



NEWS RELEASE

North Dakota State Water Commission

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August 11, 2017

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Favorable Decision from Federal District Court Allows NAWS Project to Move Forward

Last night the U.S. District Court in Washington, DC, issued a motion allowing the North Dakota State Water Commission and United States Department of the Interior-Bureau of Reclamation to move forward with construction on the Northwest Area Water Supply (NAWS) project.

“This is a critically important step in our ongoing efforts to secure a long-term, reliable supply of clean drinking water for all North Dakotans,” said Gov. Doug Burgum, who chairs the nine-member State Water Commission. “The Northwest Area Water Supply project is a piece of infrastructure that’s essential for our state to reach its full potential. We are deeply grateful to all the parties who have worked tirelessly to see this project to completion since construction began more than 15 years ago during the Hoeven administration.”

With the completion of the Federal environmental analysis, construction of the NAWS project began in 2002, but was halted by a court injunction due to concerns about invasive species and an inter-basin transfer of water. Additional environmental studies were completed and although some construction was allowed to continue throughout the project history, this motion allows for final construction and delivery of water from the Missouri River to the city of Minot and the surrounding area.

“This is a major milestone for a Federal project which will ultimately deliver high quality drinking water to people in North Dakota,” said State Engineer Garland Erbele. “The completion of this project will address the well documented water supply needs within the north central region of our state.”

The court’s ruling follows the release of a Record of Decision (ROD) issued in August 2015, addressing the previously identified concerns regarding invasive species and the inter-basin transfer of water. The ROD identified the use of Missouri River water, followed by advanced water treatment prior to crossing the Basin Divide as the preferred alternative. This level of treatment will provide flexibility to address long-term Safe Drinking Water Act standards to provide a safe and reliable drinking water supply to this region, while providing additional benefits for biota treatment.

“The next steps allowed by this ruling include the design and construction of a water treatment plant located near Max, N.D., and a water intake that will withdraw water from Lake Sakakawea,” said Bureau of Reclamation Area Manager, Arden Freitag.

To learn more about the project, visit www.swc.nd.gov/project_development/naws.html or www.usbr.gov/gp/dkao.