

**Sixty-third Legislative Assembly of North Dakota  
In Regular Session Commencing Tuesday, January 8, 2013**

SENATE BILL NO. 2199  
(Senators G. Lee, Burckhard, Luick, Dotzenrod)  
(Representatives Hofstad, Kreun)

AN ACT to amend and reenact sections 61-16.1-02, 61-16.1-40.1, 61-16.1-45, 61-16.1-51, 61-16.1-53, 61-21-46, 61-21-47, and 61-32-07 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to drainage projects.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH DAKOTA:**

**SECTION 1. AMENDMENT.** Section 61-16.1-02 of the North Dakota Century Code is amended and reenacted as follows:

**61-16.1-02. Definitions.**

In this chapter, unless the context or subject matter otherwise provides:

1. "Affected landowners" means landowners whose land is subject to special assessment or condemnation for a project.
2. "Assessment drain" means any natural watercourse opened, or proposed to be opened, and improved for the purpose of drainage, and any artificial drain of any nature or description constructed for the purpose of drainage, including dikes and appurtenant works, which are financed in whole or in part by special assessment. This definition may include more than one watercourse or artificial channel constructed for the purpose of drainage when the watercourses or channels drain land within a practical drainage area.
3. "Commission" means the state water commission.
4. "Conservation" means planned management of water resources to prevent exploitation, destruction, neglect, or waste.
5. "Costs of the frivolous complaint" means all reasonable costs associated with the requisite proceedings regarding the removal of obstructions to a drain, removal of a noncomplying dike or dam, or closing a noncomplying drain, including all reasonable construction costs; all reasonable attorney's fees and legal expenses; all reasonable engineering fees, including investigation and determination costs; compliance inspections; and necessary technical memorandum and deficiency review; and all costs associated with any hearing conducted by a district, including preparation and issuance of any findings of fact and any final closure order.
6. "District" means a water resource district.
6. ~~"Person" means any person, firm, partnership, association, corporation, limited liability company, agency, or any other private or governmental organization, which includes any agency of the United States, a state agency, or any political subdivision of the state.~~
7. "Frivolous" means allegations and denials in any complaint filed with a district made without reasonable cause and not in good faith.
8. "Project" means any undertaking for water conservation, flood control, water supply, water delivery, erosion control and watershed improvement, drainage of surface waters, collection, processing, and treatment of sewage, or discharge of sewage effluent, or any combination thereof, including incidental features of any such undertaking.

8-9. "Water resource board" means the water resource district's board of managers.

**SECTION 2. AMENDMENT.** Section 61-16.1-40.1 of the North Dakota Century Code is amended and reenacted as follows:

**61-16.1-40.1. Maintenance of federally constructed projects - Assessment district established.**

With regard to projects constructed by a federal agency, including the soil conservation service or natural resources conservation service, the water resource board may finance in whole or in part the maintenance of the project with funds raised through the collection of a special assessment levied against the land and premises benefited by maintenance of the project. The assessments to be levied may not exceed ~~two~~four dollars per acre [.40 hectare] annually on agricultural lands and may not exceed two dollars annually for each five hundred dollars of taxable valuation of nonagricultural property. No action is required for the establishment of the assessment district or the assessments except the water resource board must approve the maintenance and assessment therefor by a vote of two-thirds of the members and the board of county commissioners of the county in which the project is located must approve and levy the assessments to be made by a vote of two-thirds of its members. If a board that undertakes a project finds that the project may benefit lands in this state outside water resource district boundaries, the board shall provide notice to the water resource board where the benefited lands are located. The board of each water resource district containing lands benefited by a project must approve the project and assessment by vote of two-thirds of its members. The board of county commissioners in each county that contains lands benefited by a project must approve and levy the assessment to be made by vote of two-thirds of its members. If a project and assessment is not approved by all affected water resource boards and boards of county commissioners, the board of each water resource district and the board of county commissioners of each county shall meet to ensure that all common water management problems are jointly addressed. In addition, the water resource board that undertakes the project may proceed with the project if the board finances the cost of the project and does not assess land outside of the district. Before an assessment may be levied under this section, a public hearing must be held. The hearing must be preceded by notice as to date, time, location, and subject matter published in the official newspaper in the county or counties in which the proposed assessment is to be levied. The notice must be published at least ten days but not more than thirty days before the public hearing.

