

Sixty-sixth
Legislative Assembly
of North Dakota

ENGROSSED SENATE BILL NO. 2211

Introduced by

Senators Bekkedahl, Dwyer, Unruh

Representatives Keiser, Porter

1 | A BILL for an Act to create and enact section 61-33-01.1 and a new subsection to section
 2 | 61-33.1-03 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to the determination of the ordinary high
 3 | water mark; ~~and~~ to amend and reenact sections 61-33-01 and 61-33.1-02, subdivision e of
 4 | subsection 3 of section 61-33.1-03, sections 61-33.1-04 ~~and~~, 61-33.1-05, and 61-33.1-07 of the
 5 | North Dakota Century Code, relating to sovereign lands, determining the ordinary high water
 6 | mark, and the ownership of mineral rights of land ~~inundated~~ subject to inundation by Pick-Sloan
 7 | Missouri basin project dams; to provide for application; and to declare an emergency.

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

9 | **SECTION 1. AMENDMENT.** Section 61-33-01 of the North Dakota Century Code is
 10 | amended and reenacted as follows:

11 | **61-33-01. Definitions.**

12 | As used in this chapter, unless the context otherwise requires:

- 13 | 1. "Board" means the sovereign lands advisory board.
- 14 | 2. "Board of university and school lands" means that entity created by section 15-01-01.
- 15 | 3. "Ordinary high water mark" means that line below which the presence and action of
 16 | the water upon the land is continuous enough so as to prevent the growth of terrestrial
 17 | vegetation, destroy its value for agricultural purposes by preventing the growth of what
 18 | may be termed an ordinary agricultural crop, including hay, or restrict its growth to
 19 | predominantly aquatic species.
- 20 | 4. "Sovereign lands" means those areas, including beds and islands, lying within the
 21 | ordinary high water mark of navigable lakes and streams. Lands established to be
 22 | riparian accretion or reliction lands pursuant to section 47-06-05 are considered to be
 23 | above the ordinary high water mark and are not sovereign lands.

1 4.5. "State engineer" means the person appointed by the state water commission pursuant
2 to section 61-03-01.

3 **SECTION 2.** Section 61-33-01.1 of the North Dakota Century Code is created and enacted
4 as follows:

5 **61-33-01.1. Ordinary high water mark determination - Factors to be considered.**

6 The state engineer shall maintain ordinary high water mark delineation guidelines
7 consistent with this section.

8 1. When determining the ordinary high water mark for delineating the boundary of
9 sovereign lands, vegetation and soils analysis must be considered the primary
10 physical indicators. When considering vegetation, the ordinary high water mark is the
11 line below which the presence and action of the water is frequent enough to prevent
12 the growth of terrestrial vegetation or restrict vegetation growth to predominately
13 aquatic species. Generally, land, including hay land, where the high and continuous
14 presence of water has destroyed the value of the land for agricultural purposes must
15 be deemed within the ordinary high water mark.

16 2. When feasible, direct hydrological and hydraulic measurements from stream gauge
17 data, elevation data, historic records of water flow, high resolution light detection and
18 ranging systems, prior elevation and survey maps, and statistical hydrological
19 evidence must be considered when determining the ordinary high water mark. The
20 state engineer shall establish appropriate guidelines, technical standards, and other
21 criteria, including use of light detection and ranging systems or other future
22 technological advancements, as necessary, for conducting hydrologic and hydraulic
23 modeling required by this section.

24 3. Secondary physical indicators, including litter, debris, or staining, may be considered
25 to supplement the analysis of the ordinary high water mark investigation but may not
26 supersede primary physical indicators unless primary physical indicators are deemed
27 inadequate or inconclusive. Physical indicators directly affected by influent
28 non-navigable tributaries, adjoining water bodies, or wetlands may not be used to
29 delineate the sovereign land boundary of a navigable body of water.

