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Chairman Beltz and members of the House Agriculture Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition to HB 1544. My name is Brent Baldwin, I am a Farmer and President of the Red River Valley Sugarbeet Growers Association. A lot of good work has gone into water management in the last few sessions, this issue included. This bill introduces unnecessary regulatory hurdles, increased costs, makes an unfair shift in control over individual landowners' rights and reintroduces a lot of red tape that was removed in previous sessions.

We have several major concerns with this bill. First are the excessive bureaucratic delays. This bill will require landowners to notify all downstream landowners and wait 60 days to begin a water management project. This added time is extremely costly with our short summers as we have a limited number of days to get a project done before freeze up or additional rain fall.

Next is the increased costs and unnecessary burden on landowners by requiring now certified mail notifications to all the downstream landowners. Additionally, this bill is then blanket mandating of erosion control measures at all outlets, we already are required by water sheds to apply such conditions, and it is working.

Next is the unfair shift in control to downstream landowners. We all know water flows downhill, and yet this bill will effectively allow downstream landowners to delay or completely prohibit a water management project simply by filing an objection. Additionally, many downstream landowners will be extremely hesitant to sign off on a project as they feel it will prevent them for any potential future claim of damages.

Our last concern is the overall negative impact on agriculture in North Dakota. Water management is key to our success, and the negative and unnecessary restrictions that HB 1544 will impose on effective water management.

We strongly encourage this committee to provide a DO NOT PASS recommendation on HB 1544.

Brent Baldwin
St. Thomas, ND
President – Red River Valley Sugarbeet Growers