

# The Oxbow

FROM THE NORTH DAKOTA STATE WATER COMMISSION

## North Dakota's State Engineers

- 1904-1905: E.F. Chandler
- 1905-1907: A.L. Fellows
- 1907-1913: T.R. Atkinson
- 1913-1918: Jay W. Bliss
- 1918-1923: W.H. Robinson
- 1924-1925: W.G. Black
- 1925-1927: H.C. Frahm
- 1927-1935: Robert E. Kennedy
- 1935-1939: E.J. Thomas
- 1939-1940: H.F. McColly
- 1941-1946: John T. Tucker
- 1946-1954: J.J. Walsh
- 1954-1973: Milo W. Hoisveen
- 1973-1989: Vernon Fahy
- 1989-2000: David A. Sprynczynatyk
- 2001-2010: Dale L. Frink

## Frink Retires From State Engineer Position

By Patrick Fridgen

After 39 years of dedicated service to the people of North Dakota, State Engineer, Dale Frink, announced his retirement – effective June 30. At a May 24 staff meeting, Frink announced his intention to retire, saying, "...it just feels like the time is right." After expressing his thanks to Water Commission staff, and providing words of encouragement for future efforts, he received a standing ovation from the packed room of staffers.

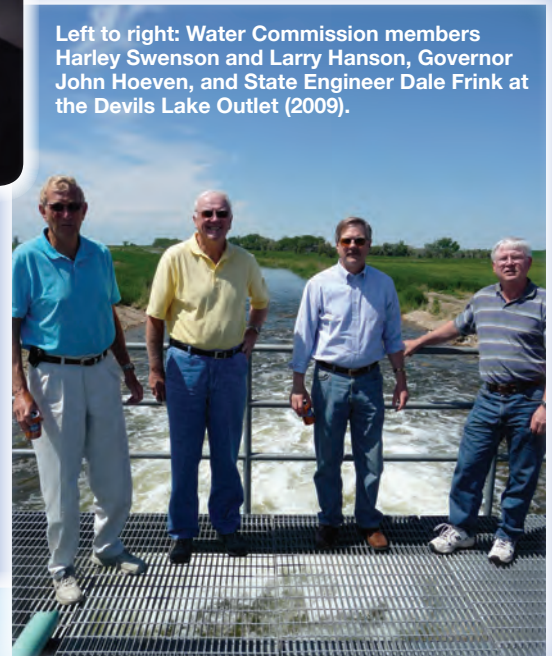
Frink spent his entire professional career working for the State Water Commission, starting in 1971 after graduating from North Dakota State University with a Masters Degree in Agricultural Engineering.

When he arrived at the Commission, Frink worked as a Planning Engineer for the West River Diversion Project, which eventually evolved into the Southwest Area Water Supply, and later the Southwest Pipeline Project. In 1985, after various promotions, Frink became manager of the Southwest Pipeline Project. Having worked on that project to some degree throughout his career, Southwest Pipeline



Frink

Left to right: Water Commission members Harley Swenson and Larry Hanson, Governor John Hoeven, and State Engineer Dale Frink at the Devils Lake Outlet (2009).



Frink (far left with shovel) and other dignitaries at the 2002 groundbreaking of the Northwest Area Water Supply Project.

Project has always been near and dear to Frink.

When asked about some of the highlights of his professional career, Southwest coming to fruition was first on his list. Today, Southwest Pipeline serves 28 communities and 14 bulk users with potable water service, 4,200 rural water hook-ups, and in total, more than 28,000 North Dakotans with a clean, affordable, high quality source of drinking water.

In 1989, Frink became Director of the Water Development Division where he oversaw several key water development efforts, including the MR&I program, Southwest Pipeline Project, and the Northwest Area Water Supply (NAWS).

In February 1997, Frink was promoted to the position of Assistant State Engineer where he worked until his appointment as Interim State Engineer in January 2001. He was later appointed by the State Water Commission as North Dakota's 16th State Engineer, and Chief Engineer-Secretary to the Water Commission in June 2001.

