

LAWA is a co-sponsor of the Red River Valley Water Supply Project (RRVWSP) with the Garrison Diversion Conservancy District (Garrison Diversion). LAWA represents the end users of the Project. The magnitude of the effort to get the RRVWSP to where it is today is not lost on Spencer. He gives a lot of credit to those who have been working for decades to make this much-needed water supply project a reality.

“When reading up on the Red River Valley Water Supply, you quickly learn that the vision to utilize the Missouri River to the strategic benefit of North Dakota has been 80 years in the making,” he says.

Ultimately, the chance to work on a historic project like the RRVWSP was too rare to pass up. “Coming to LAWA and getting to work on this project when it’s about six years away from the anticipated completion is inspiring,” says Spencer. “Just an incredible project and opportunity at a critical time in the project’s development.” The scope of the project is well understood by him, with much of central and eastern North Dakota expected to benefit from the project. “It’s an amazing opportunity to do something for the common good of – not just one town – but half of the citizens of North Dakota,” said Spencer.

A Career Built on Public Service

After growing up in Devils Lake, Spencer attended Lake Region State College where he earned his Associate of Arts degree. He went on to earn a Bachelor degree and Master of Public Administration from the University of North Dakota. Since then, he has devoted his career to public service, most recently serving as the City Administrator for his hometown. He began at the City of Grand Forks as a Planning and Zoning intern and was promoted several times before being named City Administration Assistant and Planner/Project Coordinator.

His professional experience will assist Spencer in two ways that will directly benefit the RRVWSP – responsiveness to the project participants and to the LAWA Board. “Over my eight years or so with the cities of Devils Lake and Grand Forks, I worked directly with four different mayors. Many of the LAWA board members are current or former mayors of their communities. Reporting directly to people who hold that position is familiar. I understand the issues they work on day-to-day and the RRVWSP is one of many projects vying for their attention,” explains Spencer.

City Administrators, Finance Directors, Engineers, and Utility Managers from LAWA member communities have played major roles in the development of the RRVWSP. “These are all positions I’ve worked with, supervised, or held myself. I think that provides a perspective that helps in working with users effectively – whether they are a big city, small city, or rural water district,” he says.

Spencer’s time as the Devils Lake City Administrator also allows him to appreciate what goes into a decision like joining the RRVWSP. “I understand what it’s like to sit on the other side of the table and the calculus that goes into the user’s perspective when faced with the possibility of joining the project,” he says. “That experience provides a perspective that will help be responsive to users – all which have unique water supply needs.”

Short and Long-Term Goals

As the RRVWSP moves closer to becoming operational, LAWA is firming up its organizational structure to ensure the future program works seamlessly. The first step was hiring an Executive Director. Some of Spencer’s immediate goals in the new leadership role are to improve user engagement by facilitating more consistent and better communication with its members, as well as providing better structure, stability, and consistency to the execution of LAWA business.

LAWA is taking a more prominent role in coordinating the user agreements. Spencer began meeting with the prospective users shortly after coming on board. He is scheduling

regional and individual meetings with prospective users to confirm participation in the RRVWSP. Looking ahead, he is also prioritizing the facilitation of several important contracts that are on the horizon. The Water Supply, Water Distribution, and Thompson-Acker Agreements will be foundational legal documents which will define how the project will operate.

“My long-term goal is to be responsive, effective, and reliable for users when it comes to operations, diplomacy, and advocacy,” he says.

Outside of the Office

Due to his new position, Spencer recently relocated his family of five from Devils Lake to Fargo. He and his wife, Stephanie, stay busy with their three children who are all under age four.

Outside of time spent with family or on the job, Spencer also officiates high school and college basketball. The part-time gig also benefits his day job.

“Officiating is a great way to develop skills that help you in your professional and personal life. You really have to work hard on what’s right in front of you. You take black and white rules and enforce them on a gray world. You learn to trust yourself, separate noise from signal, and work with others in tense situations,” says Spencer. “It also teaches you how important a ‘next play’ mindset is in life. The only thing worse than one bad call is two bad calls back-to-back. Same thing for your professional and personal life – the most important task is the next one, and compounding negatives can only be prevented by working hard to get the next play right.”

Whether it’s on the court or in a meeting, Spencer works diligently to make the right calls at the right time while finding common ground with all the players in the room.

2026 Construction & Bidding Update

Fall is quickly approaching but the 2026 construction season for the Red River Valley Water Supply Project (RRVWSP) is still full steam ahead. Progress on the transmission pipeline continues with 9.6 miles installed this year.

“Our relatively dry summer weather has helped the construction crews this year,” says Kip Kovar, Garrison Diversion Conservancy District Engineer / Deputy Program Manager for RRVWSP Engineering. “There’s still plenty of construction season left in 2026 to make even more progress on the transmission pipeline.”

