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DWR Completes Missouri River Intake Study *Identifies Optimal Sites for Future Industrial, Irrigation, and Municipal Water Use*

BISMARCK, N.D. — The [North Dakota Department of Water Resources](#) (DWR) has announced the completion of the [Missouri River Potential Intake Locations Investigation](#), a strategic study aimed at identifying optimal surface and subsurface water intake sites along the Missouri River corridor. The findings mark a major milestone in North Dakota's efforts to support industrial development, expand irrigation capacity, and strengthen domestic water supply options using the state's most abundant freshwater source.

The study identified 11 top-ranking surface water intake sites and 6 top-ranking subsurface intake sites. These sites were evaluated based on multiple criteria, including but not limited to, water availability, water quality, sedimentation risk, proximity to infrastructure such as railroads, roads, power lines, and gas lines, as well as expressed interest by industry.

The study area spanned 231.6 river miles from the Montana state line to Washburn, ND—including 178 miles within Lake Sakakawea and 53.6 miles of free-flowing river channel. Conducted by HDR Engineering, Inc. and subconsultants, the study evaluated intake sites with the capacity to supply at least 15,000 acre-feet of water per year (approximately 9,300 gallons per minute), suitable for industrial, irrigation, or municipal use.

To determine optimal intake sites, the study used two geospatial models—one for surface water and one for subsurface aquifers—to score and rank grid cells throughout the study area based on the criteria mentioned above. Spatial analysis was used to identify the top-ranking surface water and subsurface sites for each river reach and aquifer identified in the study.

"This effort supports our strategic goal of putting North Dakota's water to its highest and best use," said Reice Haase, Director of the Department of Water Resources. "With this study, we now have a data-driven framework to guide additional development and investment in water infrastructure along the Missouri River."

The intake study was commissioned after a formal request for proposals (RFP) was issued in early 2024. HDR was selected through a competitive procurement process, and the State Water Commission approved a \$335,000 contract for the work in April 2024.

"This study lays the groundwork for economic opportunity, thoughtful development, and long-term water planning in North Dakota," Haase added. "By narrowing the field to the most promising intake locations, we've created a clearer path forward."

While the data provided by this study is robust, the DWR will verify conditions in the field to confirm findings and determine the technical feasibility of site development. Field verification may include completing bathymetric surveys, LiDAR collection, geotechnical sampling, aquifer testing, and cultural resource evaluations.

To view the full report and site maps, visit www.dwr.nd.gov.

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