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Testimony of Doug Goehring, Agriculture Commissioner
House Bill 1459
Natural Resources Committee, Roughrider Room
9:00 a.m., Thursday, March 4, 2010

Chairman Erbele and members of the Natural Resources Committee, I am Agriculture Commissioner Doug Goehring. I am here today as a participant in the natural resources committee's study of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' weed control programs on federal land under its control, required by Section 4 of House Bill No. 1459.

It has been our pleasure to work with the interim committee, chaired by Senator Robert Erbele.

Since the committee last met, my department has hosted a meeting with representatives from the corps and governor's office to discuss the Lake Oahe master plan and grazing strategies. During this meeting, the corps stressed that lessees need to work with their NRCS office to develop grazing plans as a means to acquire authorization to implement early season grazing. The department stressed the need for increased noxious weed control on corps property.

My staff have consulted with the Morton County Soil Conservationist to discuss the practicality of developing grazing management plans for leased corps land. We have also spoken with a Morton county landowner that leases land from the corps for grazing purposes. He has worked with the

Morton County Soil Conservationist to develop a grazing plan and has invited us out to tour the implemented plan this spring. However, the corps has not formally approved his plan.

As requested by this committee, we have compiled three documents for the committee's review.

1. **Comparison of master plans for Lake Oahe and Lake Sakakawea** – This document compares the US Army Corps of Engineers' Draft Oahe Dam/Lake Oahe Master Plan and the Garrison Dam/Lake Sakakawea Master Plan with regard to land management, specifically grazing and noxious weed control. The major differences are:
 - a) The amount of land acquired for Lake Sakakawea is far greater due to a change in land acquisition guidelines prior to the creation of Lake Oahe.
 - b) Animal Unit Months (AUMs) are included in Lake Sakakawea grazing leases but not in Lake Oahe leases.
 - c) Grazing entry and exit dates vary greatly from lease to lease on both projects. However, entry of grazing animals is generally allowed earlier in Lake Sakakawea grazing leases. Entry of grazing animals is not permitted prior to July 15th on Lake Oahe unless an approved NRCS grazing plan exists.
2. **Summary of a South Dakota Game Fish and Parks Piping Plover Management Plan** – The corps has grazing restrictions in place on lands leased to private landowners around Lake Oahe in North Dakota and states that the grazing restrictions are, in part, to minimize disturbance and possible damage to nesting interior least terns and piping plovers. This summary of the original South Dakota Game Fish and Parks report includes the two species' habitat requirements,

reasons for their population decline and the effect that livestock grazing has on their nesting success.

3. **North Dakota State University (NDSU) Extension Early Season Grazing Strategies** – I am providing copies of this extension circular to inform the committee of NDSU's recommended early season grazing strategies.

I appreciate your hard work as you move forward in strengthening weed control efforts across the state. I would be happy to answer any questions.