



Matt Blunt, Governor • Doyle Childers, Director

# DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

www.dnr.mo.gov

OFFICIAL FILE COPY RECEIVED		
MAY - 1 2006		
REPLY:	YES	NO
INFO. COPY TO:		
DATE	INITIAL	TO
5/2/06	(JL)	Alicia
5/5/06	RDAC	Kon
5/5	BS	Rick
		Denny
CLASSIFICATION		
PROJECT		
CONTROL NO.		
FOLDER I.D.		

April 20, 2006

Northwest Area Water Supply Project EIS  
 U. S. Bureau of Reclamation  
 Dakotas Area Office  
 P. O. Box 1017  
 Bismarck, North Dakota 58502-1017

Re: Comments regarding scoping of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Northwest Area Water Supply Project

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am writing to provide the Missouri Department of Natural Resources' (MDNR) comments on the scoping process for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Northwest Area Water Supply (NAWS) Project.

We note that the preparation of this DEIS is due to the United States District Court for the District of Columbia's ruling that, in preparing the Environmental Assessment that previously served as the basis for the project, the Bureau of Reclamation (Bureau) did not adequately analyze a series of "significant environmental consequences" as is required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The State of Missouri participated as amicus in this federal court case filed by the government of the Canadian Province of Manitoba. The State of Missouri has long had concerns about the NAWS project and indeed any project under which water would be diverted from the Missouri River.

The NAWS project, which will cost taxpayers more than \$142 million, proposes to pump approximately 26 million gallons of water per day from the Missouri River. The project would transfer this water via pipeline, over the continental divide from the Missouri River Basin to the Hudson Bay drainage basin. The water would first be routed to Minot, North Dakota, and pumped to several communities from that location.

Because the Missouri and Hudson River basins have been naturally separated for hundreds of thousands of years, each basin has developed its own unique ecosystems. The Canadians' (and specifically Manitoba's) concerns are the same for the NAWS project as for other interbasin diversions, namely that, even with treatment, the risk of transfer of invasive species or harmful biota is unacceptable. At risk in Manitoba are the

extensive commercial fisheries on Lake Winnipeg, the tenth largest freshwater lake in the world, and sport fisheries in numerous provincial lakes and rivers. All told, the direct and indirect annual value of those fisheries to the Canadian economy is more than \$50 million.

While the concerns over invasive species will be an integral part of the DEIS, we assert that, in order to comply with NEPA, a truly comprehensive analysis of all potential environmental impacts must be conducted. The Missouri Department of Natural Resources submits the following specific comments relevant to the scoping process for the DEIS:

- To reach compliance with NEPA, the DEIS must be comprehensive in its analysis and cannot focus on only one aspect of the proposed project such as biota transfer.
- In the DEIS, the Bureau must assess the cumulative impacts associated with the NAWS project. Based on our experience with the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Red River Valley Water Supply Project, the Bureau seems determined to look at each water project in isolation. This approach is in violation of NEPA.
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has issued a Biological Opinion dealing with three threatened and endangered species (endangered pallid sturgeon and least tern and the threatened piping plover) in the Missouri River basin. In the DEIS, the Bureau must thoroughly assess the endangered and threatened species impacts in the Missouri River basin. The NAWS project could impact habitat and the spring pulse aspects of the USFWS Biological Opinion.
- The Bureau must adequately assess species transfer in the DEIS. We assert that a computer model is not adequate to accomplish this analysis. In the species transfer assessment, the Bureau should use real species and multiple scenarios.
- We note that, in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Red River Valley Water Supply Project, the Bureau used entirely different methods to assess the impacts of that proposed project in the Missouri River Basin than those used to assess impacts in the Red River Basin. In the DEIS for the NAWS project, the assessment of the Missouri River and Hudson River basins must be comparable.
- We note that NEPA requires the Bureau to assess reasonably expected events and consequences. We strongly encourage the Bureau to include an analysis of reasonably expected events and consequences in the DEIS for the NAWS project, including the operation of Red River Valley Water Supply Project Missouri River supply alternatives during prolonged droughts in the Missouri and Red River basins. In addition, the Bureau should include other proposed or reasonably expected growth in diversions from the Missouri River in the assessment.

Northwest Area Water Supply Project EIS

April 20, 2006

Page 3

We appreciate the opportunity to comment during the scoping phase for the DEIS for the NAWS project. If you have any questions or need clarification, please contact me or Mr. Dru Buntin, phone number (573) 751-3195. His address for correspondence is Department of Natural Resources, P.O. Box 176, Jefferson City, MO 65102. Thank you.

Sincerely,

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Doyle Childers". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Doyle Childers

Director

DC:db