

Newsletter

Notice of Intent for Red River Valley Water Supply Project published in Federal Register



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Among the first steps in the process of conducting an Environmental Impact Statement is the publication of a Notice of Intent in the United States Federal Registry.

The Bureau of Reclamation has published a Notice of Intent to move forward with an Environmental Impact Statement on the Red River Valley Water Supply Project, which can affect residents of the Red River Basin in North Dakota.

The project was mandated by the 106th Congress on Dec. 15, 2000 with passage of the Dakota Water Resources Act.

The Dakota Water Resources Act of 2000 (DWRA) states that, "the Secretary of the Interior shall conduct a comprehensive study of the water quality and quantity needs of the Red River Valley in North Dakota and possible options for meeting those needs." In addition, the

DWRA states "pursuant to an agreement between the Secretary and State of North Dakota.... the Secretary and the State of North Dakota shall jointly prepare and complete a draft Environmental Impact Statement concerning all feasible options to meet the comprehensive water quality and quantity needs of the Red River Valley and the options for meeting those needs." The State of North Dakota has designated the Garrison Diversion Conservancy District (GDCCD) to serve as the State lead in preparation of the EIS for the Red River Valley Water Supply Project. Reclamation, acting under the authority of the Secretary of the Interior, is the lead

Federal agency. Cooperating agencies will be identified at a later date.

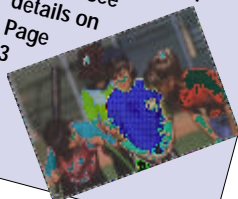
DWRA requires the Bureau of Reclamation and the State of North Dakota to jointly prepare this environmental impact statement (EIS).

Reclamation and the GDCCD will use the NEPA process to ensure that the public has opportunities to review and comment on long-term water supply and management alternatives for the Red River Valley Water Supply

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Next Meetings

? Public Scoping will begin October 28 in Fargo. See details on Page 3



How have Reclamation and GDCCD gotten to this point in the EIS?

In 1944, the U.S. Congress passed the Flood Control Act (the Missouri-Basin Pick Sloan Act), authorizing construction of dams on the Missouri River and its tributaries. The Garrison Diversion Unit (GDU) was authorized in 1965, and construction began in 1967. The project was designed to divert Missouri River water to central and eastern North Dakota for irrigation; fish and wildlife enhancement; municipal, rural, and industrial (MR&I) water supply; and recreation development. Most of the currently authorized principal supply works have been completed, except for about a 20-mile reach between the end of the McClusky Canal and beginning of the New Rockford Canal.

The project was reformulated in 1986, reducing emphasis on irrigation and increasing emphasis on meeting the MR&I water needs throughout North Dakota. The 1986 Reformulation Act authorized a Sheyenne River water supply and release feature and water treatment plant capable of delivering 100 cubic feet per second of water to eastern

North Dakota.

The authorization for the GDU was amended again in December 2000 by Dakota Water Resources Act (DWRA).

The DWRA requires that an Environmental Impact Study and Needs and Options Report be prepared to aid decision-making on a preferred alternative to meet water needs in the Red River Valley in North Dakota.

Development of a reliable water supply for the Red River Valley has been a subject of great interest to local residents, along with government agencies and entities concerned with water management and development. Although rivers in eastern North Dakota such as the Red and Sheyenne rivers are prone to flooding and excessive runoff, they also experience low flow and drought conditions such as those that occurred in the 1930s and 1980s.

In 1994, Reclamation initiated an appraisal-level (preliminary) assessment of MR&I water needs in the Red River Valley as an outcome of the

North Dakota Water Management Collaborative Process. That study was completed in two phases. The first phase was further subdivided into parts A and B. Phase IA compared the existing and projected future MR&I water needs in the Red River Valley with the surface water flows and groundwater resources available to meet those needs. This report, completed in April 1998, concluded that significant shortages could occur during future droughts if no action is taken.

The Phase IB report provided an evaluation of seasonal instream flow needs for water quality and maintenance of aquatic life in the Sheyenne and Red rivers. That report was finalized in August 1999.

The Phase II report presented a range of preliminary alternatives to meet the shortages identified in the Phase IA report. These alternatives included both in-basin and out-of-basin water supplies along with water conservation and a variety of management and operational techniques.

Does the Red River Valley Really Need Water?

Purpose of and Need for the Federal Action

The Red River Valley Water Supply Project EIS will evaluate alternative ways to meet the comprehensive “water quality and quantity needs of the Red River Valley in North Dakota” [DWRA Section 8(b) (1)]. The needs are defined as municipal, rural, and industrial supplies; water quality; aquatic environment; recreation; and water conservation measures [Section 8(b)(2)].