Transmission Pipeline Progress

- **Contract 5C:** 8.1 miles from Bordulac Township to Bucephalia Township in Foster County. Pipe installation was completed in July 2026. Land restoration will be completed this year.
- **Contract 5D:** 10 miles of pipeline and a trenchless crossing of Pipestem Creek in western Foster County and eastern Wells County are complete. Land restoration will wrap up in 2026.
- **Contract 6A:** 7.1 miles of pipeline from James River to Eastman Township in Foster County. Pipe installation was completed by August 2026. Land restoration will be completed this year.
- **Contract 6B/C:** 3 miles are installed of the 17.6-mile pipeline in McKinnon, Sutton, and Revere Townships in Foster and Griggs Counties. The project includes two 96-inch diameter trenchless crossings of jurisdictional wetlands and one 96-inch diameter trenchless crossing of a BNSF railroad.
- **Contract 7A:** This segment is 6.5 miles long and runs from Revere Township to Cooperstown in Griggs County. Pipe installation began in late August 2026. The contract includes three 96-inch diameter trenchless crossings of jurisdictional wetlands.

ENDAWS Contracts

Garrison Diversion Conservancy District (Garrison Diversion) advertised the first Eastern North Dakota Alternate Water Supply (ENDAWS) facilities contract in July for initial work on the Biota Water Treatment Plant (BWTP) site. Martin Construction out of Dickinson, North Dakota, was selected with the low bid of \$20.4 million from a pool of six bidders.

Construction on the ENDAWS BWTP Contract 1 is scheduled to begin in October. Contract 1 includes improving and building access roads to the future BWTP, performing mass grading of approximately 500,000 cubic yards of material, and excavating a pumping station wet well.

The BWTP is an important part of ENDAWS, a project that complements the RRVWSP. Before conveying the water through the RRVWSP transmission pipeline, the water will be treated to meet the requirement of regulatory agencies.

By utilizing existing federal infrastructure, including the Snake Creek Pumping Plant and the McClusky Canal, ENDAWS will reduce RRVWSP construction costs. Another benefit of using existing infrastructure is the reduced operational costs due to a higher elevation and

lower pumping lift and shorter distance to convey water from McClusky Canal to the transmission pipeline.

Garrison Diversion plans to advertise ENDAWS BWTP Contract 2 next spring. That contract will include the McClusky Canal intake, tunnel, and wet well/shaft liner.

“The beginning of ENDAWS construction is an important milestone,” says Duane DeKrey, Garrison Diversion General Manager. “We are moving closer to fulfilling the promise of an emergency and supplemental water supply for central and eastern North Dakota.”

Thankful for North Dakota's Investment in Drought Protection

North Dakotans are in an enviable position in 2026. The state is well on the way to protecting nearly half the state's population from the effects of drought.

A Much-Needed Drought Project

"I give a lot of credit to the State of North Dakota for recognizing the importance of implementing a long-term solution to protect central and eastern North Dakota from the devastating effects of future droughts," says Duane DeKrey, Garrison Diversion Conservancy District (Garrison Diversion) General Manager. Garrison Diversion is a co-sponsor of the Red River Valley Water Supply Project (RRVWSP) along with the Lake Agassiz Water Authority. "The estimated financial impact of a drought similar to the 1930s Dust Bowl is \$33 billion over 10 years. That would impact the entire state's economy."

"The state has been an excellent partner in this drought mitigation project," says Merri Mooridian, Deputy Program Manager of RRVWSP Administration and Garrison Diversion Administrative Officer. "Thanks to support from Sen. John Hoeven and Sen. Kevin Cramer, the federal government has also stepped up with \$150 million for the Eastern North Dakota Alternate Water Supply, a project that complements the RRVWSP by using existing Bureau of Reclamation infrastructure."

The RRVWSP will provide an emergency and supplemental water supply to communities and rural water systems in central and eastern North Dakota by conveying water from the Missouri River via a 125-mile buried pipeline. When construction wraps up, nearly half of the state's population will benefit from the additional water supply.

The RRVWSP has been in the works since the year 2000, when it was conceived as a federal, state and local project. However, without federal authorization, a state and local version of the project was developed due to the dire need for water resiliency. Construction began in 2021 thanks to support from the North Dakota State Water Commission (now called the Department of Water Resources). The project is anticipated to be complete by 2032.

