

Sixty-sixth  
Legislative Assembly  
of North Dakota

## ENGROSSED SENATE BILL NO. 2211

Introduced by

Senators Bekkedahl, Dwyer, Unruh

Representatives Keiser, Porter

1 A BILL for an Act to create and enact section 61-33-01.1 and a new subsection to section  
2 61-33.1-03 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to the determination of the ordinary high  
3 water mark; ~~and~~ to amend and reenact sections 61-33-01 and 61-33.1-02, subdivision e of  
4 subsection 3 of section 61-33.1-03, sections 61-33.1-04 ~~and~~, 61-33.1-05, and 61-33.1-07 of the  
5 North Dakota Century Code, relating to sovereign lands, determining the ordinary high water  
6 mark, and the ownership of mineral rights of land ~~inundated~~ subject to inundation by Pick-Sloan  
7 Missouri basin project dams; to provide for application; and to declare an emergency.

8 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH DAKOTA:**

9 **SECTION 1. AMENDMENT.** Section 61-33-01 of the North Dakota Century Code is  
10 amended and reenacted as follows:

11 **61-33-01. Definitions.**

12 As used in this chapter, unless the context otherwise requires:

- 13 1. "Board" means the sovereign lands advisory board.
- 14 2. "Board of university and school lands" means that entity created by section 15-01-01.
- 15 3. "Ordinary high water mark" means that line below which the presence and action of  
16 the water upon the land is continuous enough so as to prevent the growth of terrestrial  
17 vegetation, destroy its value for agricultural purposes by preventing the growth of what  
18 may be termed an ordinary agricultural crop, including hay, or restrict its growth to  
19 predominantly aquatic species.
- 20 4. "Sovereign lands" means those areas, including beds and islands, lying within the  
21 ordinary high water mark of navigable lakes and streams. Lands established to be  
22 riparian accretion or reliction lands pursuant to section 47-06-05 are considered to be  
23 above the ordinary high water mark and are not sovereign lands.

1 4.5. "State engineer" means the person appointed by the state water commission pursuant  
2 to section 61-03-01.

3 **SECTION 2.** Section 61-33-01.1 of the North Dakota Century Code is created and enacted  
4 as follows:

5 **61-33-01.1. Ordinary high water mark determination - Factors to be considered.**

6 The state engineer shall maintain ordinary high water mark delineation guidelines  
7 consistent with this section.

8 1. When determining the ordinary high water mark for delineating the boundary of  
9 sovereign lands, vegetation and soils analysis must be considered the primary  
10 physical indicators. When considering vegetation, the ordinary high water mark is the  
11 line below which the presence and action of the water is frequent enough to prevent  
12 the growth of terrestrial vegetation or restrict vegetation growth to predominately  
13 aquatic species. Generally, land, including hay land, where the high and continuous  
14 presence of water has destroyed the value of the land for agricultural purposes must  
15 be deemed within the ordinary high water mark.

16 2. When feasible, direct hydrological and hydraulic measurements from stream gauge  
17 data, elevation data, historic records of water flow, high resolution light detection and  
18 ranging systems, prior elevation and survey maps, and statistical hydrological  
19 evidence must be considered when determining the ordinary high water mark. The  
20 state engineer shall establish appropriate guidelines, technical standards, and other  
21 criteria, including use of light detection and ranging systems or other future  
22 technological advancements, as necessary, for conducting hydrologic and hydraulic  
23 modeling required by this section.

24 3. Secondary physical indicators, including litter, debris, or staining, may be considered  
25 to supplement the analysis of the ordinary high water mark investigation but may not  
26 supersede primary physical indicators unless primary physical indicators are deemed  
27 inadequate or inconclusive. Physical indicators directly affected by influent  
28 non-navigable tributaries, adjoining water bodies, or wetlands may not be used to  
29 delineate the sovereign land boundary of a navigable body of water.

