Testimony of Kip Kovar, District Engineer
Garrison Diversion Conservancy District
SB2020 DWR/SWC Funding
Education & Environment Division of the Senate Appropriations Committee
Bismarck, North Dakota – January 19, 2023

Senator Sorvaag and members of the Education and Environment Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 2020, the ND Department of Water Resources budget. I am Kip Kovar, District Engineer for the Garrison Diversion Conservancy District (Garrison Diversion).

Because we recognize the value irrigation development brings to North Dakota through increased land values, decreased risk, an increase in crop production, and a positive economic impact, irrigation development is a high priority for Garrison Diversion.

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 8,000 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 Department of Water Resources 50 percent 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 percent of the Central Supply Works and 100 percent 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 percent of total on- and off-farm project costs for the irrigator. The bottom line is, irrigation is expensive and Garrison Diversion supports increasing irrigation funding to support a true 50 percent cost share for the irrigator.

Funding from the Department of Water Resources 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. A study completed by North Dakota State University in 2014 determined that for every $1 invested in irrigation by the state, $7 is returned.

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 Department of Water Resources budget.

Thank you for allowing my testimony to be heard today.