

Testimony by Scott K. Olin
On behalf of the
Southwest Pipeline Project
to the
House Appropriations Committee
Education and Environment Subcommittee
Hearing on House Bill 1020
January 11, 2021

Good morning Mr. Chairman and Committee members. My name is Scott Olin, and I am the President and General Manager of Dickinson Ready Mix Co. (DRM), a concrete and concrete products supplier with plants located throughout southwestern North Dakota. Thank you for the opportunity to provide my input on HB 1020. I urge your continued support for funding of the Southwest Pipeline Project (SWPP) in southwest North Dakota.

The southwest corner of the state is one of the most arid regions in the United States and has been plagued with water shortages in the past. I have been with DRM long enough to remember the days before the SWPP began delivering water to Dickinson and the surrounding area. There were periods of extreme drought when Dickinson and other communities were forced to implement strict water conservation measures. I remember a time in the early 1980's when water rationing was implemented and DRM couldn't wash trucks, was restricted on the amount of water used to wash-out and was even limited in batch capacity. It was at this time that the City of Dickinson even considered recycling water from the 4th cell of the lagoon because they were in such dire straits. These water shortages and corresponding restrictions were very disruptive, but beyond being a major inconvenience, they served to inhibit growth and development for businesses and communities in this region. Fortunately, we have not seen critical water shortages like that since SWPP began delivering water to this area.

A reliable source of quality water, to support continued growth and development for all of southwest North Dakota, is no less important now than it was then. Prior to COVID much of the growth in this region was driven by energy development. Energy is a huge consumer of water, but not the only major consumer, by any means. Energy, agriculture, industry and communities, both urban and rural, are all dependent on water if they are to continue to grow and prosper. I know first-hand the importance of having a reliable source of quality water for continued growth and development. DRM has plants located in Dickinson, Killdeer, Beach and Bowman, North Dakota and from these plants we serve most of southwest, North Dakota. Quality water is essential to my business, we can't manufacture quality concrete without it. So, it follows that our efforts to help build southwest North Dakota would be constrained without water from the SWPP. In fact, water may be the most critical limiting resource for continued growth and development for all types of business and industry as well as urban and rural development.

My Dad, Jack Olin, was involved in water development for as long as I can remember. He was involved with bringing water to southwest North Dakota when it was an open ditch concept back in the 1960s. He served on the North Dakota Water Commission for more than 20 years and I believe he introduced the Southwest Pipeline Project Bill in the ND Legislature. He always said one of his proudest moments was when Governor Sinner opened the valve and water started flowing through the Southwest Pipeline. He understood the critical importance of water and investing in water infrastructure. He always said that water is the most precious resource we have. We may find alternate sources for power and energy, but when the human body is thirsty there is no alternate for water. He often repeated the message that without adequate water, an area cannot continue to grow and develop.

I urge your support of House Bill 1020 to provide continued funding for the SWPP, including pump station upgrades, additional water treatment plant equipment, distribution system expansion and operations. By supporting this legislation, you will be supporting continued growth and development for all southwest North Dakota, now and for future generations. Thank You.

Respectfully,

Scott K. Olin

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