RECLAMATION
Managing Water in the West

April 2006
Dakotas Area Office

Northwest Area Water Supply Project

Environmental Impact Statement: Public Scoping

The Bureau of Reclamation will prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on the Northwest Area Water Supply (NAWS) Project. The EIS will evaluate water treatment alternatives to minimize the risk of transfer of non-native organisms (biota) from the Missouri River Basin to the Hudson Bay Basin. This publication provides information about the EIS and solicits your comments regarding environmental issues that you believe should be addressed. This Federal action is subject to requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Responses to this scoping announcement will assist Reclamation in determining the environmental effects of completing construction of the NAWS project.

Project Background

The Garrison Diversion Unit's Municipal, Rural and Industrial (MR&I) program was authorized by the U.S. Congress on May 12, 1986 through the Garrison Diversion Unit Reformulation Act of 1986. This act set aside $200 million of Federal funds for the planning and construction of water supply facilities for the North Dakota MR&I program. This act also set aside $20.5 million for the planning and construction of water supply facilities for the Standing Rock, Fort Berthold and Spirit Lake reservations. In December 2000, the U.S. Congress passed the Dakota Water Resources Act which authorized additional Federal funds, $200 million for the state MR&I program and $200 million for the tribal MR&I program along with the inclusion of the Turtle Mountain reservation and the Trenton Indian Service Area. The NAWS Project, initiated in November 1987, is being developed as a part of the state MR&I program.

(Above) NAWS groundbreaking ceremony April 5, 2002.

The NAWS project is designed as a bulk water distribution system for local communities and rural water systems in 10 counties in northwestern North Dakota, including the community of Minot. The NAWS project will treat water from Lake Sakakawea, in the Missouri River Basin in North Dakota, deliver it to Minot, and ultimately to other communities and rural water systems in the Hudson Bay Basin (Figure 1). Reclamation completed an Environmental Assessment (EA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the NAWS project in 2001. Construction on the project began in April 2002. In October 2002, the Province of Manitoba filed a legal challenge in U.S. District Court in Washington D.C. to compel the Department of the Interior to complete an EIS on the project. A Court Order dated February 3, 2005, required Reclamation to complete additional environmental analysis.

Construction was allowed to continue on the NAWS project as the lawsuit proceeded. Construction of the raw water pipeline that