**SECTION 3. AMENDMENT.** Section 61-16.1-45 of the North Dakota Century Code is amended and reenacted as follows:

**61-16.1-45. Maintenance of drainage projects.**

1. If it is desired to provide for maintenance of an assessment drain in whole or in part by means of special assessments, the levy in any year for the maintenance may not exceed ~~two~~four dollars per acre [.40 hectare] on any agricultural lands benefited by the drain. The district, at its own discretion, may utilize either of the following methods for levying special assessments for the maintenance:
  - 1.a. Agricultural lands that carried the highest assessment when the drain was originally established, or received the most benefits under a reassessment of benefits, may be assessed the maximum amount of ~~two~~four dollars per acre [.40 hectare]. The assessment of other agricultural lands in the district must be based upon the proportion that the assessment of benefits at the time of construction or at the time of any reassessment of benefits bears to the assessment of the benefits of the agricultural land assessed the full ~~one dollar~~four dollars per acre [.40 hectare]. Nonagricultural property must be assessed the sum in any one year as the ratio of the benefits under the original assessments or any reassessment bears to the assessment of agricultural lands bearing the highest assessment.

- 2-b. Agricultural lands must be assessed uniformly throughout the entire assessed area. Nonagricultural property must be assessed an amount not to exceed ~~one dollar~~two dollars for each five hundred dollars of taxable valuation of the nonagricultural property.
2. In case the maximum levy or assessment on agricultural and nonagricultural property for any year will not produce an amount sufficient to cover the cost of cleaning out and repairing the drain, a water resource board may accumulate a fund in an amount not exceeding the sum produced by the maximum permissible levy for six years.
3. If the cost of, or obligation for, the cleaning and repairing of any drain exceeds the total amount that may be levied by the board in any six-year period, the board shall obtain the approval of the majority of the landowners as determined by chapter 61-16.1 before obligating the district for the costs.

**SECTION 4. AMENDMENT.** Section 61-16.1-51 of the North Dakota Century Code is amended and reenacted as follows:

**61-16.1-51. Removal of obstructions to drain - Notice and hearing - Appeal - Injunction - Definition.**

1. If a water resource board determines that an obstruction to a drain has been caused by the negligent act or omission of a landowner or tenant, the board shall notify the landowner by registered mail at the landowner's post-office address of record. A copy of the notice must also be sent to the tenant, if any. The notice must specify the nature and extent of the obstruction, the opinion of the board as to its cause, and must state that if the obstruction is not removed within such period as the board determines, but not less than fifteen days, the board shall procure removal of the obstruction and assess the cost of the removal, or the portion the board determines appropriate, against the property of the landowner responsible. The notice must also state that the affected landowner, within fifteen days of the date the notice is mailed, may demand, in writing, a hearing on the matter. Upon receipt of the demand, the board shall set a hearing date within fifteen days from the date the demand is received. In the event of an emergency, the board may immediately apply to the appropriate district court for an injunction prohibiting a landowner or tenant from maintaining an obstruction. Assessments levied under the provisions of this section must be collected in the same manner as other assessments authorized by this chapter. If, in the opinion of the board, more than one landowner or tenant has been responsible, the costs may be assessed on a pro rata basis in accordance with the proportionate responsibility of the landowners. A landowner aggrieved by action of the board under this section may appeal the decision of the board to the district court of the county in which the land is located in accordance with the procedure provided in section 28-34-01. A hearing as provided for in this section is not a prerequisite to an appeal. If a complaint is frivolous in the discretion of the board, the board may assess the costs of the frivolous complaint against the complainant. If the obstruction is located in a road ditch, the timing and method of removal must be approved by the appropriate road authority before the notice required by this section is given and appropriate construction site protection standards must be followed.
2. For the purposes of this section, "an obstruction to a drain" means a barrier to a watercourse, as defined by section 61-01-06, or an artificial drain, including if the watercourse or drain is located within a road ditch, which materially affects the free flow of waters in the watercourse or drain.
3. Following removal of an obstruction to a drain, either by a water resource board or by a party complying with an order of a water resource board, the board may assess its costs against the property of the responsible landowner.

