

**HOUSE GOVERNMENT AND VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**  
**Representative Jim Kasper, Chair**  
**January 8, 2021**

North Dakota Department of Parks and Recreation  
Jolene Rieck, PLA, Chief of Planning and Programs  
**Presenting Testimony in support of House Concurrent  
Resolution No. 3002**

Chairman Kasper and members of the committee:

I am Jolene Rieck, the Chief of Planning and Programs for the State of North Dakota, Department of Parks and Recreation and I am testifying on behalf of the Department in support of House Concurrent Resolution 3002.

The evaluation for the public access and use of real property owned by the State of North Dakota commenced in 2009 after an ice jam flooded the Missouri River Correctional Center (MRCC) property that caused residents to be evacuated. Consideration was being given to relocating the MRCC that coincided with public efforts for "Penitentiary Park." Bills were introduced in both the 2011 and 2013 legislative session to relocate the MRCC to a different location, but neither passed. In 2013, an appropriation to study the issue does pass.

In 2015, the North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department received a one-time appropriation at the Director's discretion, which was used for planning purposes for the Missouri River Day Use Park. The plan identified almost 200 acres of a highly developed day park with a conceptual cost estimate of \$6.75 million dollars in 2015. The study concluded that the existing MRCC land is well suited for a public day park, it is not desirable due to the significant risk associated with maintaining strict physical separation of two distinct populations located in proximity to each other.

In 2016, 240 acres of land was transferred via executive order from the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DOCR) to the Department of Parks and Recreation (NDPRD). In 2017, NDPRD received an appropriation for developing recreation opportunities on sovereign lands in the state but noted that almost all the \$500,000 appropriation would have been used to build a road with

no funds for development, maintenance or to provide a staffing presence at the site.

Without the relocation of the MRCC, the feasibility of developing a park utilizing partial acreage was less than desirable at that time. In 2017, the land was transferred back to DOCR from NDPRD, and a Memorandum of Understanding was executed between the two departments, providing the Parks and Recreation Department would have the first option to purchase the land previously transferred if the MRCC site ceases operations or relocates.

Meanwhile, General Sibley Park is adjacent to the property and contains campsites, multi-use trails, a small watercraft launch, picnic areas, playgrounds and equipment rentals. That park is managed by the Bismarck Parks and Recreation District.

The Memorandum of Understanding provides an ideal solution to preserve the full opportunity for future public use of the state-owned property without encumbering current resources.

Mr. Chairman, the Department of Parks and Recreation supports House Concurrent Resolution 3002.

Mr. Chairman, I would be happy to stand for any questions. Thank you.