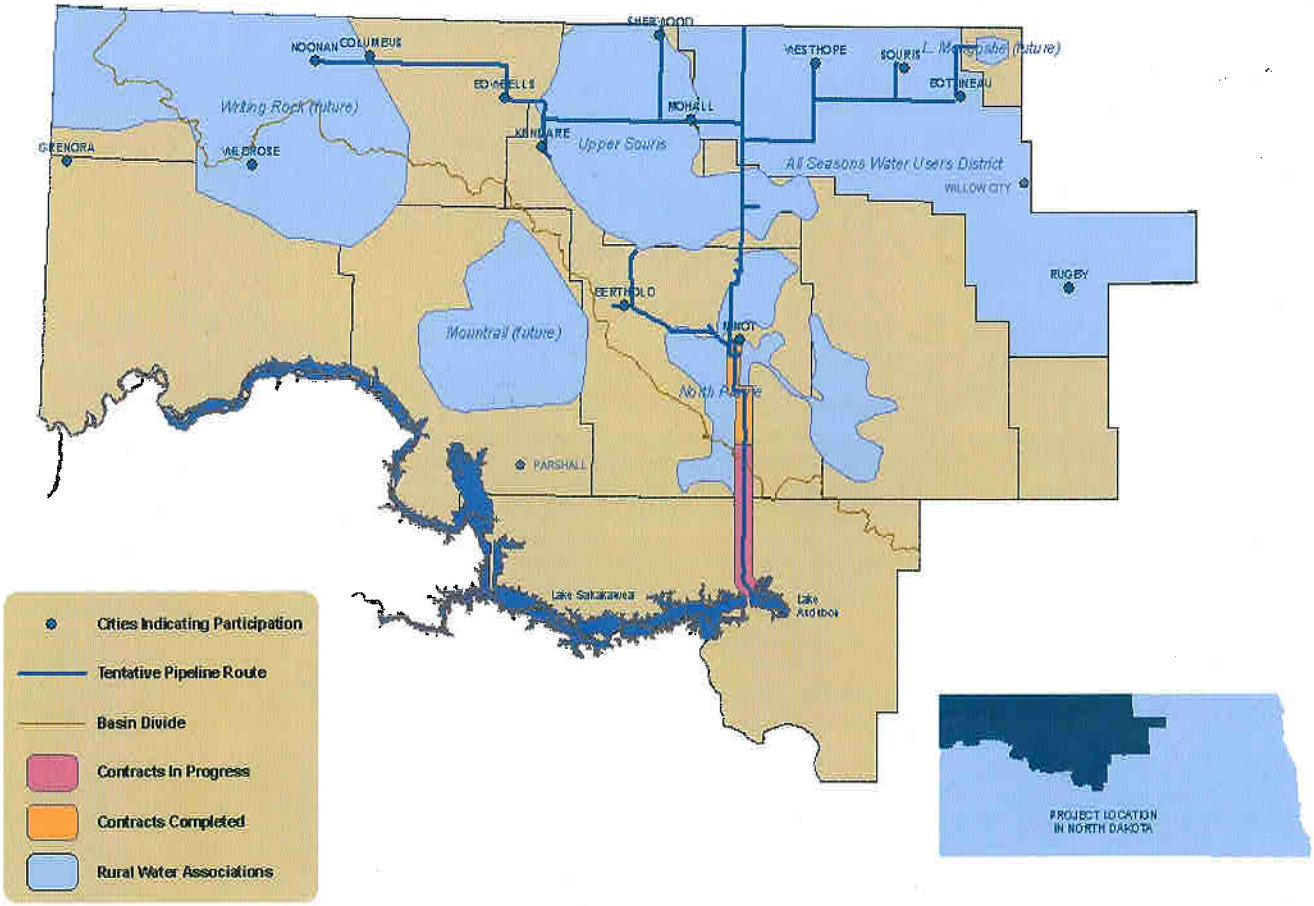


Figure 1. Service area of the NAWS project detailing the construction completed and ongoing construction.

would deliver water from Lake Sakakawea to Minot began in April 2002. Approximately 15 miles of this pipeline have been completed.

Construction has begun on the remaining portion of the pipeline and is scheduled for completion in November 2006. Construction of the distribution system, water treatment facilities and other features of the project has not begun.

Purpose of the NAWS Project

The purpose the NAWS project is to provide a reliable source of high quality treated water from Lake Sakakawea to northwestern North Dakota for MR&I uses as authorized by the Garrison Diversion Unit Reformulation Act. Missouri River water would be treated and delivered to Minot and neighboring communities using techniques that minimize the risk of non-native biota transfer.

(Above) Crews installing raw water pipeline.

(Above) Crews installing valves for raw water pipeline.

What is the Need for this EIS?

Reclamation proposes to study and evaluate alternative water treatment methods to minimize the risk of transferring non-native biota from the Missouri River Basin to the Hudson Bay Basin through the NAWS project. Project features and facilities to be evaluated in the EIS include, but are not limited to:

- Construction and operation of water treatment plant(s) and
- Construction methods and operational measures designed to minimize the risk of transfer of non-native biota that could occur as a result of pipeline failures.

Evaluating water treatment is needed because Reclamation was directed by the courts to further examine water treatment methods and pipeline design to reduce the risk associated with the potential for interbasin transfer of non-native biota.

What is the Scope of this EIS?

The scope of the proposed action consists of the range of actions, alternatives, and potential impacts to be considered by Reclamation. The scope of the proposed action would include those actions and alternatives that are consistent with the purpose and need above. The potential environmental impacts will be evaluated in the EIS to identify direct, indirect, and cumulative effects that may result from the proposed action and alternatives.

The geographic scope of the EIS includes areas and resources within the United States affected by water diversion and delivery for NAWS project purposes. This includes but is not limited to:

- Sites of all NAWS project features and facilities,
- Lands that receive NAWS project water supplies; and
- Potential depletion effects on the Missouri River caused by water diversion for the NAWS project.

Responsible Official

The responsible official for the EIS and any subsequent Record of Decision is the Regional Director, Great Plains Region of the Bureau of Reclamation. The Regional Director has assigned the Area Manager of the Dakotas Area Office of the Great Plains Region to lead preparation of the EIS.

(Above) Pipe segments spanning the prairie between Lake Sakakawea and Minot.

Lead Agency and Cooperating Agencies

Reclamation is the lead Federal agency for preparation of the EIS. The following agencies and stakeholders, along with others as determined appropriate, will be invited to participate as cooperating agencies: (1) North Dakota State Water Commission; (2) U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service; (3) U.S. Environmental Protection Agency: (4) City of Minot; (5) Three Affiliated Tribes; (6) Standing Rock Sioux Tribe; (7) U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; and (8) North Dakota Department of Health.

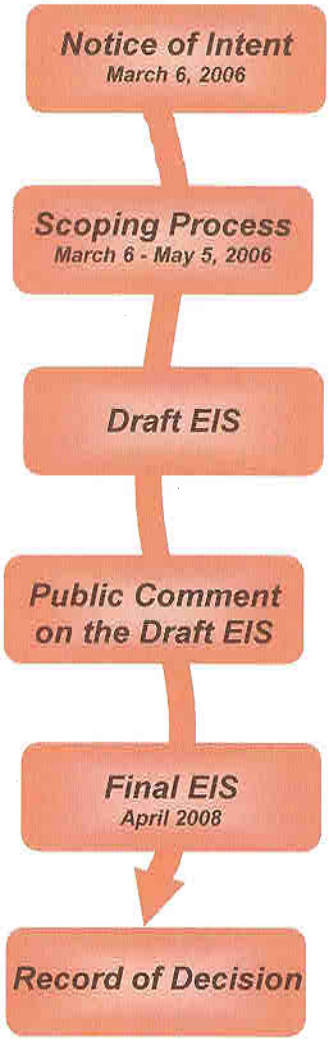
(Above) Snake Creek Pumping Plant on Lake Sakakawea.