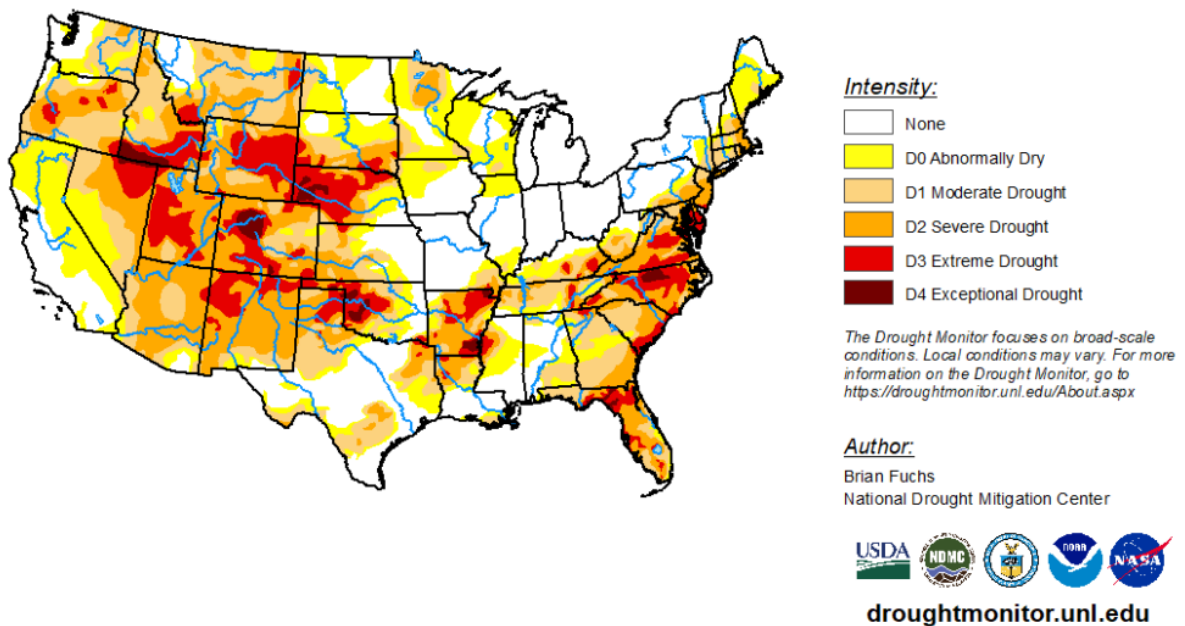
"It will be a relief when the construction wraps up, and communities and rural water systems receive water from the Red River Valley Water Supply Project. This is a historic project, one that I'm certainly proud to have worked on during my career at Garrison Diversion," says Kip Kovar, Deputy Program Manager for RRVWSP Engineering and Garrison Diversion Engineer.

Drought Conditions Across the U.S.

Having a project like the RRVWSP in place to protect North Dakota's residents and economy is a true blessing when one considers what other states are facing. More than half of the United States experienced drought conditions during the spring of 2026.

U.S. Drought Monitor Contiguous U.S. (CONUS)

June 16, 2026
(Released Thursday, Jun. 18, 2026)
Valid 8 a.m. EDT



More than 97% of Colorado is in a drought, with 79% of the state in the severe, extreme, or exceptional category. Some of the lowest recorded winter snowpack levels, combined with little rain and higher-than-normal spring temperatures, created a statewide emergency. In an effort to cut water use by 20%, the City of Denver issued watering restrictions along with a rule requiring restaurants to serve tap water to customers only on request, instead of automatically providing it to guests.

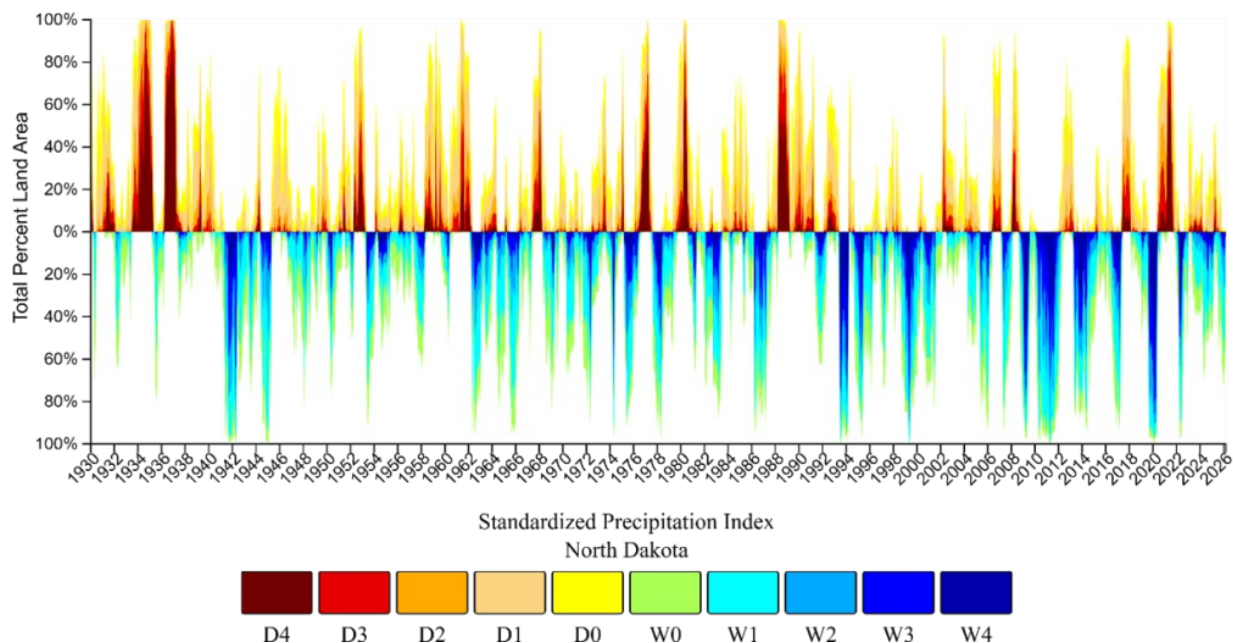
North Dakota's neighboring states are also experiencing drought, though not to the same degree as Colorado. More than 76% of Montana, nearly 55% of South Dakota, and more than 37% of Minnesota are seeing drought conditions as of June 16. But what about us? The U.S. Drought Monitor listed North Dakota and Michigan as the only two drought-free states in late April. By mid-June, drought conditions crept into 10.3% of North Dakota.

