



Issue #4 North Dakota Water Needs

Information current as of: July 2005

Summary and Current Status:

North Dakota (ND) is concerned about its current and future water supply and water quality for the north and southwestern areas of the state. The state is pursuing several projects – through the North Dakota State Water Commission (SWC) – as options to address possible shortages of clean water. North Dakota's water needs are issues that Manitoba cannot afford to ignore, given the interconnectedness and shared water resources of Manitoba and North Dakota.

Elements:

North Dakota is concerned that natural recharge of water supply (wells, streams, reservoirs) in the western part of the state will not be adequate to meet the needs of its population in the coming years.

North Dakota Water Needs and the Garrison Dam

Since the Garrison dam on the Missouri River in North Dakota was completed in the mid-1950s there have been a variety of proposed irrigation projects and water distribution proposals for municipal, rural and industrial uses. The initial Garrison diversion project proposed the large-scale transfer of Missouri River water into the Hudson Bay drainage basin for irrigation purposes. Several major Garrison features were constructed prior to the investigation by the International Joint Commission (1977) which determined that using Missouri River water for irrigation in the Hudson Bay drainage basin should not be allowed.

Following the IJC decision, a new Garrison proposal, which contained a specific requirement for consultations with Canada, was reached under the Garrison Reformulation Act of 1986 and the US Congress made the amendment in December 2000.

What does this have to do with North Dakota?

The Dakota Water Resources Act of 2000 does **not** contain a requirement for consultations with Canada, mandates the continued maintenance and use of all Garrison features previously constructed, and identifies potential additional uses of Missouri River water in the Red River Valley. In effect, the Act re-introduces the possibility of large-scale interbasin transfers of Missouri River water into the Hudson Bay drainage basin, a serious concern for Manitoba.

The Southwest Pipeline and Northwest Areas Water Supply (NAWS) projects

The ND State Water Commission (SWC)'s mission is the 'Stewardship of North Dakota's water resources' and it has a mandate to pursue this through "developing Missouri River water, developing adequate water supplies for eastern North Dakota, financing future water development, and balancing the public interest and the public trust". Two projects – the Southwest Pipeline project and the Northwest Areas Water Supply (NAWS) project – are designed to alleviate possible future shortages of clean water for these north and southwestern parts of ND.

Less than 15 inches of rain falls on southwestern North Dakota each year. Since 1977, the State Water Commission (SWC) has been studying the task of bringing enough clean water to the southwest. Water supply for the northwest area of the state has also become a focus. Many cities and rural areas in the Northwest Areas Water Supply (NAWS) project area have less than desirable quality of domestic water supplies.

The Southwest Pipeline project has already brought water to a number of communities in southwestern ND. More are waiting for the project to be completed. The pipeline brings water from Lake Sakakawea, the giant reservoir created by the Garrison Dam.

The NAWS is a proposed bulk water distribution system designed to supply communities and rural water systems in 10 North Dakota counties. Its objective is to meet "secondary" standards of the U.S. Safe Drinking Water Act (taste, odour, colour and other aesthetic qualities) although according to the Manitoba government there are sufficient groundwater supplies in the region, which could be treated to meet these standards.

According to the SWC, the advantages of bringing in Missouri River water are a clean and abundant supply of water for the residents of North Dakota including the far west and the Red River Valley, a more inviting home for potential business and industry, and a stronger local economy.

View a map of the Northwest Area Water Supply Project at <http://www.swc.state.nd.us/Projects/NAWS.pdf>

Water 2025

Water 2025 is a US Department of the Interior Bureau of Reclamation initiative intended to focus attention on; the implications for competing water uses and conflicts as a result of population growth in western urban areas of the US, emerging water needs for environmental and recreational uses, and the domestic production of food and fiber from western farms and ranches. Water 2025 promotes a leading role for state and local governments in meeting these

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challenges, citing the decision by Congress to recognize states' authority to allocate water within their boundaries, except under exceptional circumstances.

Implications for Manitoba

The evolution of the Devils Lake project (see [Water Issue #3 – Devils Lake Outlet Project](#)) and North Dakota's cavalier attitude about downstream impacts resulting from unilateral action by the state should be an indication of how future projects may be conducted. The fact that North Dakota plans to bring water from the Missouri River to the northwestern part of the state are also pertinent to Manitoba since, like the Devils Lake project, this represents an interbasin transfer of water, possibly introducing non-native and/or invasive species to the shared Red River basin.

Key Publication(s) & Links:

- North Dakota State Water Commission
<http://www.swc.state.nd.us/index.html>
- North Dakota Southwest Pipeline Project
<http://www.swc.state.nd.us/projects/swpipe.html>
- North West Area Water Supply Project
<http://www.swc.state.nd.us/projects/nwwatsup.html>
- *Water 2025: Preventing Crises and Conflict in the West*
<http://www.doi.gov/water2025/>
- Manitoba Department of Water Stewardship - North Dakota Water Project Proposals: Garrison Diversion and Devils Lake Outlet
http://www.gov.mb.ca/waterstewardship/water_info/transboundary/north_dakota.html

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