

Fifty-sixth Legislative Assembly, State of North Dakota, begun in the Capitol in the City of Bismarck, on Tuesday, the fifth day of January, one thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine

HOUSE BILL NO. 1139
(Natural Resources Committee)
(At the request of the State Engineer)

AN ACT to create and enact a new section to chapter 61-16.1 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to appeals of water resource board decisions of noncomplying dams, dikes, or other devices to the state engineer.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH DAKOTA:

SECTION 1. A new section to chapter 61-16.1 of the North Dakota Century Code is created and enacted as follows:

Appeal of board decisions - State engineer review - Closing of noncomplying dams, dikes, or other devices for water conservation, flood control, regulation, and watershed improvement. The board shall make the decision required by section 61-16.1-53 within a reasonable time, not exceeding one hundred twenty days, after receiving the complaint. The board shall notify all parties of its decision by registered mail. The board's decision may be appealed to the state engineer by any aggrieved party. The appeal to the state engineer must be made within thirty days from the date notice of the board's decision has been received. The appeal must be made by submitting a written notice to the state engineer which must specifically set forth the reason why the appealing party believes the board's decision is erroneous. The appealing party shall also submit copies of the written appeal notice to the board and to all nonappealing parties. Upon receipt of this notice the board, if it has ordered removal of a dam, dike, or other device, is relieved of its obligation to procure the removal of the dam, dike, or other device. The state engineer shall handle the appeal by conducting an independent investigation and making an independent determination of the matter. The state engineer may enter property affected by the complaint for the purpose of investigating the complaint.

If the board fails to investigate and make a determination concerning the complaint within a reasonable time, not exceeding one hundred twenty days, the person filing the complaint may file the complaint with the state engineer. The state engineer, without reference to chapter 28-32, shall cause the investigation and determination to be made, either by action against the board, or by personally conducting the investigation and personally making the determination. If the state engineer determines that a dam, dike, or other device has been constructed or established by a landowner or tenant contrary to title 61 or any rules adopted by the board, the state engineer shall take one of these three actions:

1. Notify the landowner by registered mail at the landowner's post-office address of record;
2. Return the matter to the jurisdiction of the board along with the investigation report; or
3. Forward the dam, dike, or other device complaint and investigation report to the state's attorney.

If the state engineer decides to notify the landowner, the notice must specify the nature and extent of the noncompliance and must state that if the dam, dike, or other device is not removed within such reasonable time as the state engineer determines, but not less than thirty days, the state engineer shall procure the removal of the dam, dike, or other device and assess the cost of removal against the property of the responsible landowner. The notice from the state engineer must state that, within fifteen days of the date the notice is mailed, the affected landowner may demand, in writing, a hearing on the matter. Upon receipt of the demand, the state engineer shall set a hearing date within fifteen days from the date the demand is received. If, in the opinion of the state engineer, more than one landowner or tenant has been responsible, the costs may be assessed on a pro rata basis in proportion to the responsibility of the landowners. Upon assessment of costs, the state engineer shall certify the

assessment to the county auditor of the county where the noncomplying dam, dike, or other device is located. The county auditor shall extend the assessment against the property assessed. Each assessment must be collected and paid as other property taxes are collected and paid. Assessments collected must be deposited with the state treasurer and are hereby appropriated out of the state treasury and must be credited to the contract fund established by section 61-02-64.1. Any person aggrieved by action of the state engineer under this section may appeal the decision of the state engineer to the district court in accordance with chapter 28-32. A hearing by the state engineer as provided for in this section is a prerequisite to such an appeal.

If the state engineer, after completing the investigation required under this section, decides to return the matter to the board, a complete copy of the investigation report must be forwarded to the board and it must include the nature and extent of the noncompliance. Upon having the matter returned to its jurisdiction, the board shall carry out the state engineer's decision in accordance with the terms of this section.

If the state engineer, after completing the investigation required under this section, decides to forward the dam, dike, or other device complaint to the state's attorney, a complete copy of the investigation report must also be forwarded, which must include the nature and extent of the noncompliance. The state's attorney shall prosecute the complaint in accordance with the statutory responsibilities prescribed in chapter 11-16.

In addition to the penalty imposed by the court in the event of conviction under this statute, the court shall order the dam, dike, or other device removed within such reasonable time period as the court determines, but not less than thirty days. If the dam, dike, or other device is not removed within the time prescribed by the court, the court shall procure the removal of the dam, dike, or other device, and assess the cost thereof against the property of the landowner responsible, in the same manner as other assessments under chapter 61-16.1 are levied. If, in the opinion of the court, more than one landowner or tenant has been responsible, the costs may be assessed on a pro rata basis in proportion to the responsibility of the landowners.

The authority granted in this section may only be exercised for dams, dikes, or other devices constructed after the effective date of this Act.

Speaker of the House

President of the Senate

Chief Clerk of the House

Secretary of the Senate

This certifies that the within bill originated in the House of Representatives of the Fifty-sixth Legislative Assembly of North Dakota and is known on the records of that body as House Bill No. 1139.

House Vote: Yeas 95 Nays 0 Absent 3

Senate Vote: Yeas 47 Nays 0 Absent 2

Chief Clerk of the House

Received by the Governor at _____ M. on _____, 1999.

Approved at _____ M. on _____, 1999.

Governor

Filed in this office this _____ day of _____, 1999,

at _____ o'clock _____ M.

Secretary of State