



STATE WATER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM: WORKING WITH PROJECT SPONSORS



WATER PROJECT INVENTORY PROCESS

As part of the Department of Water Resources' (DWR) and Water Commission's (SWC) planning efforts, DWR and SWC biennially solicit project and program information from potential project sponsors. The results provide the DWR and SWC with an updated inventory of water projects and programs that could seek state cost-share in the upcoming 2023-2025 biennium and beyond. As in the past, the product of this effort becomes the foundation that supports the agency's budget request to the Governor and Legislature.

To obtain updated and new project and program information from sponsors, the DWR invited water boards, joint water boards, the North Dakota Irrigation Association, communities, rural and regional water supply systems, and government agencies with an interest in water development projects and programs to complete an electronic project planning and information form. Information requested on the forms included general project descriptions, location, cost estimates, permit information, and identification of potential obstacles, among other basic aspects of the projects.

In addition, sponsors were asked to assign the most realistic start dates possible to projects they expected to present to the Commission for cost-share consideration - particularly during 2023-2025 and later biennia. As part of that effort, project sponsors needed to take into consideration when a funding commitment from the Commission would be needed for projects or programs to proceed.

As the electronic project information forms were received by DWR, they were automatically placed into a water project database, helping to ensure receipt and accurate inventory of projects. This process provides updated project information for older projects and an accounting of new projects that have been identified by local sponsors since the last inventory process during the 2021-2023 biennium. Of course, circumstances change, and so do project costs over time. Therefore, the database is updated regularly leading up to the Legislative Assembly.

When the deadline for project submittal was reached, each project was reviewed by staff and Commissioners to determine if portions of the project were eligible for cost-share, and if the proposed timeframes for project advancement were reasonable and justified by supporting information.

The agency worked closely with project sponsors to maintain the most up-to-date project information possible. In addition, the Commissioner-hosted basin meetings were a useful forum for the agency and project sponsors to discuss projects and update information accordingly.

The result of this inventory process is a comprehensive list of water projects throughout North Dakota that could come forward for new or additional cost-share in future biennia. As stated earlier, this is an important tool for budget planning purposes for the agency, the Office of Management and Budget, the Governor's Office, and the Legislature.