Proposed Alternatives

As required by Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) implementing regulations (40 CFR 1502.2[e]), a full range of reasonable alternatives will be evaluated in the EIS. These alternatives will include No Action and development of in-basin and out-of-basin water sources. The EIS will evaluate potential environmental impacts of



specific alternatives together with engineering and socioeconomic considerations. A preferred alternative has not been identified at this time.

Eight preliminary alternatives, including No Action, were described in the Phase II Needs Assessment. These alternatives were:

- ? No Action. This alternative represents the reasonably foreseeable future condition if a Red River Valley Water Supply Project is not constructed.
 - ? Construction of a new water supply reservoir on the Sheyenne River near Kindred.
 - ? Raising the height of Baldhill Dam on the Sheyenne River near Valley City to increase water storage.
 - ? Development of groundwater resources including purchase of existing rights, new well fields, desalinization, and aquifer storage and recovery.
 - ? Importation of Missouri River water via a pipeline from Bismarck to Fargo.
 - ? Importation of Missouri River water via a pipeline from Lake Oahe south of Bismarck to the vicinity of Wahpeton.
 - ? Importation of Missouri River water to the upper Sheyenne River utilizing existing GDU principal supply works.
 - ? Importation of Missouri River water via a system of closed pipelines from the GDU principal supply works to cities, industries, and rural water systems.
- Other potential water sources including Minnesota sub-basins and

Municipal and Rural



Devils Lake may be evaluated in detail in the EIS. Comments or suggestions on these alternatives or suggestions of other alternatives that should be considered are welcome.

A determination of how much additional water is actually needed in a particular area is needed before Reclamation can explore options for obtaining water. To do this, Reclamation will study “water needs” in six categories

Municipal: Municipal water needs addresses water needed by communities for day-to-day activities, for example drinking and cooking, watering lawns, parks, household use, filling the local swimming pool.

Rural: Rural water needs involves water needed by people not living in a municipality. The water needs include household water needs and livestock watering. Irrigation is an exception to this needs list because DWRA excludes irrigation in the Hudson Bay drainage basin.

Industrial: Industrial needs are the water needed by a particular industry, for example a sugar beet plant or a corn processing plant.

Aquatic Environment: Aquatic water needs are basically the minimum amount of water that aquatic life (fish, crayfish, water plants, etc.) needs to sustain itself.

Recreation: Quantities required to support water-based recreation activities. For example the amount of water needed for canoeing in river.

Water Quality: Even if there is water in abundance in the Red River Valley, it must also be of a usable quality. Some water is extremely expensive to treat, so water quality must be a primary consideration in the development of alternatives.



Red River Valley Water Supply Project Environmental Impact Statement Newsletter

Prepared jointly by the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, Great Plains Region, Dakotas Area Office, Bismarck, ND, and the Garrison Diversion Conservancy District, Carrington, ND.

Multiple steps lead EIS study team to definitive conclusion on RRV

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) was passed by Congress in 1969, and represents the most significant piece of environmental legislation enacted in the United States. NEPA provides national policy for Federal agencies by governing the decision-making and planning process used to reach significant environmental decisions. Through NEPA, the public is informed and involved in the decision-making process, and a systematic, interdisciplinary approach is used to consider the environmental impacts.

An EIS is an Environmental Impact Statement, a document that provides full and fair discussion of significant environmental impacts of a proposed action. It describes reasonable alternatives, which would avoid or minimize adverse impacts or enhance quality of the human environment.

Following is a brief description of steps to be undertaken:

Initiate the NEPA Process - A number of tasks will be initiated by the co-leads prior to publishing a Notice of Intent, which formally begins the NEPA process.

Issue Notice of Intent - The preparation and publication of a Notice of Intent (NOI) in the *Federal Register* formally initiates the NEPA process.

Agency Coordination and Public Scoping - Reclamation will take the lead in formal consultation with federal agencies, states other than North Dakota, Canada, Tribes, and with the State Historic Preservation Offices. GDCD will take the lead in consultation with State agencies.

Identify Purpose and Need for Action - The co-leads will agree to a Statement of Purpose and Need consistent with DWRA. These water quality and quantity needs will be identified in the Needs and Options Report to be prepared by Reclamation with assistance from the State. MR&I needs projections are a function of available surface and ground water, population, and per capita demand. Aquatic environment, water quality, and recreation needs will also be quantified as part of the Needs and Options Report.

Develop Alternatives - Preliminary alternatives include those described in the Phase II appraisal level needs assessment, as well as any new alternatives brought forward during the scoping process.