With regard to other highlights of his professional career, Frink also mentioned the evolution of the MR&I water supply program concept in North Dakota, for which he was instrumental in developing the structure of, as is exists today. Thanks in large part to that program, regional and rural water systems have continued to expand throughout the state. There are now 32 regional water systems in North Dakota, providing water to over 200,000 residents, including 319 cities, and over 90,000 rural residents. Currently, all or part of 47 counties, are served by regional water systems.

Also mentioned by Frink was the completion of the state's emergency Devils Lake outlet. "It's amazing that we managed to build that project with all the opposition," said Frink. "I was not sure at all that we would be able to get it done, but to my surprise, we built it, and turned it on."

In discussing projects he would like to have seen completed during his tenure as State Engineer, Frink

responded, "NAWS, NAWS, and NAWS. I thought we would have water to Minot by this time," said Frink, "but we're several years away right now."

When asked about what he thought were some of the most critical water-related issues facing North Dakota in the next decade, Frink again mentioned the completion of NAWS. But in broader terms, he talked about the distribution of Missouri River water to eastern North Dakota and other parts of the state, adding that it's been an important issue for the last 30 to 40 years, and will continue to be in the future.

With regard to flood control, Frink commended Grand Forks on their efforts, saying "what they've done is a great achievement." And for Fargo, Frink said he thought their much-needed flood control project would ultimately get done, despite some local opposition and the project's price tag. Frink also said, "we still have major, major issues at Devils Lake," for which there are no easy solutions.

In responding to what he would miss the most in his professional career, "I think working with the people," said Frink. "We've got just a fantastic staff."

Once retired, Frink plans to continue being involved in water to a certain degree by doing some consulting for a few years. In his free time, he plans to continue playing lots of golf and bridge, and spending time with family – including his first grandchild that's expected sometime in July.

On behalf of the North Dakota State Water Commission staff, we wish Dale the best in his future endeavors. And, we wish him and his family many more years of happiness, health, and success.



Dale Frink (left), Jeff Volk (center), and Jake Gust (right) discussing valley flooding issues on a Red River basin tour (2003).

## Another Successful Water Festival Held in Bismarck, May 17-18

On May 17 and 18, the Bismarck Public School District and North Dakota's Project WET (Water Education for Teachers) sponsored the 7th annual water festival at the Jack Science Center on the Bismarck State College campus.

Over the course of the two-day event, there were about 840 third grade students from 15 Bismarck elementary schools and 43 classrooms. Presenters from several state and federal government agencies, Bismarck State College, Bismarck

### PRESENTING AGENCIES

*Bismarck City Water Department  
Bismarck Public Schools  
Bismarck State College  
Bureau of Reclamation  
National Park Service  
Natural Resources Conservation Service  
ND Atmospheric Resource Board  
ND Forest Service  
ND Geological Survey  
ND Rural Water Systems Association  
ND State Health Department  
ND State Historical Society  
ND State Water Commission  
US Geological Survey  
US Weather Service*



Bismarck State College instructor, Eric Bless, teaches students about freshwater and saltwater creatures.



Water Commission staffer, Patrick Fridgen, teaches students about watersheds through an interactive activity called Blue Beads.



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*The State Water Commission does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability in employment or the provision of services.*

Public Schools, the city of Bismarck, and the North Dakota Rural Water Systems Association operated the various activities.

Some of the students spent half a day at the event, where they took in four different presentations and activities. Others spent the entire day, taking in up to eight different programs.

The festival itself consisted of structured learning stations, demonstrations, and exhibits where students were actively engaged in hands-on water activities and investigations. In addition, the festival provided students with an opportunity to learn about water resources in a way that both complemented and reinforced their traditional classroom learning in a fun and informative manner.

Once again, comments and feedback from both students and teachers were quite favorable. One teacher commented, "This was the first time for us to go for the full day and I was very pleased. The students seemed as excited about the last session as they did about the first!" Another teacher provided a similar comment saying, "Next year must be a full day!"

An 8th annual Bismarck water festival is already in the works for the spring of 2011 – likely in the third week of May.