

February 11, 2022

NORTH DAKOTA

WATER USERS ASSOCIATION | WATER COALITION | WATER RESOURCE DISTRICTS ASSOCIATION | IRRIGATION ASSOCIATION

Policy Update

Water Drainage

The interim Water Drainage committee met on February 10. They discussed two bill drafts. The first seeks to create a uniform process for assessment projects; the second would add additional requirements to water resource districts when assessing costs and benefits of a project. Conversation generally focused on creating a clear, uniform process for canvassing and opening assessment votes; the appeals process for decisions made by a water board, including the possibility of offering or requiring mediation; notification of landowners and potentially impacted road authorities about projects during the initial planning stages; ensuring appropriately sized culverts and bridges; the ability for water resource districts to enter private land to clear out natural obstructions; and changes to assessing costs and benefits.

The committee spent considerable time discussing costs and benefits, receiving input and feedback on the State Water Commission's economic analysis process for projects seeking cost share. There was also much discussion on the current costs-benefit analysis required in statute for assessment projects. Despite robust conversation, the committee failed to come to a consensus. We expect legislative counsel to work on a few possible bill drafts related to this topic for the next meeting.

Legislative counsel will also be making tweaks to the first bill draft discussed at the February meeting, on the assessment process, and presenting it for the committee's consideration again at the next meeting.

The committee adjourned without setting a future meeting date.

Irrigation Seminar

The Irrigation Association, in partnership with the Central Dakota Irrigation District, is hosting an informational workshop on Thursday, February 17 at 2pm in Steele, ND. This seminar will feature an update on aquifer levels in the area and a discussion of what irrigators can expect in the coming year. The workshop will occur in the Pifer Auction Center building which can be found at 510 7th St NW in Steele, N.D. All are welcome!

Irrigation EQIP Opportunity

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has \$1 million available through the NRCS' Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) for irrigators wishing to make changes to their irrigation system to increase water efficiency. Funding availability begins February 1. Examples of eligible projects include converting from flood to pivot, installing variable rate irrigation on an existing low-pressure system or converting a high-pressure center pivot to a low-pressure system.

NRCS also offers a free energy audit for producers looking for ways to increase energy efficiency through the On-farm Energy Initiative. Energy audits can pinpoint upgrades or changes that can be made to systems to increase efficiency. Often those changes can be made with financial assistance through NRCS.

To apply, producers should contact their local NRCS office. The deadline to apply is March 4, 2022.

Job Opportunities

The Department of Water Resources has several open positions including hydrologists, water resource engineers and public policy director. Please visit the [DWR website](#) to learn more and apply.

Upcoming Meetings

The State Water Commission will meet on February 23 at 1pm in the Pioneer Room at the State Capitol.

The interim Water Topics committee will meet on March 22 at 9am in the Roughrider Room at the State Capitol.

We'd love to hear from you! Feel free to email us at staff@ndwater.net or call 701-223-4615.