

**Testimony of Merri Mooridian, Administrative Officer
Garrison Diversion Conservancy District
HB 1020 State Water Commission Budget
Senate Appropriations Committee
Bismarck, North Dakota – March 22, 2021**

Senator Holmberg and members of the Senate Appropriations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 1020, the ND State Water Commission budget. I am Merri Mooridian, Administrative Officer of the Garrison Diversion Conservancy District (Garrison Diversion).

While Garrison Diversion has several focus areas we work diligently to progress, the development of irrigation systems is a high priority. Irrigation development brings value to the state of North Dakota. Land values increase, risk decreases, crop production increases, and the economic impact is tremendous. A study completed by North Dakota State University in 2014 determined that for every \$1 invested in irrigation by the state, \$7 is returned.

The McClusky Canal was constructed as part of the Garrison Diversion Unit authorized in 1965 and was designed to irrigate up to 250,000 acres. The original project scope was revised through the Garrison Diversion Reformulation Act of 1986 and the Dakota Water Resources Act of 2000, and, as a result, irrigation acres were decreased. Currently, 23,700 acres of irrigation are authorized along the McClusky Canal through the Dakota Water Resources Act.

In an effort to utilize the authorized acres along the McClusky Canal, Garrison Diversion has been working with producers since 2010 to expand irrigation development through the McClusky Canal Irrigation Project, successfully utilizing Missouri River water

from the McClusky Canal. Multiple projects have been completed, and to date, there are approximately 7,200 developed irrigated acres in the McClusky Canal Irrigation Project, with additional projects in the works.

Garrison Diversion provides upfront investment for projects which determines irrigable soils, facility design and the bidding process. These projects are eligible for the North Dakota State Water Commission 50% cost share on the Central Supply Works, which includes the pump station, power and main transmission lines. The irrigator is then responsible for the other 50% of the Central Supply Works and 100% of the on-farm items such as pivots, power for pivots and distribution lines to pivots. In total, the cost share actually represents approximately 30% of total on- and off-farm project costs for the irrigator. The bottom line is, irrigation is expensive.

Funding from the State Water Commission is essential to further irrigation development. Without it, these irrigation projects are not feasible, as irrigator costs would be too high to be considered profitable.

Irrigation benefits to North Dakota are widespread, and the State's investment is important in realizing the irrigation potential of the McClusky Canal. Please help us keep future irrigation projects affordable by providing funding in the State Water Commission budget.

Thank you for allowing my testimony to be heard today.