

Testimony for House Bill 1020

January 11, 2021

Dan Jacobson,

ND Water Resource Districts Association, Chairman

SE Cass County WRD, Chairman

Cass County Joint Board, Chairman

Red River Joint Water Board, Director

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Dan Jacobson, and I serve as Chairman for the ND Water Resource Districts Association; I serve as Chairman for the SE Cass County Water Resource District; I serve as Chairman of the Cass County Joint Board; and I serve on the Board of Directors for the Red River Joint Board.

Water resource districts have a long history of providing valuable services in North Dakota to the local constituents in their respective counties and regions. Enabling legislation for the establishment of water resource districts was first passed in 1935. The responsibility of water resource districts includes water management from a local and regional perspective for beneficial uses of water, as well as for protection against flooding, erosion, and other detrimental effects of too much water.

The beneficial uses of water and protection against damages caused by flooding is critical to the agricultural and other local economies, as well as the social well-being of our citizens. Rural flood control provides crucial drainage relief not only for North Dakota farms and ranches, it also reduces flood damages to township, county, and state infrastructure.

An important piece of providing these vital services has been NDSWC funding. Without this funding, many important flood control, erosion protection, water management, and beneficial use projects would not have been completed. According to the NDSWC Water Development Plan, there exists approximately \$48M in current needs for general water management projects, and approximately \$86M in current needs for water conveyance and local flood control projects. Water resource districts sponsor many of these types of projects. Our water resource districts request additional funding authorization for water resource districts' projects for this upcoming biennium.

During the 2019 Legislative Session, the North Dakota Legislature authorized funding for "other flood control" and "general water management" projects. The "other flood control" bucket was segregated from funding authorized for the Mouse River and FM Diversion flood control projects. Our water resource districts support this separation from major project funding to ensure that water resource districts have allocated, authorized funding for flood control, water conveyance, and general water management projects that are shovel-ready, despite the level of funding needed for those major projects, which we, of course, support.

Our water resource districts have indicated strong support in allowing the State of North Dakota to utilize the issuance of bonds backed by the Legacy Fund to provide an additional source for grant funding and loan funding. Although water resource districts' projects are not direct beneficiaries of the existing bond funding proposals, water resource districts believe that bond funding for our major projects will provide additional funding opportunities from the Resources Trust Fund for water resource district projects.

I would be happy to answer any questions the committee may have regarding this testimony.

Thank you.

Dan Jacobson