

Testimony
House Bill 1020 – State Water Commission Budget
Senate Appropriations Committee
Northwest Area Water Supply Project Update
March 22, 2021

Good morning Chairman Holmberg and members of the Senate Appropriations Committee. I am Tim Freije, Northwest Area Water Supply (NAWS)/Southwest Pipeline Project (SWPP) Section Head for the State Water Commission. I am appearing before you today to provide an update on the NAWS project.

After a prolonged legal battle and federal injunction, progress on the NAWS project resumed in August of 2017 and the progress has gained momentum through the current biennium. I will attempt to summarize the project status and progress into current biennium activities and the plan for next biennium.

There has been tremendous progress this biennium despite numerous hurdles and I will summarize the progress by project component. Components worked on this biennium include improvements to the Minot Water Treatment Plant, four pipeline contracts, the Lansford Reservoir and Pump Station, the Biota Water Treatment Plant, Snake Creek Pumping Plant Intake Modifications, South Prairie Reservoir and Hydraulic Control Structure, Souris and Bottineau Reservoirs and Pumps Stations, and Raw Water Line Condition Assessment. All told, we have roughly \$180 million worth of infrastructure in various stages of planning, design, and construction.

The Phase II Improvements to the Minot Water Treatment Plant are nearing completion and will replace the existing softening basins, chemical storage and feed

facilities, laboratory, operations room, and influent flow piping amongst other improvements. These improvements will increase treatment capacity from 13 to 14 million gallons per day to 18 million gallons per day.

The four pipeline contracts are on the distribution system and total 70 miles of pipeline. 40 of the miles of pipeline are complete and 30 miles are to be completed by late 2021. Upon completion, the project will be able to deliver 300,000 to 350,000 gallons per day of water to Bottineau.

The Lansford Reservoir and Pump Station has been designed, bid, and is under contract with a completion date of June 2022. This facility will include a 4.5-million-gallon reservoir and a 2,500 gallon per minute pump station. This will increase hydraulic capacity on the distribution system and will allow delivery of 400,000 gallons per day to Bottineau and allow utilization of numerous service connections to serve Upper Souris Water District, All Seasons Water Users District, and the City of Westhope.

Phase I of the Biota Water Treatment plant has been bid and awarded. The construction and operations and maintenance of this facility is purely for Boundary Waters Treaty Compliance, and therefore a federal responsibility. The design so far has been funded with MR&I funds. Two equipment procurement contracts for the facility are already in place which are also funded with MR&I funds. There should be sufficient remaining MR&I funds appropriated to the Biota WTP to cover anticipated

expenditures through the end of the current biennium. We would not have been able to award this contract without the line of credit included in Senate Bill 2020 last session. A similar line of credit in House Bill 1020 this session will be necessary to allow the construction of this critical project component given the unknown nature of federal appropriations.

The design of the Intake Modifications to the Snake Creek Pumping Plant is 90 percent complete. The bidding timeframe will be primarily determined by receipt of permits from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. We anticipate bidding the project late summer or early fall 2021.

Design of the South Prairie Reservoir and Hydraulic Control Structure is roughly 70 percent complete and will include a ten million-gallon reservoir on the raw water line north of the highway 83/23 intersection and a hydraulic control structure on the high point of the raw water line five miles south of the reservoir. The reservoir will provide an average day's use of storage on the raw water line making the supply system more robust and greatly simplifying operations. The hydraulic control structure provides a hydraulic break to control pressures to protect the integrity of the pipeline.

The intake, Biota water treatment plant, and reservoir and hydraulic control structure will be necessary to deliver lake water to Minot.

Project components currently under contract total \$135 million, with \$85 million of those expenses remain to incurred. \$63.2 million in contracts have been bid since September. Expenditures this biennium through January total \$36.7 million, including \$17.5 million in federal MR&I funding, \$11.6 million reimbursed by the City of Minot, and \$7.6 million from 2017-2019 carryover from the resource trust fund.

Planned project components for the 2021-2023 biennium include construction of the Snake Creek Pumping Plant Intake Modifications, South Prairie Reservoir and Hydraulic Control Structure, Souris and Bottineau Reservoirs and Pump Stations, and design of the Phase III improvements at the Minot Water Treatment Plant.

The objective of the work next biennium is to deliver Lake Sakakawea water to Minot for treatment and distribution. The project is currently treating and distributing water from the aquifers in the Minot area, which is a finite supply and temporary solution. Aquifer levels in the area had been decreasing for years and rebounded greatly following the flood of 2011. The aquifer levels were fairly stable from 2011 through 2014 due to lower-than-average water use, wet weather, large tracts of uncropped farmland, and record rainfalls in 2014. The aquifer levels have been rapidly declining since then. Current dry conditions may accelerate that decrease which could negatively affect water availability.

Water availability for the project is currently 13 to 14 million gallons per day.

Completion of the Phase II improvements to the Minot Water Treatment Plant will

increase treatment capacity to 18 million gallons per day but the aquifers are only expected to produce fifteen to 16 million gallons per day. Eighteen million gallons per day, if not more, will be available upon delivery of Lake Sakakawea water to Minot, anticipated in early 2024.

Proposed NAWS funding for the 2021-2023 biennium in the executive budget included \$100 million in authority and \$41.5 million in resource trust funding from the 2021-2023 biennium appropriation. No funding from the 2019-2021 biennium resource trust funding was available for the NAWS project. A line of credit for the Biota Water Treatment Plant will likely be needed to continue progress on the project to serve water to our citizens that desperately need it. Phase I of the Biota plant is the second largest project in agency history behind the east Devils Lake outlet and it is a critical component for delivery of water to avert an incipient water supply crisis and is a \$64 million federal responsibility with \$35 million in federal funding available.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my update on the NAWS project. I will stand for any questions you or the committee have.