

**Testimony of Mayor Brandon Bochenski
Lake Agassiz Water Authority Member & Grand Forks Mayor
Senate Appropriations Committee
Bismarck, North Dakota – November 8, 2021**

My name is Brandon Bochenski, and I am the Mayor of Grand Forks and a member of the Lake Agassiz Water Authority (Lake Agassiz). Lake Agassiz and the Garrison Diversion Conservancy District (Garrison Diversion) are cosponsors of the Red River Valley Water Supply Project.

The State of North Dakota has an incredible opportunity to safeguard our future against devastating droughts, which have impacted the region's industry and human use several times during the last century. With an investment of \$50 million in ARPA funds, the Red River Valley Water Supply Project will continue its construction progress. With over \$200 million in shovel ready construction, the project can make significant progress in a shorter amount of time, saving overall costs and reducing inflation risk.

Drought Resiliency Solution

The City of Grand Forks, along with 30+ water systems across central and eastern North Dakota, watched anxiously this summer as drought took a hold of our region. The Red River flow in Grand Forks was so low this summer many items in the river from the 1930s were uncovered and parts of the river stagnated.

Climatologist Daryl Richardson presented a historic look at droughts at a recent water conference. He noted that what we saw this summer wasn't even considered a moderate drought in terms of comparing it to the 1980s let alone the 1930s. We know that something

much more damaging to our economy and our citizens will eventually return and we have to be ready for it.

It is absolutely critical that we invest in the Red River Valley Water Supply Project now. It benefits not only Grand Forks, but nearly half of the population of North Dakota. A decade-long drought such as what the State experienced in the 1930's would have a \$32 billion impact on the **entire** State of North Dakota, while a moderate drought similar to the 1980's would have more than a billion-dollar impact. Both scenarios would be devastating to the state's economy not to mention the real human concern of not having enough drinking water for our communities.

Affordability and Long-Term Cost Savings

ARPA funding was intended for projects exactly like this – an opportunity for state and local governments to make strategic investments in long-lived assets. More importantly, by making this investment now, we can buy down the project cost and make it affordable for small and large systems alike.

Additionally, with the ability to access ARPA funds, key areas of the project can be completed. We truly have a great opportunity to not only shorten the project timeline, but also minimize inflation risks that threatened to price out smaller communities. Please consider appropriating \$50 million to the Red River Valley Water Supply Project.

Thank you, Chairman Holmberg and members of the Senate Appropriations Committee for the opportunity to provide testimony.