30 **SECTION 3. AMENDMENT.** Section 61-33.1-02 of the North Dakota Century Code is
31 amended and reenacted as follows:

1 | **61-33.1-02. Mineral ownership of land ~~inundated~~subject to inundation by Pick-Sloan**
2 | **Missouri basin project dams. (Retroactive application - [See note](#))**

3 | The state sovereign land mineral ownership of the riverbed segments ~~inundated~~subject to
4 | inundation by Pick-Sloan Missouri basin project dams extends only to the historical Missouri
5 | riverbed channel up to the ordinary high water mark. The state holds no claim or title to any
6 | minerals above the ordinary high water mark of the historical Missouri riverbed channel
7 | ~~inundated~~subject to inundation by Pick-Sloan Missouri basin project dams, except for original
8 | grant lands acquired by the state under federal law and any minerals acquired by the state
9 | through purchase, foreclosure, or other written conveyance. Mineral ownership of the riverbed
10 | segments ~~inundated~~subject to inundation by Pick-Sloan Missouri basin project dams which are
11 | located within the exterior boundaries of the Fort Berthold reservation and Standing Rock Indian
12 | reservation is controlled by other law and is excepted from this section.

13 | **SECTION 4. AMENDMENT.** Subdivision e of subsection 3 of section 61-33.1-03 of the
14 | North Dakota Century Code is amended and reenacted as follows:

- 15 | e. Subsection ~~34~~ of section 61-33-01 and section 47-06-05, which provide all
16 | accretions are presumed to be above the ordinary high water mark and are not
17 | sovereign lands. Accreted lands may be determined to be within the ordinary high
18 | water mark of the historical Missouri riverbed channel based on clear and
19 | convincing evidence. Areas of low-lying and flat lands where the ordinary high
20 | water mark may be impracticable to determine due to inconclusive aerial
21 | photography or inconclusive vegetation analysis must be presumed to be above
22 | the ordinary high water mark and owned by the riparian landowner.

23 | **SECTION 5.** A new subsection to section 61-33.1-03 of the North Dakota Century Code is
24 | created and enacted as follows:

25 | Upon adoption of the final review findings by the industrial commission, the board of
26 | university and school lands may contract with a qualified engineering and surveying
27 | firm to analyze the final review findings and determine the acreage on a quarter-
28 | quarter basis or government lot basis above and below the ordinary high water mark
29 | as delineated by the final review findings of the industrial commission. The acreage
30 | determination is final upon approval by the board.

1 **SECTION 6. AMENDMENT.** Section 61-33.1-04 of the North Dakota Century Code is
2 amended and reenacted as follows:

3 **61-33.1-04. Implementation. (Retroactive application - [See note](#))**

- 4 1. Within six months after the adoption of the ~~final review findings~~acreage determination
5 by the ~~industrial commission~~board of university and school lands:
- 6 a. Any royalty proceeds held by operators attributable to oil and gas mineral tracts
7 lying entirely above the ordinary high water mark of the historical Missouri
8 riverbed channel on both the corps survey and the state phase two survey must
9 be released to the owners of the tracts, absent a showing of other defects
10 affecting mineral title; and
- 11 b. Any royalty proceeds held by the board of university and school lands attributable
12 to oil and gas mineral tracts lying entirely above the ordinary high water mark of
13 the historical Missouri riverbed channel on both the corps survey and the state
14 phase two survey must be released to the relevant operators to distribute to the
15 owners of the tracts, absent a showing of other defects affecting mineral title.
- 16 2. Upon adoption of the ~~final review findings~~acreage determination by the ~~industrial~~
17 ~~commission~~board of university and school lands:
- 18 a. The board of university and school lands shall begin to implement any acreage
19 adjustments, lease bonus and royalty refunds, and payment demands as may be
20 necessary relating to state-issued oil and gas leases. The board shall complete
21 the adjustments, refunds, and payment demands within two years after ~~the date~~
22 ~~of adoption of the final review findings~~approving the acreage determination.
- 23 b. Operators of oil and gas wells affected by the ~~final review findings~~final acreage
24 determination immediately shall begin to implement any acreage and revenue
25 adjustments relating to state-owned and privately owned oil and gas interests.
26 The operators shall complete the adjustments within two years after ~~the date of~~
27 ~~adoption of the review findings~~the board approves the acreage determination.
28 Any applicable penalties, liability, or interest for late payment of royalties or
29 revenues from an affected oil or gas well may not begin to accrue until the end of
30 the two-year deadline. The filing of an action under section 61-33.1-05 tolls the

