



— State of —
North Dakota
Office of the Governor

John Hoeven
Governor

**Testimony of North Dakota Governor John Hoeven at the Public Hearing regarding
the Northwest Area Waters Supply (NAWS) Project Draft Environmental Impacts
Statement (DEIS)**

February 4, 2008

Good evening, and thank you for the opportunity to testify on the Environmental Impact Statement for the Northwest Area Water Supply Project. I am John Hoeven, Governor of the State of North Dakota, and I am here today for several reason:

- To emphasize the importance of the NAWS project
- To highlight the environmental soundness of the project, and the various protections that are already in place and planned for it; and
- To express our concern that the Bureau of Reclamation must be prepared to immediately fund the preferred alternative selected.

The purpose of the NAWS project, which is to provide safe and reliable drinking water to tens of thousands of North Dakotans in the Northwestern part of the state, is well documented in the environmental assessment. It is an important project for Minot and the Minot Air Force Base, as well as our small communities and rural areas, enabling them to sustain economic growth and also provide dependable quality drinking water to their residents.

This project, which has been planned since the mid 1980's, has already been viewed and reviewed for its merits and environmental integrity. In 2001, an Environmental Assessment analysis was conducted by the Bureau, and resulted in a "Finding of No

Significant Impact” statement signed by then Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton, authorizing construction of the project.

Over the course of 20 years, this project has met all federal legal and water-quality standards. The Department of Interior’s Bureau of Reclamation has allowed us to move forward, and the project is under construction. In addition, the project has also been found to be in compliance with the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909 and the National Environmental Policy Act.

Nevertheless, a federal court determination has required an additional review through an Environmental Impact Statement analysis of additional treatment options for the water.

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), as presented for discussion this evening, highlights a very important fact: Treatment options that were already contemplated in the earlier environmental assessment provide adequate safeguards for avoiding and minimizing any potential environmental impacts of the project, as designed (and now as partially completed).

The DEIS includes biota treatment goals recommended by the Province of Manitoba. The Bureau has chosen to consider these goals when evaluating the efficacy of treatment processes for biota treatment. The levels of treatment prescribed actually exceed what is required to protect human health under the United States Safe Drinking Water Act.

The science for the project as approved in the Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact is sound, and remains sound. Therefore, we respectfully and strongly urge the Bureau of Reclamation to select the so-called “No Action Alternative,” the treatment plan included in the original Environmental Assessment approved by the Bureau and the EPA. The “no action alternative” is a misnomer, because in reality this baseline option represents several enhancements already included in the project as approved by

the Department of the Interior in 2001. These enhancements are meant to mitigate the risk of transferring biota or aquatic species across the watershed.

This alternative provides for disinfection and prevention of water losses as the water is pumped to the Minot treatment plant, which will include filtration and ultraviolet treatment of the water. In addition, before the water leaves the Missouri River Basin, it will be pre-treated with chemical disinfection, including chlorine and chloramines.

In support of efforts to minimize the potential of water “escaping” on the Hudson basin side, the misnamed “no action alternative” incorporates the inclusion of a pressure-reducing station and three isolation vaults. These are placed prior to the three coulees that lead to the Mouse River. The station and vaults have valves that automatically close and contain water in the pipe if there is a loss of telemetry, pressure loss or flow reversal, or break in the pipeline. Additionally, the design incorporates strengthened joint pipe encased in concrete through all coulee crossings. These coulees are the only intermittent stream crossed by the pipeline prior to the conventional treatment plant in Minot.

With any of the treatment options described in the DEIS, there is a very low, and for all practical purposes, non-existent risk of transferring any species of fish, plant, or microbial matter to the Hudson Bay watershed through the NAWs project. In fact the EIS explains that non-project pathways of natural movements by wildlife and even accidental introduction by sportsmen pose a higher risk of biological transfer than any existing or proposed inter-basin transfer.

While I understand that the costs of any extraneous treatment options chosen will be the responsibility of the Federal Government, the inconsistent financial support that NAWs has experienced could result in delaying the project indefinitely. If the Bureau, in the end, chooses a treatment option beyond that which is already designed and planned, then the Bureau must also immediately obtain the funding necessary to complete the project.

Again, the NAWS project is vitally important to North Dakota. If redundant treatment is required, meaning a full treatment plant at the Sakakawea intake, as well as full treatment in Minot, then we need a federal commitment to fund the additional cost now so that no further delay of this water delivery project occurs.

For more than 20 years, the State has worked on this project. Following the Department of the Interior's approval seven years ago, construction finally commenced. However, the absence of funding for redundant treatment as described in this DEIS diminishes the prospect for getting it completed in a reasonably timely manner.

The State of North Dakota is committed to continuing with NAWS as an environmentally sound project that will bring high quality water to the people of northwestern North Dakota, who need it

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