

Testimony by Jenifer Murray, acting Manager/CEO

Southwest Water Authority

On behalf of the

Southwest Pipeline Project

to the

House Appropriations Committee

Hearing on House Bill 1431

Monday, February 1, 2021

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Jenifer Murray. I am the acting Manager/CEO of Southwest Water Authority. I am here today to testify in support of House Bill 1431.

First of all, I want to thank the North Dakota Legislature for the wonderful job that has been accomplished to fund water projects across the state. It was through the Legislature the Southwest Pipeline Project was authorized and administered through the State Water Commission. The Southwest Pipeline Project was the first large multi-county regional rural water project developed in North Dakota and today it serves 33 communities, 7,330 rural water customers, 24 contract customers, 24 raw water customers and two additional rural water systems. Southwest Water Authority holds the responsibility to operate, manage, and maintain this state-owned project.

The Resources Trust Fund was established with the purpose of providing funding by legislative appropriation for development of water-related projects. Throughout the years the Southwest Pipeline Project has received funding from multiple sources. We are truly grateful for the support from the legislature and the Resources Trust Fund. Presently, however, the Resources Trust Fund is the only source of funding for the Southwest Pipeline Project. The relationship Southwest Water Authority and the Southwest Pipeline Project share with the Resources Trust Fund is unique. Since 1991, the Capital Repayment from the Southwest Water Authority customers is paid back to the Resources Trust Fund and is used for funding other water projects throughout the State. The repayment is approaching \$11 Million per biennium. Southwest Water Authority customers will pay back every dollar of funding received and will continue to pay into perpetuity long after original funding has been repaid.

Southwest Water Authority acknowledges the need for funding of water projects throughout the state, each of which is important to stabilize local economies and improve quality of life. The magnitude and need of water related projects continues to grow at a rate such that competition for funding from the Resources Trust Fund alone may cause delay for many.

North Dakota has been set up for success through the thoughtful planning of the legislature. Establishment of the proposed water infrastructure revolving loan fund and bonded debt repayment program in House Bill 1431 speaks to the legislative commitment for the present and future.

There are hundreds of people in southwest North Dakota that continue to wait for quality water. Southwest Water Authority supports House Bill 1431 as a mechanism for funding of critical water infrastructure needs throughout North Dakota. Thank you.

Jen Murray, Acting Manager/CEO

Southwest Water Authority

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