

**Testimony of Merri Mooridian, Administrative Officer**  
**Garrison Diversion Conservancy District**  
**House Bill 1380**  
**Senate Appropriations Committee**  
**Bismarck, North Dakota – March 31, 2021**

Good afternoon Chairman Holmberg and members of the Senate Appropriations Committee. My name is Merri Mooridian, and I am the Administrative Officer for the Garrison Diversion Conservancy District (Garrison Diversion). Garrison Diversion and the Lake Agassiz Water Authority (Lake Agassiz) are cosponsors of the Red River Valley Water Supply Project. Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 1380 related to the creation of a Legacy Infrastructure Fund.

Section six of House Bill 1380 would add a new section to chapter 21-10 of the North Dakota Century Code to create a Legacy Infrastructure Fund using Legacy Fund earnings. Among several types of infrastructure projects identified in the legislation, one-time infrastructure projects and water projects such as the Red River Valley Water Supply Project would be eligible for Legacy Infrastructure Fund, as lawmakers appropriate the funding.

The Red River Valley Water Supply Project is a one-time infrastructure project that will safeguard water for North Dakota communities and rural water systems in times of moderate and severe droughts. The Project will deliver water from the Missouri River to central and eastern North Dakota via a buried pipeline. When constructed, the Red River Valley Water Supply Project will serve about 50% of North Dakota's population. 35 cities and rural water systems signed up for the development portion of the Project.

As of March 25th, the U.S. Drought Monitor lists all of North Dakota in the moderate, severe, or extreme drought categories. We do not know whether our current drought conditions will improve or worsen this year. But we do know that climatologists predict we will experience another 1930s-style drought by the year 2050.

The long-term effects of a severe drought would be financially devastating. A 10-year drought similar to the dust bowl of the '30s would have a **\$32 billion impact** on the entire State's economy. A moderate drought like what occurred in the 1980s would have more than a **billion-dollar impact**. Both scenarios would damage the State's communities, industries, and future economy.

I am asking this Committee to please support the utilization of Legacy Fund earnings as outlined in House Bill 1380 to create a new Legacy Infrastructure Fund for one-time infrastructure projects, water projects, and other necessary infrastructure investments.

The creation of a Legacy Infrastructure Fund could benefit the Red River Valley Water Supply Project, pending appropriations from the North Dakota legislature, that would safeguard our water supply, serve multiple generations of North Dakotans, and protect the State's future economy from the steep costs of drought recovery.

Thank you, Chairman Holmberg and members of the Senate Appropriations Committee.