North Dakota is no stranger to dry spells. In fact, drought is an unfortunately common occurrence. Historic droughts during the 1930s Dust Bowl and 1950s affected our water supplies and agriculture. Many people remember the more recent drought of the 1980s and the short but intense droughts of 2012, 2017, 2020, and 2021.

North Dakota's Highly Variable Climate

North Dakota's climate is highly variable, with the potential for droughts and floods occurring during back-to-back years. In 2011, several areas of the state experienced serious flooding, including Fargo and Minot. Even climatologists were surprised by the summer drought that followed in 2012.

In the chart below, the dark red areas indicate extremely dry conditions while the dark blue shows extremely wet periods. This illustration makes it easy to see how North Dakota continuously seesawed between wet and dry periods from 1930 through 2026.



The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) National Centers for Environmental Information created the Standardized Precipitation Index to illustrate how observed precipitation deviates from the climatological average.

“Our constant back and forth between too much and too little water highlights the importance of being prepared, which the State of North Dakota has helped its residents achieve by supporting drought and flood projects across the state,” says DeKrey. “We should all be thankful to our state and federal delegation for supporting projects like the

Red River Valley Water Supply Project. We're miles ahead of a lot of other states right now in terms of drought mitigation efforts."

Hopefully, North Dakota will avoid worsening drought for the rest of 2026. Though construction is underway and making steady progress, we are still a few years from being able to rely on the RRVWSP for an emergency and supplemental water supply.

RRVWSP Pipeline Construction Moves into Griggs County

The 2026 Red River Valley Water Supply Project (RRVWSP) construction season is well underway. Crews have been installing the transmission pipeline for several years in Foster and Wells Counties. This spring, work moved into Griggs County.

Carstensen Contracting, Inc. began working on a 6.5-mile portion of 72-inch pipeline from Helena Township to Ball Hill Township in Griggs County. Carstensen is also installing a 9.1-mile stretch from McKinnon Township to Mabel Township in Foster and Griggs Counties, and an 8.4-mile pipeline from Mabel Township to Helena Township in Griggs County.

"The projects that began this spring in Griggs County are expected to wrap up in the fall of 2028," says Kip Kovar, Garrison Diversion Conservancy District Engineer / Deputy Program Manager for RRVWSP Engineering.

"This project brings hundreds of crew members to the region each construction season. These workers stay in hotels and campgrounds or rent apartments and houses. They visit restaurants and contribute to local sales tax revenue when they go shopping," says Merri Mooridian, Garrison Diversion Administrative Officer / Deputy Program Manager of RRVWSP Administration. "The City of Carrington and Foster County have enjoyed an economic boost thanks to the construction crews, and we expect that to occur along the pipeline's route as the work continues."

When construction is complete, treated water from the Missouri River will be conveyed via the 125-mile transmission pipeline from central North Dakota to the Red River Valley. The buried pipeline will span from the McClusky Canal to the discharge structure, which empties into the Sheyenne River, located about six miles south of Cooperstown. The pipeline will serve communities in central North Dakota and keep Lake Ashtabula full. Currently, there are 34 miles of transmission pipe in the ground.

Introducing Jeff Breker, LAWA Board Member

Jeff Breker understands the importance of having access to high quality water better than many people. As a resident of Sargent County who has operated a ranch for more than 40 years, he remembers the days before rural water reached his farmstead.

