



WESTERN STATES WATER COUNCIL SUMMER *Meeting*

On July 13-15, the State Water Commission hosted the Western States Water Council's (WSWC) summer meeting in Bismarck.

The WSWC is an organization consisting of representatives appointed by the governors of 18 western states.

The purpose of the WSWC is:

- To accomplish effective cooperation among western states in the conservation, development and management of water resources;
- To maintain vital state prerogatives, while identifying ways to accommodate legitimate federal interests;
- To provide a forum for the exchange of views, perspectives, and experiences among member states; and
- To provide analysis of federal and state developments in order to assist member states in evaluating impacts of federal laws and programs and the effectiveness of state laws and policies.

Over the three days of their meeting, the WSWC discussed issues important to the group as a whole, as well as focusing on topics important to North Dakota. On the first day of the meeting, Water Commission staff led a tour of the Missouri River around Bismarck, with stops providing a North Dakota perspective on a wide variety of topics, including:

- The 2011 Flood
- Ongoing Flooding Challenges
- Sovereign Land management
- Water Supply
- Endangered Species Act Impacts on Missouri River Management
- Federal vs State Conflicts Over Missouri River Management
- Recreation
- Sub-Surface Water Intakes For Bismarck's Municipal Supply



The meeting covered a wide range of topics, including:

- Drought Update by NOAA
- GOES Radio Spectrum Bandwidth
- The Water Data Exchange (WaDE)
- The United States Geological Survey (USGS) North Dakota Water Science Center
- North Dakota Water Quality
- Protection of Aquatic Life from Effects of Hydrologic Alteration
- State Water Quality Authorities
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers programs and the Fargo-Moorhead Diversion



The workshop, tour, and meetings were all well received by attendees. And, North Dakota's WSWC representatives were very happy to have the opportunity to host a meeting of their counterparts from other western states.

The next meeting of the WSWC is scheduled for St. George, Utah on September 28-30, 2016.



2016 Commissioner Hosted Meetings A Success

From July 25-28, the North Dakota State Water Commission hosted stakeholder meetings across the state. The meetings were intended to promote and encourage increased local water project sponsor participation in the state's Water Plan update process, and agency biennial budgeting efforts.

In 2013, the Legislative Assembly passed House Bill 1206 (NDCC 61-02-01.3), requiring that the Water Commission schedule commissioner-hosted meetings within the state's six major drainage basins - the Red, James, Mouse, lower and upper Missouri River, and Devils Lake basins.

Depending on location, two to four Commissioners were present at each of the basin meetings, along with State Engineer, Garland Erbele; Planning and Education Division Director, Patrick Fridgen; Water Development Division Director, Craig Odenbach; and other Water Commission staff who assisted with meeting logistics.

The basin meetings were well attended, with representatives from cities, water boards, rural and regional water supply systems, counties, private citizens, engineering firms, and the Legislature – all participating in the process.

One of the key components of the meetings was to provide an opportunity for project sponsors to present their projects to Commissioners and staff. A common theme to the presentations and comments from meeting attendees, was gratitude for the State Water Commission's exceptional support of water projects throughout the state. Attendees also frequently expressed their gratitude for the Commissioners hosting meetings within their respective regions of the state.

While some discussion was held over existing projects that are underway during the current biennium, meeting attendees primarily focused on funding needs for projects in the upcoming 2017-2019 biennium and beyond.

At each meeting, Water Commissioners and staff discussed the expected funding environment for the 2017-2019 biennium. The State of North Dakota funds the vast majority of water development projects through the Resources Trust Fund, which is funded by a portion of the state's oil extraction tax. Therefore, with the recent drop in oil revenues, it is expected that there will be less available funding for water development projects during the next budget cycle.

At the same time, the number of new projects identified during the Water Plan update process already exceeds those received in the 2015-2017 biennium. As a result, it is highly unlikely that sufficient funding will be available to meet all of the project financial needs that exist for the 2017-2019 biennium.

To meet those funding challenges, the Water Commission, working with the Governor's Office and State Legislature, will be using the state's Water Project Prioritization Guidance Policy, developed at the legislature's request, to allocate financial resources for the next biennium.

On behalf of North Dakota's Water Commissioners, State Engineer Garland Erbele, and the Water Commission's staff, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to everyone who attended the Commissioner-hosted meetings. Your participation, dedication, and interest in North Dakota's water development and management efforts are greatly appreciated.



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