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April 10, 2006

Red River Valley Water Supply Project
Bureau of Reclamation
PO Box 1017
Bismarck, ND 58502-1017

Re: Comments on Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)
Red River Valley Water Supply Management Project

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen:

The City of Ottertail is located in Northeastern Otter Tail County and offers the following comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement Red River Valley Water Supply Project. Our comments relate to the proposed Red River Basin Alternative.

Many area residents, with interest in this project, were not aware of or were unable to attend the public hearing held February 16, 2006 due to the limited notice and information made available prior to that meeting. This presented residents in our area with limited resources and time to review the Draft EIS and evaluate the information. A public information meeting was held March 23, 2006 at a Perham location with approximately 125 area residents attending. It is unfortunate that comments presented by those in attendance at that meeting will not be part of the formal record, unless they go the added step of submitting written comments.

We feel it should be noted, to the best of our knowledge, no representative from this area or surrounding communities participated in development of the alternatives presented in the Draft EIS. However, several communities that will certainly benefit from the project, were included in the work groups and review teams that developed the proposed alternatives.

Local residents living in this area during the 1930's can recall that many lakes and other surface waters in the area were dry or suffered severe reductions of 20, 30 or more feet below their normal high water marks for an extended period of years during the draught of the 1930's. Given soil conditions and the interaction between ground and surface water one can reasonably expect similar drops occurring in ground water in the surrounding areas should another draught occur.

Many City of Ottertail residents, agricultural water users and most rural residents in the area rely on ground water for their drinking water supplies. Most of these wells range less than 100 feet deep. We feel an additional 108 wells, of the magnitude proposed, would severely affect the water supply of residential users and could eliminate the valuable farming industry in this area completely. The Draft EIS does not appear to address the long term impact from the operational requirements of using ground water located some 60 miles away and the affect it would have on the supply area. It is obvious wells in the well field would need to be operated on a somewhat regular basis to assure they would work properly when needed. Water pumped from the aquifers during non-draught conditions would very likely become part of the "base supply" for those areas served by the Red River Valley Water Supply Project. This could further encourage water consumption and increase the water supply deficit in the future for this area.

The EIS does not address the impact of having a user controlled system in place to determine when the system should be placed into full operation. With a user controlled system in place and the impacts difficult to see and measure, the alternative presents a much greater change of adverse impacts/affects when compared to the more definable and measurable impacts associated with the preferred alternative being presented.

It would appear, from information presented in the Draft EIS, the import of water from the GDU Import to the Sheyenne River alternative is the most effective alternative as a huge investment has already been made in some of the facilities needed to implement this alternative. The proposed biota treatment facility would reduce the probability that exotic species would be transported from the Missouri to the Red River Basin to acceptable standards.

It is highly apparent a drought with the magnitude of the 1930's would not be confined to the Red River Valley. It would likely impact throughout and well beyond the Red River Basin. For this reason and reasons outlined the City of Ottertail would strongly urge that the alternative of drawing ground wter supplies from the Otter Tail Surficial Outwash and Pelican River Sand-Plain Aquifers be dropped from further consideration. Simply put, there appears to be a huge lack of data on the impacts of this alternative. Any definitive knowledge of the impact of substantially lowering the level of these aquifers during a severe drought would not be known until it is to late to react effectively.

Sincerely,



Raymond Mounts
Mayor, City of Ottertail

Cc State Senator Cal Larson
State Representative Dean Simpson