“I’ve been operating my cattle operation since the early eighties. Starting out, my wife Jody and I had water quantity and quality struggles. In 1988, we invested \$8,000 in a 900 foot well into glacial till. It was unsuccessful,” explains Jeff. “The water here was high in sulfur, and you could see the discoloration when it came out of the tap.”

In the early nineties, Richland Rural Water Users expanded into Sargent County to help address high arsenic levels. That expansion allowed Jeff’s family and their cattle to enjoy constant access to high-quality water. “I wouldn’t have a livestock business to where I’m at right now without good water. High quality water is needed for the success of a cattle business,” says Jeff.

He became active with the Richland Rural Water Users board which was renamed Southeast Water Users District (SEWUD). Over the years Ransom Sargent Water Users District and Dickey Rural Water Users Association also joined under the SEWUD name. Jeff is the current SEWUD Board President. He recently replaced LaVonne Althoff as the SEWUD representative on the Lake Agassiz Water Authority (LAWA) Board of Directors.

“LaVonne served in many leadership roles on the SEWUD Board of Directors and the North Dakota Water Rural Water Systems Association. She did an excellent job and has been dedicated to water industry through LAWA service and beyond. She positively impacted the water industry in North Dakota,” says Jeff.

Jeff is already well known within North Dakota’s water circles. In addition to his new role on the LAWA board, he is the current Vice President of the North Dakota Rural Water Systems Association. In 2020, he received the prestigious Water Wheel award from the North Dakota Water Users Association.

His experience as a former Sargent County representative on the Garrison Diversion Conservancy District (Garrison Diversion) Board of Directors provides valuable knowledge about the history of LAWA’s biggest initiative – the Red River Valley Water Supply Project (RRVWSP). LAWA and Garrison Diversion are co-sponsors of the state-led RRVWSP.

“The federal government promised North Dakota water as compensation for farmland lost to flooding due to the construction of dams on the Missouri River. The project traces its roots to the Pick-Sloan Missouri Basin Program. We spent years waiting for the project to move forward, through multiple presidents,” explains Jeff.

The RRVWSP will provide a supplemental and emergency water supply from the Missouri River to central and eastern North Dakota via a buried pipeline that spans from the McClusky Canal to the Sheyenne River near Cooperstown. With construction of the transmission pipeline well underway, the cities and rural water systems, including SEWUD, are looking forward to the completion of the RRVWSP in a few years.

“The Red River Valley Water Supply will provide water for years to come,” says Jeff. “This project is forward thinking in the development of water for the future of North Dakota.”

He and Jody have three adult children and nine grandchildren. The couple likes to travel, golf, and enjoy time with family and friends. Their daughter, Ashten, is an electrical engineer in South Dakota and their two sons, Jacob and Greg, are taking over the ranch.

Though he has retired from ranching, Jeff isn’t taking a step back from his work with North Dakota’s water any time soon. He truly knows how life changing a new water supply can be for communities.

LAWA Thanks LaVonne Althoff for 22 Years of Service

The Lake Agassiz Water Authority (LAWA) Board of Directors is thanking one of its initial members who is retiring after 22 years of service. LaVonne Althoff has represented Southeast Water Users District (SEWUD) since the very first LAWA Board meeting in February 2004.

The following resolution of appreciation was adopted unanimously during the March 2026 LAWA Board meeting:

Resolution of Appreciation Recognizing LaVonne Althoff of Southeast Water Users District for Her Dedicated Years of Service

WHEREAS, the Lake Agassiz Water Authority (LAWA) has benefited from the dedication and leadership of individuals who have faithfully served to advance reliable, high-quality water supplies for communities across North Dakota; and

WHEREAS, LaVonne Althoff, representing the Southeast Water Users District, has served on the LAWA Board with distinction, bringing valuable perspective, thoughtful insight, and a strong commitment to regional collaboration; and

WHEREAS, throughout her tenure serving since the inception of LAWA, Ms. Althoff has demonstrated consistent support for the mission and goals of LAWA, contributing to sound decision-making and long-term planning efforts that strengthen regional water sustainability; and

WHEREAS, her service reflects a deep understanding of the importance of cooperative water development and responsible stewardship on behalf of the communities served by LAWA;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Lake Agassiz Water Authority duly assembled in Fargo, in the state of North Dakota, on March 27, 2026, hereby expresses its sincere appreciation and gratitude to LaVonne Althoff for her dedicated service, leadership, and contributions as a member of the LAWA Board; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that LAWA recognizes and thanks Ms. Althoff and the Southeast Water Users District for their continued commitment to advancing regional water solutions that benefit present and future generations.

Jeff Breker, SEWUD Board President, replaced LaVonne on the LAWA Board of Directors.

