

NACD Resolution

Email:

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Sponsoring Entity:

Montana Association of Conservation Districts

Resolution Title:

Fort Peck Test Flow Mitigation

Background Information:

The Fort Peck Reservoir was built for flood control, irrigation, and jobs in 1934, and Lake Sakakawea in 1953 upon the completion of Garrison Dam. Since these two water bodies have been in place, pallid sturgeon have not been documented to successfully reproduce between them due to the limited river miles for the small fry to develop before hitting the dead waters of Lake Sakakawea and the regulated, unnatural flows coming out of Fort Peck Dam. The USACE has done an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on conducting Test Flows at the Fort Peck Dam in an attempt to assist pallid sturgeon reproduction between Fort Peck Dam and Lake Sakakawea. In the EIS it states there are 23 counties adjacent to the Missouri River in Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota that hold permits to use water from the Missouri River for the purpose of agriculture production. This totals 187,068 acres of irrigated cropland that could be affected by the test flows. The proposed maximum high flow of 35,000 cfs will alter the river channel. The minimum low flow of 8,000 cfs will not be enough for the pump sites to operate. It will also be a challenge to move pump sites where needed following the high flow. Any disruption of irrigation efforts during the growing season will result in a large economic impact on the citizens, businesses, and cropland in the region. In the EIS it is estimated that the test flows could have an overall impact of over \$80 million to the local economy, which conservation districts and producers believe is greatly underestimated. In addition, the high and low flows could have great negative impacts on the rural and municipality water systems that take from the River.

Discussion with the USACE is ongoing to try and find middle ground, lowering the high flows and increasing the low flows of a test flow. Doing this would help irrigation to continue through the growing season. Discussions with federal crop insurance says any damages that may occur to crops will not be compensated for as the test flows are a man-made event.

Resolution Text to be Included in the NACD Policy Book:

NACD will work to mitigate the Fort Peck Test Flow that will cause negative impacts to regional irrigation, agriculture, rural and municipality water systems, communities, and economies.

Sponsors Actions on this issue to Date:

Roosevelt County Conservation District along with Richland County Conservation District, Fort Peck Tribes, and Missouri River Conservation Districts Council have held public meetings with local producers in the affected areas. Work has been done to keep in close contact with Sidney Sugars, Inc as they would be greatly impacted. They have met with affected Conservation Districts in North Dakota and presented information to the Montana legislative Water Policy Interim Committee. There have also been multiple meetings with USACE to work on alternative plans and keep lines of communications open. Board members from Roosevelt County CD, Richland County CD, and Missouri River Conservation Districts Council have also been working with the Missouri River Recovery Implementation Committee.

Impact on Existing NACD Policy:

There is no policy directly related to the Fort Peck Dam Test Flow, however there are two policies on page 47 of the policy book that are directly related.

1. NACD supports protection measures for threatened and endangered species, which must consider the social and economic values of private enterprise, respect for private property rights, and work in harmony with other environmental laws. (93) AO2019/TBR202
5. NACD supports that an economic impact analysis should be conducted prior to the implementation of any threatened or endangered species recovery plan to determine if such actions will result in adverse economic impacts on the local landowners and community. Such economic impact analysis should be subject to full public disclosure and review. (03) AO2019/TBR2024

Potential Financial Impact on NACD: This should have minimal, if any, impact on NACD financially.

If Applicable, Potential Fiscal Impact on the Federal Budget: NA

Meeting and Date Adopted by Sponsoring Entity: Montana Association of Conservation District Annual Fall Meeting, November 17, 2022.

Authorized Signatures and Titles*

Dean Rogge, MACD Board President;
Steve Hedstrom, MACD Representative to NACD;
Rebecca Boslough-King, MACD Executive Director