30 **SECTION 3. AMENDMENT.** Section 61-33.1-02 of the North Dakota Century Code is  
31 amended and reenacted as follows:

1 | **61-33.1-02. Mineral ownership of land ~~inundated~~subject to inundation by Pick-Sloan**  
2 | **Missouri basin project dams. (Retroactive application - [See note](#))**

3 | The state sovereign land mineral ownership of the riverbed segments ~~inundated~~subject to  
4 | inundation by Pick-Sloan Missouri basin project dams extends only to the historical Missouri  
5 | riverbed channel up to the ordinary high water mark. The state holds no claim or title to any  
6 | minerals above the ordinary high water mark of the historical Missouri riverbed channel  
7 | ~~inundated~~subject to inundation by Pick-Sloan Missouri basin project dams, except for original  
8 | grant lands acquired by the state under federal law and any minerals acquired by the state  
9 | through purchase, foreclosure, or other written conveyance. Mineral ownership of the riverbed  
10 | segments ~~inundated~~subject to inundation by Pick-Sloan Missouri basin project dams which are  
11 | located within the exterior boundaries of the Fort Berthold reservation and Standing Rock Indian  
12 | reservation is controlled by other law and is excepted from this section.

13 | **SECTION 4. AMENDMENT.** Subdivision e of subsection 3 of section 61-33.1-03 of the  
14 | North Dakota Century Code is amended and reenacted as follows:

- 15 | e. Subsection ~~34~~ of section 61-33-01 and section 47-06-05, which provide all  
16 | accretions are presumed to be above the ordinary high water mark and are not  
17 | sovereign lands. Accreted lands may be determined to be within the ordinary high  
18 | water mark of the historical Missouri riverbed channel based on clear and  
19 | convincing evidence. Areas of low-lying and flat lands where the ordinary high  
20 | water mark may be impracticable to determine due to inconclusive aerial  
21 | photography or inconclusive vegetation analysis must be presumed to be above  
22 | the ordinary high water mark and owned by the riparian landowner.

23 | **SECTION 5.** A new subsection to section 61-33.1-03 of the North Dakota Century Code is  
24 | created and enacted as follows:

25 | Upon adoption of the final review findings by the industrial commission, the board of  
26 | university and school lands may contract with a qualified engineering and surveying  
27 | firm to analyze the final review findings and determine the acreage on a quarter-  
28 | quarter basis or government lot basis above and below the ordinary high water mark  
29 | as delineated by the final review findings of the industrial commission. The acreage  
30 | determination is final upon approval by the board.

1       **SECTION 6. AMENDMENT.** Section 61-33.1-04 of the North Dakota Century Code is  
2 amended and reenacted as follows:

3       **61-33.1-04. Implementation. (Retroactive application - [See note](#))**

- 4       1. Within six months after the adoption of the ~~final review findings~~acreage determination  
5 by the ~~industrial commission~~board of university and school lands:
- 6       a. Any royalty proceeds held by operators attributable to oil and gas mineral tracts  
7 lying entirely above the ordinary high water mark of the historical Missouri  
8 riverbed channel on both the corps survey and the state phase two survey must  
9 be released to the owners of the tracts, absent a showing of other defects  
10 affecting mineral title; and
- 11       b. Any royalty proceeds held by the board of university and school lands attributable  
12 to oil and gas mineral tracts lying entirely above the ordinary high water mark of  
13 the historical Missouri riverbed channel on both the corps survey and the state  
14 phase two survey must be released to the relevant operators to distribute to the  
15 owners of the tracts, absent a showing of other defects affecting mineral title.
- 16       2. Upon adoption of the ~~final review findings~~acreage determination by the ~~industrial~~  
17 ~~commission~~board of university and school lands:
- 18       a. The board of university and school lands shall begin to implement any acreage  
19 adjustments, lease bonus and royalty refunds, and payment demands as may be  
20 necessary relating to state-issued oil and gas leases. The board shall complete  
21 the adjustments, refunds, and payment demands within two years after ~~the date~~  
22 ~~of adoption of the final review findings~~approving the acreage determination.
- 23       b. Operators of oil and gas wells affected by the ~~final review findings~~final acreage  
24 determination immediately shall begin to implement any acreage and revenue  
25 adjustments relating to state-owned and privately owned oil and gas interests.  
26 The operators shall complete the adjustments within two years after ~~the date of~~  
27 ~~adoption of the review findings~~the board approves the acreage determination.  
28 Any applicable penalties, liability, or interest for late payment of royalties or  
29 revenues from an affected oil or gas well may not begin to accrue until the end of  
30 the two-year deadline. The filing of an action under section 61-33.1-05 tolls the

