

A DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES PERSPECTIVE: Missouri River Initiative Will Contribute to Continued Successes

During the process of formulating a five-year strategic plan for the newly established Department of Water Resources (DWR) in the spring of 2022, it was known early on that the importance of the Missouri River to the future success of North Dakota would need to be a key element. Ultimately, one of the five primary objectives included in the plan is to “Support beneficial use of Missouri River system water and other available water supply sources.” To accomplish that objective, there are several related goals to guide DWR’s progress.

Though that objective is part of DWR’s five-year strategic plan, North Dakota’s citizens and economy will only be able to maximize the river’s benefits by working together. Looking back to what now seems fortuitous timing, a collaborative approach in support of North Dakota’s interest in the Missouri River – the Missouri River Joint Board’s EAE (Educate, Advocate, and Engage) initiative – was also gaining momentum last spring.

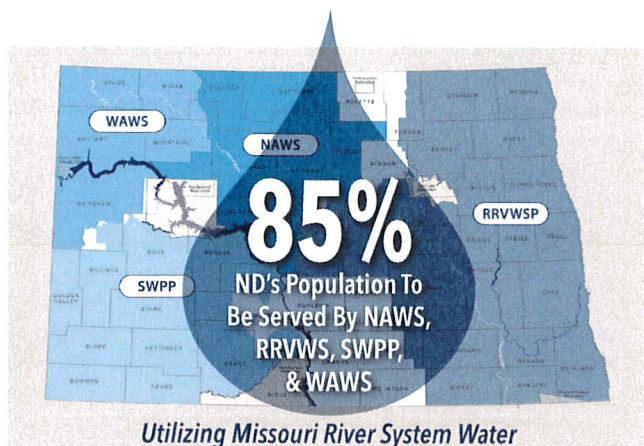
In understanding the importance of what grassroots stakeholders were trying to accomplish with the EAE initiative, DWR and water commissioners partnered to provide technical and financial support when approached by the board. As part of their proposal, the board made it clear that the overall purposes of the EAE are to 1.) promote awareness related to historic federal actions impacting the Missouri River; 2.) share the importance of the Missouri River to North Dakota’s citizens; and 3.) address challenges associated with securing and retaining benefits from the Missouri River. All of these fit with DWR’s objective related to support of beneficial use of Missouri River water.

The EAE initiative also provides an additional opportunity to work with tribal partners on efforts to put more of Missouri River water to beneficial use. This is another positive evolving from the early stages of the EAE, and we look forward to cooperating with tribal leaders and elders in their efforts to secure critical supplies of high-quality Missouri River water.

Looking at the many ways North Dakota utilizes the Missouri River – recreation, industry, irrigation and domestic water supplies – we see numerous success stories, including the build-out and advancement of large-scale regional water supply systems to provide our citizens with high-quality Missouri River water, while capitalizing on economies of scale.



In particular, the development of large regional systems like the Northwest Area Water Supply (NAWS), Red River Valley Water Supply (RRVWS), Southwest Pipeline Project (SWPP) and Western Area Water Supply (WAWS) provide North Dakota with boundless opportunity. With that in mind, it’s worth outlining not only how far these systems have come, but more importantly, the wholistic benefits they will provide in the future.



NORTHWEST AREA WATER SUPPLY

- Major project elements currently under construction.
- 81,000 future water users to be served (10% of North Dakota's population).
- 15 public water systems currently served with an interim water supply from Minot, including Minot, Minot Air Force Base, Kenmare, Sherwood, Bottineau and North Prairie Rural.

RED RIVER VALLEY WATER SUPPLY PROJECT

- Major project elements currently under construction.
- More than 380,000 future water users to be served (50% of North Dakota's population).
- At least 30 public water systems to be served, including Valley City, Fargo, West Fargo, Grand Forks and several rural systems.

SOUTHWEST PIPELINE PROJECT

- Major project elements are operating and in place.
- 58,000 current (90,000 potential future) water users (7%-12% of North Dakota's population).
- 33 communities currently served, including Dickinson, Killdeer, Medora, Hettinger and Missouri West Rural.

WESTERN AREA WATER SUPPLY

- Major project elements are operating and in place.
- 70,000 current (100,000 potential future) water users (9%–13% of North Dakota's population).
- 13 communities currently served, including Williston, Watford City, Crosby, Grenora and several rural water systems.



As we look to future opportunities, DWR and the Water Commission stand ready to support ongoing efforts of the EAE initiative, and to continue working with water users, tribal partners and various industries to put Missouri River water to beneficial use.