

# Red River Valley Water Supply Project Leadership Strives for Positive Landowner Relations

By Kimberly Cook

At the very beginning of the state Red River Valley Water Supply Project (RRVWSP), the project's co-sponsors made landowner respect, based on the golden rule, one of the guiding principles of the project. Most leaders of the Garrison Diversion Conservancy District (Garrison Diversion) and Lake Agassiz Water Authority (LAWA) also are landowners, so they understand the importance of treating people fairly – the way they would want to be treated.



As Garrison Diversion is responsible for the construction of the RRVWSP, the organization has had a lead role in the acquisition of easements to build the project. Unlike many other infrastructure projects, the design of the RRVWSP involves buried pipelines, which means landowners can utilize their land as they always have before and after construction. In addition, the construction of the RRVWSP does not require landowners to lose ownership of their land, even if pipe is buried on it. “All landowners are compensated for the use of their land,” explains Kip Kovar, Garrison Diversion District engineer and deputy program manager for RRVWSP engineering. “One of the benefits of this project is that landowners continue to maintain ownership of their acreage with limited risk of damage to the land. Unlike oil, gas or frack water pipelines, the Red River Valley Water Supply pipelines will only carry water.”

Garrison Diversion follows a specific easement process with each landowner. “First, a letter is sent to





the landowner or landowners to identify the tract of land where an easement is needed,” Kovar explains. “The letter comes with a packet of information about the Red River Valley Water Supply Project, including a map that shows the pipeline route and project features. The packet also includes an overview of the 28-county Garrison Diversion Conservancy District, Garrison Diversion’s crop damage policy and the easement agreement to be signed with a return envelope.”

After the packet of information goes out, land agents from KLJ contact landowners to discuss easement requests, as well as compensation amounts. Resolution of last resort proceedings are a last resort.

The RRVWSP is a drought mitigation project that will utilize the Missouri River to provide an emergency and supplemental water supply to cities and rural water systems from central to eastern North Dakota. “This is a forward-thinking project that will ensure half the state’s population has drinking water during future droughts. It will also help maintain North Dakota’s economy when another catastrophic drought occurs,” says Merri Mooridian, Garrison Diversion administrative officer and deputy program manager for RRVWSP administration. “We thank landowners who have already provided easements for the project. You’re helping to make North Dakota more drought resilient.”

## Abnormally Dry Conditions Return to RRVWSP Service Area

North Dakota’s climate is proving once again that precipitation is highly variable – even within the span of one year. Abnormally dry conditions returned to most of North Dakota in September. Parts of McKenzie, Williams, Mountrail and Richland Counties are experiencing moderate to severe drought conditions according to the U.S. Drought Monitor report issued on September 15.

The return of dry weather comes on the heels of severe and extreme drought conditions across North Dakota in 2021. This was followed by an abundance of precipitation in early 2022 that caused flooding. In fact, the ground was too saturated until mid-June for pipeline construction of the



Red River Valley Water Supply Project (RRVWSP) outside of Carrington, in Foster County.

Due to the serious drought conditions that affected North Dakota in 2021 and the trend towards drought in late 2022, Garrison Diversion Conservancy District (Garrison Diversion) and Lake Agassiz Water Authority (LAWA) leaders hope to accelerate RRVWSP construction.

“Getting the project done more quickly will allow the Red River Valley Water Supply Project to provide access to emergency and supplemental water supplies to about half of North Dakota’s population,” says Duane DeKrey, Garrison Diversion general manager.



# Garrison Diversion Awards Water Supply Assistance Grant Program Funds

The Garrison Diversion Conservancy District's (Garrison Diversion) MR&I Water Supply Assistance Grant Program provides funding assistance to offset the costs of new customer hookups to a rural water system or district within Garrison Diversion's member counties.



The Water Supply Assistance Grant Program is in place to aid municipal water systems or districts with extraordinary OM&R projects that will impact the delivery of water to users, introduce health and safety issues or bring potential harm to other infrastructure if not repaired.

"We are proud to support rural water in North Dakota, and this program is an excellent example of giving back to our district," says Geneva Kaiser, chair of Garrison Diversion's MR&I Committee. "Rural water provides a better quality of life for our citizens and strengthens our rural communities."

In August, the MR&I Committee awarded \$43,904 to 10 water users in the district for residential, livestock and business use.

Projects in the following systems received funding from the Water Supply Assistance Grant Program:

- Central Plains Water District - \$12,242 for two customer hookups
- Greater Ramsey Water District - \$9,800 for two customer hookups
- McKenzie County Water Resource District - \$6,188 for one customer hookup
- North Prairie Regional Water District - \$5,848 for three customer hookups
- South Central Regional Water - \$1,351 for one customer hookup
- Southeast Water Users District - \$8,475 for one customer hookup

There are two grant application periods each year. The next deadline for new customer hookup applications is May 1. There continues to be no deadline on extraordinary OM&R projects, as these will occur on an as-needed basis.

Eligibility requirements state the applicant must reside within one of Garrison Diversion's 28 member counties, must be or have a member sponsor that is a political subdivision (municipality or rural water district), and a municipality must have a population of 5,000 people or less being served.

Grant guidelines and applications can be found at [www.garrisondiversion.org](http://www.garrisondiversion.org).