1                   deadline for any oil and gas well directly affected by the action challenging the  
2                   review finding or final acreage determination.

3           **SECTION 7. AMENDMENT.** Section 61-33.1-05 of the North Dakota Century Code is  
4 amended and reenacted as follows:

5           **61-33.1-05. Actions challenging review findings or final acreage determinations.**

6 **(Retroactive application - [See note](#))**

7           1. An interested party seeking to bring an action challenging the review findings or  
8           recommendations or the industrial commission actions under this chapter shall  
9           commence an action in district court within two years of the date of adoption of the  
10           final review findings by the industrial commission. The plaintiff bringing an action under  
11           this section may challenge only the final review finding for the section or sections of  
12           land in which the plaintiff asserts an interest. The state and all owners of record of fee  
13           or leasehold estates or interests affected by the finding, recommendation, or industrial  
14           commission action challenged in the action under this section must be joined as  
15           parties to the action. A plaintiff or defendant claiming a boundary of the ordinary high  
16           water mark of the historical Missouri riverbed channel which varies from the boundary  
17           determined under this chapter bears the burden of establishing the variance by clear  
18           and convincing evidence based on evidence of the type required to be considered by  
19           the engineering and surveying firm under subsection 3 of section 61-33.1-03.

20           2. An interested party seeking to bring an action challenging the final acreage  
21           determination under this chapter shall commence an action in district court within two  
22           years of the date the acreage determinations were approved by the board of university  
23           and school lands. The plaintiff bringing an action under this section may challenge  
24           only the acreage determination for the section or sections of land in which the plaintiff  
25           asserts an interest. The state and all owners of record of fee or leasehold estates or  
26           interests affected by the final acreage determination challenged in the action under  
27           this section must be joined as parties to the action. A plaintiff or defendant claiming a  
28           determination of the acreage above or below the historical Missouri riverbed channel  
29           which varies from the final acreage determination under this chapter bears the burden  
30           of establishing the variance by clear and convincing evidence based on evidence of

1            the type required to be considered by the engineering and surveying firm contracted  
2            by the board of university and school lands under subsection 2 of section 61-33.1-04.  
3            3. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, an action brought in district court under  
4            this section is the sole remedy for challenging the final review, recommendations, and  
5            determination of the ordinary high water mark, and final acreage determination under  
6            this chapter, and preempts any right to rehearing, reconsideration, administrative  
7            appeal, or other form of civil action provided under law.

8            **SECTION 8. AMENDMENT.** Section 61-33.1-07 of the North Dakota Century Code is  
9            amended and reenacted as follows:

10           **61-33.1-07. State engineer regulatory jurisdiction. (Retroactive application - [See note](#))**

11           This chapter does not affect the authority of the state engineer to regulate the historical  
12           Missouri riverbed channel, minerals other than oil and gas, or the waters of the state, provided  
13           the regulation does not affect ownership of oil and gas minerals in and under the riverbed or  
14           lands above the ordinary high water mark of the historical Missouri riverbed channel  
15           ~~inundated~~ subject to inundation by Pick-Sloan Missouri basin project dams.

16           **SECTION 9. APPLICATION.** Sections 1 and 2 of this Act do not apply to the ordinary high  
17           water mark study required for the historical Missouri riverbed channel in chapter 61-33.1. This  
18           Act does not affect or limit the authority of the state engineer to regulate waters of this state.

19           **SECTION 10. EMERGENCY.** This Act is declared to be an emergency measure.