

City of Minot

Office of the Mayor

February 5, 2008

Bureau of Reclamation
Attn: Alicia Waters
PO Box 1017
Bismarck, North Dakota 58502

RE: NAWS-EIS Comments

Dear Ms. Waters,

For more than two decades, the City of Minot has been working with the Bureau of Reclamation and the North Dakota State Water Commission on the Northwest Area Water Supply (NAWS) Project, which was authorized by the Garrison Diversion Reformulation Act of 1986. Our need for a clean, dependable and abundant water supply has been clearly established. After years of planning and engineering, the project was finally started in April of 2002. Significant progress has been made on the project in the intervening years. And, we are now far enough along in construction to begin to truly see the "water" at the end of the tunnel. However our progress has been slowed by the legal action taken by the Canadian province of Manitoba.

As a result of that legal action, the United States District Court ruled in February of 2005 that the Bureau of Reclamation revisit the "finding of no significant impact" upon completion of further environmental analysis. And, in March of 2006, the Bureau of Reclamation determined that the most appropriate way to proceed was to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement to evaluate water treatment alternatives that would further reduce the risk of transferring invasive species from the Missouri River drainage to the Hudson Bay drainage through the construction operation of the project.

Based on review of the four biota water treatment alternatives evaluated in the EIS, I wish to state emphatically that the City of Minot favors the "no action" alternative. This alternative is estimated to cost \$8.1 million with an annual OM & R cost of \$232,000. All of the other alternatives are at least eight times the cost of the "no action" alternative cost and do not provide a significant increase in the reduction of biota transfer which will occur in the "no action" alternative. In fact, the EIS states that "The risk of transferring invasive species through the construction and operation of any of the proposed alternatives is very low compared to other existing and competing pathways."

★The Magic City★

As a result, we strongly urge the Bureau of Reclamation to identify the "no action" alternative as the preferred alternative in the Final EIS. Additionally, it is our concern that the EIS be finished and a record of decision be issued in as timely a fashion as possible.

Completion of the EIS process will allow us to complete this much needed water supply for the City of Minot, and all of Northwest and North Central North Dakota. The City of Minot and all of the communities and rural water systems who are part of the NAWS Advisory Committee will attest to the urgent need for completion of this much needed project.

The citizens of Minot have demonstrated their support for this project by overwhelmingly voting to tax themselves with a one cent sales tax which has been in place since early this decade. The City of Minot has agreed to use the sales tax to pay for its 35% share of the total cost of the project. Please believe me when I tell you that there has been no wavering in support for this project from our community or from the region.

In conclusion, we recommend that the "no action" alternative be identified as the Federal preferred alternative in the Final NAWS EIS, that the work on the EIS be completed as quickly as possible, and that we be given the opportunity to complete this clean, dependable and abundant water supply for the benefit of the people of the City of Minot and the region.

Sincerely,



Curt Zimbelman
Mayor
City of Minot

CZ/ts