Three RRVWSP Construction Contracts Awarded, 2025-2027 Biennium Funding Confirmed

As contractors prepare for the 2026 construction season of the Red River Valley Water Supply Project (RRVWSP) transmission pipeline, the State of North Dakota's Water Topics Overview Committee received an update on the Project's status. On March 26, Duane DeKrey, Garrison Diversion Conservancy District (Garrison Diversion) General Manager, shared the RRVWSP status update, plus work plans for the remainder of the 2025-2027 biennium. Garrison Diversion is a co-sponsor of the RRVWSP with Lake Agassiz Water Authority (LAWA).

"This year's construction season will begin with 30 miles of pipeline installed to date, with plans to construct 14 miles during the 2026 season," DeKrey says.

Garrison Diversion requested construction bids for Contracts 6B, 6C, and 7A last fall. The LAWA and Garrison Diversion Boards of Directors each voted to award the three contracts to Carstensen Contracting Inc. The combined value of the three contracts is \$184,701,941. Carstensen is based out of Dell Rapids, South Dakota, and has worked on other RRVWSP transmission pipeline contracts.

Current contracts include:

- **Contract 5C:** 8.1 miles from Bordulac Township to Bucephalia Township in Foster County. One mile remaining to be constructed in 2026, plus land restoration.
- **Contract 5D:** 10 miles of pipeline and a trenchless crossing of Pipestem Creek in western Foster County and eastern Wells County are complete. Land restoration begins in 2026.
- **Contract 6A:** 7.1 miles of pipeline from James River to Eastman Township in Foster County. 2.65 miles already in the ground, with restoration planned once construction wraps up.
- **Contract 6B/C:** 17.6 miles of pipe in McKinnon, Sutton, and Revere Townships in Foster and Griggs Counties, with three 96-inch diameter trenchless crossings of jurisdictional wetlands and one 96-inch diameter trenchless crossing of a BNSF railroad. Begins in 2026.
- **Contract 7A:** 6.5 miles of pipeline from Revere Township to Cooperstown in Griggs County, including three 96-inch diameter trenchless crossings of jurisdictional wetlands. Begins in 2026.

During the most recent legislative session, North Dakota lawmakers approved \$205 million in the Department of Water Resources budget for the RRVWSP, which represents the State's 75% cost share for the 2025-2027 biennium. LAWA represents the end users of the Project, who are

responsible for the 25% local share. The local portion for the biennium is \$68.333 million, the majority of which will be paid by the largest users of the RRVWSP, the Cities of Fargo and Grand Forks.

ENDAWS Receives Federal Approval and \$158M Appropriation

Thanks in large part to U.S. Senators John Hoeven and Kevin Cramer, a federal project that will complement the state-led Red River Valley Water Supply Project (RRVWSP) has received the official green light and two federal funding approvals.

Sen. Cramer announced on March 17 that the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation approved \$100 million for the Eastern North Dakota Alternate Water Supply (ENDAWS) project, as well as \$8 million for the McClusky Canal and Snake Creek Pumping Plant. The funding is included in the Working Families Tax Cuts bill, also known as the Trump Administration's "One Big Beautiful Bill."

"Today's announcement is the result of the North Dakota delegation's work to secure this funding in the Working Families Tax Cuts law," said Sen. Cramer. "It builds on our efforts to include funding for ENDAWS in the Fiscal Year 2026 Energy and Water appropriations bill and brings us closer to finishing the project. Upon completion, ENDAWS will ensure reliable water supply to roughly 50% of North Dakota's population."

As a member of the Senate Energy and Water Development Appropriations Committee, Sen. Hoeven was the driving force behind securing authorization and \$50 million for the ENDAWS project within the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 appropriations legislation. In February, President Donald Trump signed the \$1.2 billion appropriations package, which includes funding for ENDAWS.

"The federal ENDAWS project brings real savings to the Red River Valley Water Supply Project, reducing its construction costs by \$200 million and saving \$4 million in annual operating costs," said Sen. Hoeven.

By utilizing existing federal infrastructure, including the Snake Creek Pumping Plant and McClusky Canal, ENDAWS will drastically reduce construction costs. Another benefit of using existing infrastructure is the reduced operational costs due to a lower elevation and shorter pumping distance to convey water from McClusky Canal to the transmission pipeline.

"We are deeply grateful for the work North Dakota's delegation put in to achieve this funding for ENDAWS," says Tim Mahoney, LAWA Chairman and Fargo Mayor. "The construction and operational cost savings will make it more affordable to bring water from the Missouri River to

central and eastern North Dakota. This is a big relief for the communities and water systems that are responsible for the local share of the Red River Valley Water Supply Project.”

