

January 30, 2025

House Energy and Natural Resources Committee
600 E Boulevard Ave
Bismarck, ND 58505

Chairman Porter and Members of the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for the proposed HB1218 amendment to section 61-02-01.3 of the North Dakota Century Code, which relates to comprehensive water development plans. This bill is of paramount importance for North Dakota farmers, wildlife, and the overall economy.

Benefits for Farmers:

1. **Comprehensive Planning:** The bill mandates the biennial development and maintenance of a comprehensive water development plan, organized on a river basin perspective. This ensures that water resources are managed effectively and sustainably, which is crucial for agricultural activities.
2. **Local Participation:** By facilitating local project sponsor participation and project prioritization, the bill ensures that farmers and other stakeholders have a say in water management projects. This inclusion helps address local needs and concerns, making the projects more relevant and beneficial.
3. **Educational Support:** The bill includes provisions for educating stakeholders about life cycle analyses for municipal water supply projects and economic analyses for flood control and water conveyance projects. This education can help farmers make informed decisions about water management, leading to more efficient and effective use of resources.

Benefits for Wildlife:

1. **Sustainable Water Management:** By ensuring comprehensive planning and local participation, the bill promotes sustainable water management practices that can help protect natural habitats and wildlife.
2. **Erosion Control:** The bill's emphasis on proper erosion controls at project outlets can help prevent habitat degradation and maintain the health of ecosystems.

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Economic Benefits:

1. **Project Prioritization and Funding:** The bill outlines policies and procedures for commissioner-hosted meetings within various river drainage basins, helping to prioritize projects that are most beneficial to the community. This ensures that critical water management issues are addressed promptly and efficiently.
2. **Cost Savings:** Incorporating the review of HB 1218, which raises the Economic Analysis (E/A) process threshold from \$1 million to \$5 million, would result in more cost-share dollars for Water Resource District (WRD) projects, fewer project/cost-share delays, and reduced costs for WRDs applying for cost-share. Ultimately, this would save money and reduce taxes (assessments) for landowners who need drainage and flood protection projects.

In conclusion, this bill supports a structured and inclusive approach to water resource management, which is vital for the agricultural sector, wildlife conservation, and the economic well-being of North Dakota. By involving local stakeholders, providing educational resources, ensuring comprehensive planning, and addressing the economic analysis process, the bill helps create a sustainable and efficient water management system that can significantly benefit our state.

I urge you to support this important legislation for the betterment of our farmers, wildlife, and economy.

Sincerely,

Levi Otis