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Otter Tail County Coordinator

Larry S. Krohn

520 FIR AVENUE WEST • FERGUS FALLS, MN 56537-2544
FAX 218/998-8075

218/998-8060
e-mail lkrohn@co.otter-tail.mn.us

April 12, 2006

Red River Valley Water Supply Project
Bureau of Reclamation
P.O. Box 1017
Bismark, ND 58502-1017

Greetings:

Enclosed please find a resolution in opposition to the Red River Basin option as outlined in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Red River Valley Water Supply Project. This resolution was adopted by the Otter Tail County Board of Commissioners on Tuesday, April 11, 2006.

Sincerely,

Larry Krohn

Larry Krohn
County Coordinator

OTTER TAIL COUNTY RESOLUTION NO. 2006 – 32

Upon the motion of Lee, seconded by Nelson, and unanimously carried, the County Board of Commissioners adopts the following resolution:

WHEREAS, the United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, and the State of North Dakota propose to develop and deliver a bulk water supply to meet the long-term water needs of the Red River Valley in North Dakota, which is known as the Red River Valley Water Supply Project; and

WHEREAS, a Draft Environmental Impact Statement has been prepared to evaluate alternatives to meet the long-term water supply needs of the Red River Valley in North Dakota and three cities in Minnesota; and

WHEREAS, one of the options would be to draw water from aquifers that sit in Otter Tail County known as the Pelican River Sands Aquifer and the Otter Tail Outwash Aquifer. An estimated 129 wells would be drilled in the aquifers, and the water would be piped west to the Red River Valley. The two aquifers cover 696 square miles, and the wells and pipe system would cover a large portion of Otter Tail County and would affect the communities of Vergas, Perham, Dent, Ottertail, Battle Lake, Pelican Rapids and many rural areas within the County; and

WHEREAS, in reviewing the Draft EIS, many of the assumptions related to the impact on water quantity are based upon average data for the period 1931 to 2001. In measuring the impact of the drought with the magnitude of the 1930's, the surface water quantity data for the Red River and Sheyanne is noted. No similar data regarding the impact of drought conditions on the proposed ground water supplies in Otter Tail County are included in the report; and

WHEREAS, this is a serious oversight as the affect of the additional pressure on ground water resources in the area during a severe drought are not well documented. Soil conditions in Otter Tail County consist primarily of course to fine textured loams and sands. The soils have low water holding capacity. The soil types and textures directly affect the movement and rate of water percolation; and

WHEREAS, almost all agricultural, residential and industrial water uses in the County are from ground water sources. Surface water is primarily used for recreational purposes and ground water recharge. There is considerable ground and surface water interaction in the area; and

WHEREAS, accounts from local residents indicate that many of the lakes and other surface waters in the area were dry or suffered significant reductions of 20 to 30 or more feet below their normal high water marks for a sustained period of years during the drought of the 1930's. Given the soils conditions and interaction between ground water and surface water, one could reasonably expect similar drops to occur in ground water in the surrounding area; and

WHEREAS, data collected during the preparation and implementation of the City of Perham's Wellhead Protection Plan indicated that there are high nitrate concentrations in the upper portions of the aquifer in the Perham area, that pumping of high capacity wells changes the normal flow of ground water significantly increasing the vertical exchange of water in the aquifer and the nitrates and other

pollutants currently confined in the upper reaches of the aquifer could mix with the clean water deeper in the aquifer; and

WHEREAS, the drilling of 100 or more water wells will multiply these impacts throughout a significant portion of Otter Tail County; and

WHEREAS, Otter Tail County's recreational resources of over 1,000 lakes, several state parks and numerous state and national wildlife management and waterfowl production areas would be seriously impacted by a drought of the magnitude of the 1930's. It is highly unlikely the any drought would be confined to the Red River Valley and would likely have impact throughout the Red River Basin. Lowering the ground water levels would further magnify the impact on a wide variety of local and migratory wildlife populations that would already be under stress; and

WHEREAS, the Draft EIS does not address the long-term impact from the operational requirements of using ground water located some 60 miles away and what effects it would have on the supply area. Wells in the well field will need to be operated on a regular basis in order to make sure that they will work properly when needed. The water pumped from the aquifers during non-drought conditions will likely become part of the "base supply" for those areas to be served by the Red River Valley Water Supply Project. This will further encourage water consumption and enlarge the water supply deficit in the future; and

WHEREAS, the EIS does not address the impacts of having a user-controlled system being in place to determine when the system should be placed in full operation. With user-controlled systems in place and the impacts difficult to measure and see, the Otter Tail County supply alternative presents a greater chance for adverse impacts when compared with the more definable and measureable impacts associated with the preferred alternative; and

WHEREAS, based upon the information presented in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, it appears import of water from the Garrison Diversion Unit import to the Sheyenne River alternative is the most effective alternative. An extensive 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 River Basin to the Red River Basin; and

WHEREAS, the Draft EIS provides satisfactory answers regarding the potential impact on Otter Tail County's wetlands, grasslands, woodlands, riparian areas and wildlife and aquatic communities; and

WHEREAS, there is great concern for the agricultural industry which rely on the ground water for irrigation and livestock and would be under stress in drought conditions.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Otter Tail County Board of Commissioners hereby opposes the use of ground water resources in the Otter Tail Outwash and Pelican River Sands Aquifers as a source of water for the Red River Valley Water Supply Project.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Otter Tail County Board of Commissioners questions the adequacy of the Environmental Impact Statement upon the foregoing grounds and specifically lack of information how the project would affect the County in drought conditions.

Adopted this 11th day of April, 2006.

OTTER TAIL COUNTY

By Roger Froemming
Roger Froemming, Chairman
Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:

Larry Krohn
Larry Krohn, Clerk