Sen. Hoeven also reintroduced his bipartisan legislation in March with a goal of fully funding ENDAWS. If approved, the bill will amend the Dakota Water Resources Act (DWRA) to increase authorizations under the Municipal, Rural, and Industrial (MR&I) water supply grant program for North Dakota and the five Tribal Nations in the state. The amendment is necessary because North Dakota reached the state MR&I authorization cap at the end of fiscal year 2024. Because of this, the state and the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) have reallocated significant MR&I resources to cover federal responsibilities under the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909. Specifically, Sen. Hoeven is working to ensure the biota water treatment costs are fully accounted for, as they are the federal government’s responsibility.

“When the Garrison and Oahe dams were built, North Dakota lost 550,000 acres of prime farmland, but the amounts originally authorized under the Dakota Water Resources Act of 2000 were insufficient to compensate our state for this loss. As we work to fund water supply projects like ENDAWS, our legislation would correct this shortfall, ensure North Dakota receives the federal support it is owed, and help advance more resilient, drought-tolerant water supplies for communities across our state,” said Sen. Hoeven. The legislation is cosponsored by Senators Kevin Cramer of North Dakota and Alex Padilla of California. Representative Julie Fedorchak of North Dakota will introduce a companion to the bill in the House of Representatives.

“This legislation is critical for ensuring reliable water supplies for North Dakota’s communities and Tribal Nations. They included some funding for the Eastern North Dakota Water Supplies Project (ENDAWS). We need to increase existing funding authorizations to further support ENDAWS and other critical water infrastructure projects across the state. I look forward to passing these amendments and ensuring the federal government fulfills this obligation it owes to North Dakota for damming the Missouri River,” said Sen. Cramer.

“North Dakota was promised more than a million acres of irrigation as part of the Pick-Sloan project, yet that promise was never fully realized,” Rep. Fedorchak said. “The Dakota Water Resources Act Amendments move us closer to fulfilling that commitment by strengthening water systems for our communities and Tribal Nations and making sure the federal government follows through on its commitments to our state.”

The full text of the DWRA amendments can be viewed on Sen. Hoeven’s website, [here](#) and [here](#).

LAWA Board Election Results

There are no changes to report on the Lake Agassiz Water Authority (LAWA) Board of Directors. Elections were held at the North Dakota Rural Water Expo in February. Fargo Mayor Dr. Tim Mahoney continues as Chairman of the Board, and Brandon Bochenski, Mayor of Grand Forks, remains in the Vice Chairman seat.

The following list contains all the City and Rural Water System board members and their representatives:

Tim Mahoney, City of Fargo (Chairman)
 Brandon Bochenski, City of Grand Forks (Vice Chairman)
 Tom Erdmann, City of Carrington
 Tim Meyer, City of Lisbon
 Dave Carlsrud, City of Valley City
 Bernie Dardis, City of West Fargo
 Alan Idso, Cass Rural Water Users District
 Travis L. Schmidt, Moorhead Public Service
 Rick Bigwood, Northeast Regional Water District
 Jeff Breker, Southeast Water Users District
 Keith Nilson, Walsh Rural Water District
 Jim Schmaltz, East Central Regional Water District
 Ann Broussard, McLean-Sheridan Rural Water District
 Duane DeKrey, Garrison Diversion (Secretary/Treasurer)

Introducing Scott Mehring, Garrison Diversion Field Services Supervisor

After 19 years with the Garrison Diversion Conservancy District (Garrison Diversion), Scott Mehring is likely one of the most recognizable staff members. The Field Services Supervisor is Garrison Diversion's eyes and ears on the ground for the construction of the Red River Valley Water Supply Project (RRVWSP).

"I think it's amazing that I have the opportunity to work on such a historic project," Scott says. "It feels great knowing I had a role in delivering water to so many North Dakotans."

Scott works with the engineers, consultants, and contractors working on the drought mitigation project that will serve nearly half of North Dakota's population when it is constructed. Everyone from landowners to county township board members reaches out to him when they have questions or issues.

One of Scott's main responsibilities is managing quality control on land restoration. Before construction began, the project co-sponsors, Garrison Diversion and Lake Agassiz Water Authority (LAWA), developed guiding principles for the RRVWSP. One of the principles is landowner respect. Scott takes this responsibility seriously as he works to ensure the pipeline and associated infrastructure are constructed with care and respect for the land, its owners, and renters. He is also mindful of ensuring the land is restored or reclaimed in an effective and timely manner.

"Since I'm here year-round, I get to know people in the areas where construction is happening. This has been a benefit, because folks know they can come to me to discuss any issues they're having," says Scott. "I spend a decent amount of my time working with landowners and townships.

When he's not at work, Scott is focused on his family. He and his wife, Shannon, have been married for 30 years in August. They have three children: Shae is a pharmacist in Larimore, Kaydn is a sixth-grade teacher in Carrington, and their son Taylen is a junior in high school. In addition to spending time with family, Scott enjoys being outdoors, especially playing golf.



