



**House Appropriations Education and Environment Division  
Hearing for SB 2017  
March 8, 2023  
Testimony of Dave Lang, North Dakota Water Users Association**

Chairman Nathe and members of the House Appropriations Education and Environment Division, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on SB 2017. The Water Users Association is the state-wide member organization dedicated to protecting, developing, and managing North Dakota's water resources. We have more than 150 members including local, statewide and regional organizations in North Dakota who have an active interest in water.

As the Division works on the budget for the North Dakota Game and Fish Department, the Water Users asks that you support the efforts of the Game and Fish Department in preventing the spread of aquatic nuisance species (ANS). The North Dakota Water Users has a policy resolution addressing the vital need to combat the spread of ANS. Our policy reads:

*We urge aggressive prevention of aquatic nuisance species (ANS) for North Dakota waters as outlined in the North Dakota aquatic species management plan prepared by the Aquatic Invasive Species Committee. We urge all federal and state agencies to adequately fund and provide the necessary authorities to implement aquatic nuisance species prevention programs in all North Dakota waters, and we support adequate funding for ANS education and enforcement. We support the actions and initiatives of the North Dakota Game and Fish Department in their efforts to educate, inform public and protect our states' waters from ANS. As these efforts are limited in scope due to their funding through licensing fees, we strongly encourage and support direct State funding to better protect our waters from the high risks associated with the invasion and adverse impacts associated with ANS.*

As the threat of ANS, particularly zebra mussels grows, additional work will need to be done to curb the spread through inspection and education. Zebra mussels are especially damaging to any type of infrastructure within an infected body of water, including irrigation and water supply intakes. Once introduced zebra mussels can NOT be eradicated. The thumbnail-sized mollusks spread rapidly, a single female mussel can produce about a half a billion offspring in her 3 to 5-year life span. Eventually they silently, but completely upend the delicate ecology of a lake. They overwhelm and kill native mussels. They strain out and devour tiny, edible material, robbing native fish of nutrients. They excrete a carpet of waste that fosters the growth of hairy, stinky, toxic mats of algae. Zebra mussels have a jagged, razor-sharp shell that can slice a swimmer's foot or leave your hand bloody when grabbing onto anything submerged in the infested waters.

It only takes one infected boat to introduce zebra mussels and infect an entire body of water. This is why a robust inspection strategy is vital to prevention. We ask the Division to support a strong ANS prevention line item within the Department's budget.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.