Describe Affected Environment - The affected environment step covers identification of resources by the co-leads that could be affected by the alternatives,

with a focus on significant issues identified during scoping.

Environmental Consequences of Alternatives - The IDT summarizes the evaluation and comparison of alternatives in this step. Direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts to the human and natural environment will be analyzed by the co-leads for each alternative.

DEIS Preparation and Distribution - The IDT will co-author the Draft EIS (DEIS).

FEIS Preparation and Distribution - All written comments

received from the public and a summary of the hearing(s) will be included in the Final EIS.

Selection of the Preferred Alternative - Subject to the provisions of section (8) of DWRA, the Secretary of the Interior shall select a preferred alternative to implement DWRA.

Record of Decision - No sooner than thirty days after the Environmental Protection Agency has published the Notice of Availability for the FEIS, Reclamation will release a record of decision.

Locations, dates, times of scoping meetings

- Oct. 28, 7 p.m., Fargo, ND, Fargo Civic Auditorium, 207 4th Street North, lower level, Rm A?
- Oct. 29, 7 p.m., Valley City, ND, AmericInn Hotel, 330 Wintershow Road
- Oct. 30, 7 p.m., Grand Forks, ND, Grand Forks City Council Chambers, 225 N 4th Street, 3rd floor
- Nov. 6, 7 p.m., Pembina, ND, Pembina State Museum, Exit 215 off of I-29, 805 Highway 59
- Nov. 7, 7 p.m., Wahpeton, ND, Wahpeton City Hall, 1900 4th Street North, Community Room
- Nov. 8, 1 p.m., Bismarck, ND, Doublewood Inn, I-94 and Exit 159.

Issues raised at the scoping meetings will be documented in the Scope of Statement (SOS) for the Red River Valley Water Supply Project EIS.

The objectives of the SOS are to summarize the essence of the comments in a clear and concise manner, and to accurately portray the scope of the EIS. The SOS will be distributed to public libraries near the meeting locations, posted on Reclamation's Red River Valley Water Supply Project EIS web page, and mailed upon request.



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Project. Public comments are invited and encouraged regarding both the scope of environmental and socioeconomic issues and alternatives to be evaluated in the EIS.

the Secretary of the Interior shall conduct a comprehensive study of the water quality and quantity needs of the Red River Valley in North Dakota

organizations, the public, and the international community are invited to participate in the open exchange of information and to submit comments on the proposed scope of the EIS.

Each meeting will be preceded by a two-hour open house during which Reclamation, GDCD, and other participants will be available.

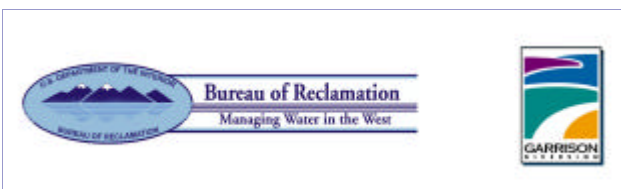
Reclamation and the GDCD have scheduled six public scoping meetings in which Federal, State, local and tribal government agencies, non-governmental or-

RED RIVER VALLEY WATER SUPPLY PROJECT
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

RRV EIS
Bureau of Reclamation
304 E Broadway
Bismarck, ND 58501

Mail to:

«Salutation» «First Name» «Last Name»
«Title»
«Agency Name»
«Agency Name Line 2»
«Street Address line 2»



WE'RE ON THE WEB
WWW.RRVWSP.COM

Issues at hand so far ...

Here are some of the issues already identified that need to be addressed before an informed decision can be made on how best to meet future water needs in the Red River Valley. This list is expected to change as the project progresses.

- What would be the effects of each alternative on water quality and quantity in streams, lakes, and wetlands?
- How would groundwater be affected?
- How would the alternatives affect plants and animals or their habitats?
- Could any endangered species be adversely impacted?
- What are the chances that unwanted plants or animals could be accidentally transferred from the Missouri River basin to the Hudson Bay basin, and what would be the ecological and economic consequences of such a transfer?
- How would this project affect flows in the Missouri River, especially during a drought?
- Would this add on to the effects of other proposed projects such as the Devils Lake outlet?
- Would there be impacts on archaeological or historic sites?
- What would be the socio-economic impacts on affected communities?

You probably have an idea or a piece of information to make this a better process. Let us know if you believe something important is missing. Email your comments to rrvwspmail@gp.usbr.gov or use the return mailing address above. All comments received will be addressed.



The scope of the Red River Valley Environmental Impact Statement will cover the Red River Basin in the United States, Minnesota, treaty obligations with Canada, and states bordering the Missouri River. The scope of the EIS may be revised after public scoping of issues and alternatives.