**SECTION 5. AMENDMENT.** Section 61-16.1-53 of the North Dakota Century Code is amended and reenacted as follows:

**61-16.1-53. Removal of a noncomplying dike or dam - Notice and hearing - Appeal - Injunction.**

1. Upon receipt of a complaint of unauthorized construction of a dike, dam, or other device for water conservation, flood control, regulation, watershed improvement, or storage of water, the water resource board shall promptly investigate and make a determination thereon. If the board determines that a dam or other device, capable of retaining, obstructing, or diverting more than fifty acre-feet [61674.08 cubic meters] of water or twenty-five acre-feet [30837.04 cubic meters] of water for a medium-hazard or high-hazard dam, has been established or constructed by a landowner or tenant contrary to this title or any rules adopted by the board, the board shall notify the landowner by registered mail at the landowner's post-office address of record. A copy of the notice must also be sent to the tenant, if any. The notice must specify the nature and extent of the noncompliance and must state that if the dike, dam, or other device is not removed within the period the board determines, but not less than fifteen days, the board shall cause the removal of the dike, dam, or other device and assess the cost of the removal, or the portion the board determines, against the property of the landowner responsible. The notice must also state that the affected landowner, within fifteen days of the date the notice is mailed, may demand, in writing, a hearing upon the matter. Upon receipt of the demand, the board shall set a hearing date within fifteen days from the date the demand is received. In the event of an emergency, the board may immediately apply to the appropriate district court for an injunction prohibiting the landowner or tenant from constructing or maintaining the dike, dam, or other device, or ordering the landowner to remove the dike, dam, or other device. Assessments levied under this section must be collected in the same manner as other assessments authorized by this chapter. If, in the opinion of the board, more than one landowner or tenant has been responsible, the costs may be assessed on a pro rata basis in proportion to the responsibility of the landowners. A person aggrieved by action of the board under this section may appeal the decision of the board to the district court of the county in which the land is located in accordance with the procedure provided in section 28-34-01. A hearing as provided for in this section is not prerequisite to an appeal. If a complaint is frivolous in the discretion of the board, the board may assess the costs of the frivolous complaint against the complainant.
2. Following removal of an unauthorized dike, dam, or other device, either by a water resource board or by a party complying with an order of a water resource board, the board may assess its costs against the property of the responsible landowner.

**SECTION 6. AMENDMENT.** Section 61-21-46 of the North Dakota Century Code is amended and reenacted as follows:

**61-21-46. Maximum levy - Accumulation of fund.**

1. The levy in any year for cleaning out and repairing a drain may not exceed ~~two~~four dollars per acre [.40 hectare] on any agricultural lands in the drainage district.
  - 4.a. Agricultural lands that carried the highest assessment when the drain was originally established, or received the most benefits under a reassessment of benefits, may be assessed the maximum amount of ~~two~~four dollars per acre [.40 hectare]. The assessment of other agricultural lands in the district must be based upon the proportion that the assessment of benefits at the time of construction or at the time of any reassessment of benefits bears to the assessment of the benefits of the agricultural land assessed the full ~~two~~four dollars per acre [.40 hectare]. Nonagricultural property must be assessed the sum in any one year as the ratio of the benefits under the original assessments or any reassessments bears to the assessment of agricultural land bearing the highest assessment.

2-b. Agricultural lands must be assessed uniformly throughout the entire assessed area. Nonagricultural property must be assessed an amount not to exceed ~~one dollar~~two dollars for each five hundred dollars of taxable valuation of the nonagricultural property.

