

Water Topics Overview Committee

Friday September 25, 2016, 9:45 am
Brynhild Haugland Room, State Capitol
Bismarck, North Dakota

Missouri River Advisory Council Update

Chairman Schmidt and members of the Committee. I am Michael Gunsch, Executive Board Member representing Flood Control on the North Dakota Missouri River Advisory Council (MRAC).

I was elected to the Executive Board by the MRAC membership, but also serve on the Council as the volunteer member representative for the Friends of Lake Sakakawea. Prior to this position I served on the Missouri River Leadership Committee, who worked under the authority of the Missouri River Joint Water Resource Board to facilitate the creation of this new organization. So let me provided a bit of history and status of our organization:

As you may recall the Missouri River Leadership Committee, prior to the 2015 legislative session, was in the process of creating an organization to unify and better represent North Dakota stakeholders with interests in the Missouri River. Then **HB-1249** was introduced during the 2015 session and the Leadership Committee became actively involved in what could have been a legislatively created organization. Many stakeholders were prepared for that outcome, however as you know **HB-1249** was defeated. The Leadership Committee took the lessons learned and messages from the legislative process and continued the process of creating a grassroots organization, as was originally envisioned several years ago.

Creating a diverse organization of stakeholders with different interests and goals is not a simple process, it takes time, commitment, patience and persistence – there have been a number of successes through the leadership, guidance and assistance of our membership and the North Dakota State Engineer and his staff, Todd Sando and now Garland Eberle serving as our interim Chairman.

So where are we today?

- ✓ We established a membership list – holding several general membership meetings
 - Currently there are 41 member positions, not all of which are filled
 - 19 Organizations, 9 Communities, 11 Counties, 2 Tribal and 1 at-large
 - Members were then invited to attend an organizational session
- ✓ The name **North Dakota Missouri River Advisory Council** was selected
- ✓ Created and elected of a governing Executive Board of thirteen special interest areas
 - See attached Executive Board and Membership list
- ✓ Held several Executive Board Member Meetings
 - Agreed in principal on a Vision and Mission
 - Agreed in principal on our organizations goals (~ #__)
- ✓ Our draft by-laws are currently under review by the SWC’s attorney general’s representative, to provide insight on creating a functional organization
- ✓ The next step is to present these by-laws to our Executive Board in October, after which they will be presented to the general membership for formal adoption
- ✓ Once the by-laws are adopted the articles of incorporation and formal creation of the organization will occur. The objective is to have this in place before the end of the year, though a lot of work remains.

Is this an easy process, certainly not, and do we all agree on every issue, no, but the process has been progressing steadily forward and productive. In my opinion our success will be based on our ability to communicate, cooperate, collaborate and compromise, when necessary, on Missouri River issues facing the State of North Dakota. At this point we are not creating position statements or passing resolutions to provide advisory statements to you and others, but we are heading that direction. There will be ongoing strategic initiatives to educate our members “To preserve and protect the rights to the Missouri River and its tributaries for North Dakota and its people to benefit of current and future generations.”

Understand I stand before you today, not providing any position for MRAC as an organization, but as a volunteer serving on the Board. With that I stand for any questions.