1 deadline for any oil and gas well directly affected by the action challenging the
2 review finding or final acreage determination.

3 **SECTION 7. AMENDMENT.** Section 61-33.1-05 of the North Dakota Century Code is
4 amended and reenacted as follows:

5 **61-33.1-05. Actions challenging review findings or final acreage determinations.**

6 **(Retroactive application - [See note](#))**

7 1. An interested party seeking to bring an action challenging the review findings or
8 recommendations or the industrial commission actions under this chapter shall
9 commence an action in district court within two years of the date of adoption of the
10 final review findings by the industrial commission. The plaintiff bringing an action under
11 this section may challenge only the final review finding for the section or sections of
12 land in which the plaintiff asserts an interest. The state and all owners of record of fee
13 or leasehold estates or interests affected by the finding, recommendation, or industrial
14 commission action challenged in the action under this section must be joined as
15 parties to the action. A plaintiff or defendant claiming a boundary of the ordinary high
16 water mark of the historical Missouri riverbed channel which varies from the boundary
17 determined under this chapter bears the burden of establishing the variance by clear
18 and convincing evidence based on evidence of the type required to be considered by
19 the engineering and surveying firm under subsection 3 of section 61-33.1-03.

20 2. An interested party seeking to bring an action challenging the final acreage
21 determination under this chapter shall commence an action in district court within two
22 years of the date the acreage determinations were approved by the board of university
23 and school lands. The plaintiff bringing an action under this section may challenge
24 only the acreage determination for the section or sections of land in which the plaintiff
25 asserts an interest. The state and all owners of record of fee or leasehold estates or
26 interests affected by the final acreage determination challenged in the action under
27 this section must be joined as parties to the action. A plaintiff or defendant claiming a
28 determination of the acreage above or below the historical Missouri riverbed channel
29 which varies from the final acreage determination under this chapter bears the burden
30 of establishing the variance by clear and convincing evidence based on evidence of

1 the type required to be considered by the engineering and surveying firm contracted
2 by the board of university and school lands under subsection 2 of section 61-33.1-04.
3 3. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, an action brought in district court under
4 this section is the sole remedy for challenging the final review, recommendations, and
5 determination of the ordinary high water mark, and final acreage determination under
6 this chapter, and preempts any right to rehearing, reconsideration, administrative
7 appeal, or other form of civil action provided under law.

8 **SECTION 8. AMENDMENT.** Section 61-33.1-07 of the North Dakota Century Code is
9 amended and reenacted as follows:

10 **61-33.1-07. State engineer regulatory jurisdiction. (Retroactive application - [See note](#))**

11 This chapter does not affect the authority of the state engineer to regulate the historical
12 Missouri riverbed channel, minerals other than oil and gas, or the waters of the state, provided
13 the regulation does not affect ownership of oil and gas minerals in and under the riverbed or
14 lands above the ordinary high water mark of the historical Missouri riverbed channel
15 ~~inundated~~ subject to inundation by Pick-Sloan Missouri basin project dams.

16 **SECTION 9. APPLICATION.** Sections 1 and 2 of this Act do not apply to the ordinary high
17 water mark study required for the historical Missouri riverbed channel in chapter 61-33.1. This
18 Act does not affect or limit the authority of the state engineer to regulate waters of this state.

19 **SECTION 10. EMERGENCY.** This Act is declared to be an emergency measure.