2. In case the maximum levy or assessment on agricultural and nonagricultural property for any year will not produce an amount sufficient to cover the cost of cleaning out and repairing the drain, the board may accumulate a fund in an amount not exceeding the sum produced by the maximum permissible levy for six years. If the cost of, or obligation for, the cleaning and repair of any drain exceeds the total amount that can be levied by the board in any six-year period, the board shall obtain an affirmative vote of the majority of the landowners as determined by section 61-21-16 before obligating the district for the costs.

**SECTION 7. AMENDMENT.** Section 61-21-47 of the North Dakota Century Code is amended and reenacted as follows:

**61-21-47. Expenditures in excess of maximum levy.**

If the cost of maintenance, cleaning out, and repairing any drain shall exceed the amount produced by the maximum levy of ~~two~~four dollars per acre [.40 hectare] in any year, with the amount accumulated in the drainage fund, the board may proceed with such cleaning out and make an additional levy only upon petition of at least sixty-one percent of the affected landowners. The percentage of the affected landowners signing such petition shall be determined in accordance with the weighted voting provisions in section 61-21-16.

**SECTION 8. AMENDMENT.** Section 61-32-07 of the North Dakota Century Code is amended and reenacted as follows:

**61-32-07. Closing a noncomplying drain - Notice and hearing - Appeal - Injunction - Frivolous complaints.**

1. Only a landowner experiencing flooding or adverse effects from an unauthorized drain constructed before January 1, 1975, may file a complaint with the water resource board. Any person may file a complaint about an unauthorized drain constructed after January 1, 1975. Upon receipt of a complaint of unauthorized drainage, the water resource board shall promptly investigate and make a determination of the facts with respect to the complaint. If the board determines that a drain, lateral drain, or ditch has been opened or established by a landowner or tenant contrary to this title or any rules adopted by the board, the board shall notify the landowner by registered mail at the landowner's post-office address of record. A copy of the notice must also be sent to the tenant, if known. The notice must specify the nature and extent of the noncompliance and must state that if the drain, lateral drain, or ditch is not closed or filled within a reasonable time as the board determines, but not less than fifteen days, the board shall procure the closing or filling of the drain, lateral drain, or ditch and assess the cost of the closing or filling, or the portion the board determines, against the property of the landowner responsible. The notice must also state that the affected landowner, within fifteen days of the date the notice is mailed, may demand, in writing, a hearing on the matter. Upon receipt of the demand, the board shall set a hearing date within fifteen days from the date the demand is received. In the event of an emergency, the board may immediately apply to the appropriate district court for an injunction prohibiting the landowner or tenant from constructing or maintaining the drain, lateral drain, or ditch and ordering the closure of the illegal drain. Assessments levied under this section must be collected in the same manner as assessments authorized by chapter 61-16.1. If, in the opinion of the board, more than one landowner or tenant has been responsible, the costs may be assessed on a pro rata basis in proportion to the responsibility of the landowners. A person aggrieved by action of the board under this section may appeal the decision of the board to the district court of the county in which the land is located in accordance with the procedure provided in section 28-34-01. A hearing as provided for in this section is not a prerequisite to an appeal. ~~If, after the first complaint, in the~~

~~opinion of the board, the~~ a complaint is frivolous in the discretion of the board, the board may assess the costs of the frivolous complaint against the complainant.

2. Following the closing or filling of an unauthorized drain, either by a water resource board or by a party complying with an order of a water resource board, the board may assess its costs against the property of the responsible landowner.

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President of the Senate

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Speaker of the House

\_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary of the Senate

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chief Clerk of the House

This certifies that the within bill originated in the Senate of the Sixty-third Legislative Assembly of North Dakota and is known on the records of that body as Senate Bill No. 2199.

Senate Vote:    Yeas 44            Nays 1            Absent 2

House Vote:    Yeas 86            Nays 6            Absent 2

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Secretary of the Senate

Received by the Governor at \_\_\_\_\_ M. on \_\_\_\_\_, 2013.

Approved at \_\_\_\_\_ M. on \_\_\_\_\_, 2013.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Governor

Filed in this office this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2013,

at \_\_\_\_\_ o'clock \_\_\_\_\_ M.

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Secretary of State