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## **Senate Appropriations Committee**

**Hearing Nov. 8, 2021**

### **Testimony of Dave Lang, North Dakota Water Users Association**

Good afternoon, Chairman Holmberg and members of the Senate Appropriations Committee. I am Dave Lang and I serve as the President of the North Dakota Water Users Association. Thank you for your hard work over the last month developing SB 2345. The North Dakota Water Users Association supports the appropriation of \$75 million of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds for water projects through SB 2345.

The Water Users Association was organized in 1959 to protect, develop, and manage North Dakota's water resources. It is currently comprised of over 300 local, statewide and regional organizations in North Dakota who have an active interest in water. We work closely with many North Dakota water organizations regarding funding needs and priorities. Collaboration is essential in meeting the water resource management needs of North Dakota.

Despite the generosity of the legislature this spring in funding water projects, there are still unmet needs. Whether for water supply, flood control, irrigation, or other water needs, there are projects across the state that could and will put ARPA funding to work. Projects under construction or close to construction have been especially hard hit by increased prices and supply chain challenges. Additional ARPA funding, above the Resources Trust Fund dollars previously allocated, will help projects pay for price increases due to inflation and save the state dollars in the long run by moving up the timeframe for project completion.

The North Dakota Water Users appreciates the conversation regarding water funding and the Resources Trust Fund that has accompanied the committee's work on ARPA funding. Water projects across the state were adversely impacted by the funding issues created by the COVID-19 pandemic. The situation highlighted areas for possible improvement with the current system for funding water projects. While this is certainly an issue that should be considered and addressed, we believe that is a policy decision best made during the regular legislative session. Waiting until the 2023 session would give all interested parties the opportunity to sit down and discuss the best solution to achieving predictable water funding.

For these reasons we would ask for your support of SB 2345 as introduced, without amendment to the section dealing with water funding.

Thank you.