



# PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE:

## THE 2025 WATER DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Every two years, the North Dakota Department of Water Resources (DWR) is required by North Dakota Century Code 61-02-01.3 to develop a comprehensive Water Development Plan (WDP). This plan outlines future water projects across the state and serves as a key tool for budgeting and planning efforts, ensuring the state's water development efforts are managed strategically and effectively.

### BUILDING THE 2025 WATER DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Planning and Education Division within DWR is currently working on the 2025 WDP, which will focus on the upcoming 2025-2027 biennium and beyond. As part of this process, DWR reached out to potential project sponsors early in 2024, encouraging them to submit ideas for cost-share eligible water projects in their areas. This outreach included more than 680 emails, 600 traditional mailers, and social media posts. A follow-up postcard reminder was also sent out in March to ensure everyone had the chance to participate. Key stakeholders included Tribal Nations, rural water managers, water resource districts, counties, municipalities, and other eligible entities.

The response was overwhelming, with more than 600 project proposals submitted by the April 30, 2024, deadline. These submissions lay the groundwork for DWR's budget requests to the Governor and Legislature, helping to secure funding for essential water development projects.

### PRIORITIZING PROJECTS

Once the project proposals were received, DWR staff reviewed them to determine which ones meet State Water Commission (SWC) cost-share eligibility. Projects that qualify are then ranked by priority, focusing on those that are most critical to the state's water development needs, and according to the Water Commission's Project Prioritization Guidance document. The importance of the priority ranking system is to help the DWR and Water Commission direct funding to higher priorities when there isn't enough revenue to support all needs.

DWR also offers an incentive for project sponsors to move up in the priority ranking. If sponsors can cover 10 percent or more of the costs beyond the SWC's typical share, their project can be bumped up one priority level. Overall, the vast majority of projects submitted were included in the preliminary 2025 Water Project Inventory, which was shared on the department's website for public and project sponsors' feedback. Some projects were deferred to future biennia, while others were removed due to eligibility requirements.

## ENGAGING THE PUBLIC

Public involvement is key to the Water Development Plan. North Dakota Century Code 61-02-01.3 requires that the Water Commission hold meetings across North Dakota's major drainage basins. These meetings allow local communities and project sponsors to provide input on water management and development projects in their areas.

In June and July of 2024, eight meetings were hosted by Water Commissioners in each of their respective basins they represent. Specific meeting locations included Jamestown, Fargo, Grand Forks, Devils Lake, Bismarck, New Town, Dickinson, and Minot. Approximately 180 project sponsors and local residents attended these sessions. During the meetings, DWR team members provided agency updates, while SWC members discussed basin-specific issues. Many sponsors shared progress reports on projects, and some community members raised awareness about local water issues. Overall, the feedback was positive, with both sponsors and residents expressing appreciation for DWR and the Commission's ongoing support.

## WATER DEVELOPMENT PLAN ONLINE DASHBOARD

In the past, the Water Development Plan was printed as a booklet. However, in preparation for the 2023 biennium, DWR moved to a fully digital format. The Water Development Plan Dashboard was created and made available on DWR's website, making it easier for anyone to access the plan's information. The digital format enabled real-time updates, making it more efficient and adaptable compared to the previous printed versions.

The digital Water Development Plan Dashboard was well received, and DWR plans to continue using it for the upcoming 2025-2027 planning process. As 2024 comes to a close, the DWR team will update the dashboard with the latest information in preparation for the 69th legislative session.

The Water Development Plan is an essential part of managing North Dakota's water resources. By gathering input from project sponsors and the public, DWR ensures that future water projects meet the state's growing needs. Please find WDP dashboard information at [https://www.dwr.nd.gov/info\\_edu/water\\_development\\_plan/](https://www.dwr.nd.gov/info_edu/water_development_plan/)

## 2025-2027 STATE COST-SHARE FUNDING NEEDS INVENTORY