Nature of Decision to be Made

Reclamation, as delegated by the Department of the Interior, will decide whether it will implement the proposed action or a reasonable alternative to it.

Project Timeline

While public participation in this analysis is welcome at any time, comments received by May 5, 2006 will be especially useful in preparation of the EIS. The anticipated time frame for the completion of the final EIS is April 2008.



Preliminary Issues

Reclamation has identified preliminary issues that may be relevant to the proposed action. Reclamation intends to continue to identify and analyze in depth the significant issues. Reclamation will also identify and eliminate the issues which are not significant or which have been covered by prior environmental review.

The issues and potential effects are not necessarily limited to those listed below. Reclamation invites suggestions for other issues that the public believes should be addressed in the EIS.

- What are the potential environmental impacts associated with the transfer of non-native biota species from the Missouri River Basin to the Hudson Bay Basin?
- What are the potential impacts to the Missouri River system from the withdrawal of water for the NAWS project?
- How could the water treatment alternatives, developed as part of the EIS, affect the ability of Minot to maintain its water treatment plant?
- How does the NAWS project affect Indian trust assets for which the United States has a trust responsibility to protect and maintain, such as lands, minerals, hunting and fishing rights, and water rights?

Possible Alternatives

The EIS will describe the effects of each alternative developed and evaluated. This will include the No Action Alternative, meaning the NAWS project will be constructed as described in the EA and FONSI prepared by Reclamation in 2001, and action alternatives which will include other treatment methods and operational measures developed to further reduce the risk of non-native biota transfer. Reclamation invites suggestions for other alternatives to be considered. Such alternatives should be described in sufficient detail to allow Reclamation to evaluate the reasonableness of the proposed alternative(s) and adequately analyze the effects of such alternative(s).

Public Involvement Activities

This scoping announcement is being provided to agencies, groups and individuals who have expressed an interest in the NAWS project. The public is invited to take part in the NEPA process and is encouraged to visit with Reclamation officials at any time during the analysis and prior

to the decision. Reclamation will be seeking information, comments and assistance from Federal, Tribal, State and local agencies and other individuals or organizations that may be interested in, or affected by the proposed action.

Six public scoping meetings starting at 6:30 p.m. each evening are scheduled on the following dates:

- **Tuesday, April 25, Bismarck**
  Best Western Doublewood Inn
  Executive Suite 114, 1400 Interchange Ave
- **Thursday, April 27, Fort Yates**
  Prairie Knights Casino and Resort
  7932 Highway 24
- **Monday, May 1, Minot**
  Sleep Inn - Inn and Suites, 2400 10th St NW
- **Tuesday, May 2, New Town**
  4 Bears Casino & Lodge
  Mandan Hidatsa Room, 202 Frontage Road
- **Wednesday, May 3, Bottineau**
  MSU- Bottineau, Nelson Science Center
  Room 125, 105 Simrall Blvd
- **Thursday, May 4, Mohall**
  City Hall, 203 Main St East

Oral and written comments will be accepted at these meetings. Comments will also be accepted by mail, fax, or e-mail to:

Northwest Area Water Supply Project EIS
Bureau of Reclamation
Dakotas Area Office
P.O. Box 1017
Bismarck ND 58502-1017

FAX: 701-250-4590
E-mail: awaters@gp.usbr.gov.

Alicia Waters, NAWS Team Leader, may also be contacted by telephone at 701-250-4242 ext. 3621.

To assist Reclamation in identifying issues and concerns regarding this EIS, comments should be received by May 5, 2006. Comment received, including the names and addresses of those who comment will be considered part of the public record and will be available for public inspection, unless requested otherwise by the commenter.

(Above) Missouri River

How to Learn More?

We encourage you to learn more about the National Environmental Policy Act, the Environmental Impact Statement process, and current National Environmental Policy Act activities by visiting or contacting the following:

- Bureau of Reclamation's NEPA Web site at: http://www.usbr.gov/pmts/guide/nepa.html
- The Council on Environmental Quality's NEPAnet for government-wide NEPA information at: http://ceq.eh.doe.gov/nepa/nepanet.htm
- Bureau of Reclamation's Dakotas Area Office Web site at: http://www.usbr.gov/gp/dkao
- U.S. Department of the Interior
  Bureau of Reclamation
  Dakotas Area Office
  1-701-250-4242