

The logo for the North Dakota Water Resource Districts Association features a dark blue silhouette of the state of North Dakota. Inside the silhouette, the text "North Dakota Water Resource Districts Association" is written in white, sans-serif font, arranged in four lines.

North Dakota
Water Resource
Districts Association

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Testimony for House Bill 1020
March 22, 2021
Dan Jacobson,
ND Water Resource Districts Association, Chairman
SE Cass County WRD, Chairman
Cass County Joint Board, Chairman
Red River Joint Water Board, Director

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Dan Jacobson, and I serve as Chairman for the ND Water Resource Districts Association; I serve as Chairman for the SE Cass County Water Resource District; I serve as Chairman of the Cass County Joint Board; and I serve on the Board of Directors for the Red River Joint Board.

Water resource districts have a long history of providing valuable services in North Dakota to the local constituents in their respective counties and regions. Enabling legislation for the establishment of water resource districts was first passed in 1935. The responsibility of water resource districts includes water management from a local and regional perspective for beneficial uses of water, as well as for protection against flooding, erosion, and other detrimental effects of too much water.

The beneficial uses of water and protection against damages caused by flooding is critical to the agricultural and other local economies, as well as the social well-being of our citizens. Rural flood control provides crucial drainage relief not only for North Dakota farms and ranches, it also reduces flood damages to township, county, and state infrastructure.

An important piece of providing these vital services has been funding through the North Dakota State Water Commission (SWC). Without this funding, many important flood control, erosion protection, water management, and beneficial use projects would not have been completed. According to the SWC Water Development Plan, there exists approximately \$48M in current needs for general water management projects, and approximately \$86M in current needs for water conveyance and local flood control projects. Water resource districts sponsor many of these types of projects. Our water resource districts request additional funding authorization for water resource districts' projects for this upcoming biennium.

During the 2019 Legislative Session, the North Dakota Legislature authorized funding for "other flood control" and "general water management" projects. The "other flood control" bucket was segregated from funding authorized for the Mouse River and Fargo Moorhead Diversion flood control projects. Our water resource districts support this separation from major project funding

to ensure that water resource districts have allocated, authorized, funding for flood control, water conveyance, and general water management projects that are shovel-ready, despite the level of funding needed for those major projects, which we, of course, support.

Additionally, our water resource districts strongly support the bonding authority found in HB 1431 and the fund stream identified in HB 1380 as a way to complete these large flood control projects, while at the same time freeing up Resources Trust Fund dollars for important, but smaller, projects. Although water resource districts' projects are not direct beneficiaries of the existing bond funding proposals, water resource districts believe that bond funding for our major projects will provide additional funding opportunities from the Resources Trust Fund for water resource district projects.

I would be happy to answer any questions the committee may have regarding this testimony.

Thank you.

Dan Jacobson