

NORTH DAKOTA

*Water Users
Association*

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Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee

House Bill 1353 Committee Hearing March 18, 2021

Testimony of Lance Gaebe, Executive Vice President, North Dakota Water Users Association

Good morning, Chairman Kruen and members of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. I am Lance Gaebe representing the North Dakota Water Users Association. The North Dakota Water Users Association supports House Bill 1353 as amended with the amendment offered by Rep. Schmidt.

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 the North Dakota Water Coalition to build consensus within the water community regarding funding needs and priorities. Collaboration is essential in meeting the water resource management needs of North Dakota.

The Water Users Association supports reorganizing the current Office of the State Engineer/State Water Commission into the Department of Water Resources, which more accurately reflects the duties and responsibilities of the agency. We also support adding a director to oversee the department.

We appreciate Rep. Schmidt's proposed amendment to HB 1353, clarifying the important role and responsibility that the state engineer has and will continue to have under the Department of Water Resources. We would ask for your support for both Rep. Schmidt's amendment and the bill as amended.

Thank you. I'm happy to stand for any questions.