63rd Annual Joint North Dakota Water Convention AND Irrigation Workshop

**Bismarck Hotel & Conference Center
December 8-10**

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 8

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| 2:30-4:30 pm | Upper Sheyenne River Joint Water Resource Board Meeting
– Governor's Room |
| 3:00-4:00 pm | N.D. Water Coalition Meeting – Cannonball Room |
| 4:30-6:00 pm | ND Water Resource Districts Association Board Meeting
– Room 2130 |
| 6:00-8:00 pm | All Water Social – Heart Room
Co-Hosted by HDR and the Garrison Diversion Conservancy District |

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 9

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| 7:30 am | Registration – Coat Room |
| 8:00-11:00 am | Water Managers Seminar – Missouri Ballroom |
| 9:00-11:30 am | ND Rural Water Systems Association Managers Meeting
(Rural Water Managers Only) – Governor's Room |
| 9:00 am-Noon | Commercial Exhibit Set-up |

FOLLOWING EVENTS IN PATTERSON/LAMBORN ROOM

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| 11:30 am | ND Water Education Foundation Silent Auction Benefit Opens |
| 11:30 am | Opening Lunch |
| 12:10 pm | Rural Mental Health: Challenges, Resources, and Opportunities
• Sarah Bedgar, <i>INVITED</i> |
| 1:00 pm | Commercial Exhibits Open |
| 1:00-1:45 pm | State of Water
• Reice Haase, <i>Department of Water Resources</i> |
| 1:45-2:15 pm | Northwest Area Water Supply and Southwest Pipeline Project Updates |
| 2:15-3:00 pm | Aquatic Nuisance Species Program Status Update
• Ben Holen, <i>Game and Fish Department</i> |
| 3:00-3:30 pm | Break |

3:30-4:45 pm	Water and Prosperity: Navigating Growth in Emerging Industries
5:00-6:00 pm	Resolutions Meeting – <i>Missouri Ballroom</i> <i>Water Users/Water Resource Districts/Irrigation Associations</i>
6:00-7:00 pm	Social – <i>Courtyard</i>

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10

8:00 am	Commercial Exhibits Open – <i>Courtyard</i>
8:00-9:00 am	Prayer Breakfast: Man in Motion – <i>Missouri Ballroom</i> • Jeff Frith, Devils Lake Joint Water Board

FOLLOWING EVENTS IN PATTERSON/LAMBORN ROOM

9:00-9:10 am	Welcome – Lt. Governor Michelle Strinden, INVITED
9:10-9:50 am	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wetlands Update • Director Brian Nesvik, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, INVITED
9:50-10:30 am	Forecasting the Future: Short- and Long-Term Weather Outlooks • Allen Schlag, National Weather Service Forecast Office
10:30-11:00 am	Break
11:00-11:30 am	Western Area Water Supply and Red River Valley Water Supply Updates
11:30-11:45 am	Water Users Update • Mary Massad and Dani Quissell
11:45 am	ND Water Users Association Elections
Noon	Buffet Luncheon
Noon-2:00 pm	Concurrent Joint Board and Annual Meetings • Devils Lake Basin Joint Water Resource Board – <i>Sheyenne Room</i> • Missouri River Joint Water Board – <i>Heart Room</i> • ND Irrigation Association Membership Meeting – <i>Grand Pacific Room</i> • Souris River Joint Board – <i>Governor's Room</i> • Red River Joint Water Resource District – <i>Cannonball Room</i>
1:00-2:00 pm	ND Irrigation Association Board Meeting – <i>Grand Pacific Room</i>

FOLLOWING EVENTS IN PATTERSON/LAMBORN ROOM

2:00-2:30 pm	Mouse River Flood Control and FM Diversion Updates
2:30-3:00 pm	Envirothon Excellence: A North Dakota Success Story • Bismarck High School Envirothon Team
3:00-3:30 pm	Rural Water and Municipal Water Updates
3:30 pm	Commercial Exhibits Close
3:40-4:00 pm	Resolutions: Final Adoption – <i>Missouri Ballroom</i> <i>Water Users/Water Resource Districts/Irrigation Associations</i>
4:10-5:30 pm	ND Water Users Association Board Meeting – <i>Governor's Room</i>
5:30-6:30 pm	Social – <i>Courtyard</i>
6:30 pm	Awards Banquet – Entertainment: Strolling Strings of Bismarck – <i>Patterson/Lamborn Room</i> ND Water Education Foundation Silent Auction Benefit Ends

IRRIGATION WORKSHOP | Thursday, December 10 • 9:00 am – 3:30 pm

SPONSORED BY: North Dakota Water Users Association and North Dakota Irrigation Association

TOPICS INCLUDE: • FWS Wetland Easements • Long- and Short-Term Weather Forecasting • Incorporating Irrigation Technology • Economic Impact of Irrigation and Drainage in North Dakota • State Permitting for Irrigation