

NAWS looking for cash infusion for 2007

By JILL SCHRAMM
Staff Writer

jschramm@minotdailynews.com

The Northwest Area Water Project needs to come up with about \$5 million to stay on track in laying more pipeline next year.

NAWS project manager Michelle Klose said the project needs to have cash on hand or appropriated before the State Water Commission can call for bids on a Minot supply pipeline and a pipeline to Berthold.

Federal money in the bank for NAWS is committed for other work, and NAWS has only a promise of more. The president's budget includes

□ NAWS

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\$1.75 million. Klose said there's a good chance that Congress will approve a larger amount, but it's not in NAWS' possession yet.

One option is to ask the city of Minot for a cash advance. The extra amount needed for construction costs could be about \$5 million, Klose said.

"We are just looking at those numbers now," she said.

The intent would be to pay back any advance from the city's NAWS fund, although that hinges on federal funding, Klose said. The city levies a

1-cent sales tax for NAWS that goes toward the 35 percent local cost-sharing on the project.

Minot previously advanced about \$5 million from its NAWS fund for the pipeline between Minot and Lake Sakakawea. The NAWS project since has paid back that money with federal funds.

The cost of projects proposed for next year, with engineering and inspection, come to about \$20 million. NAWS has \$4.5 million from the state and could be joining with other groups in seeking more money for water projects from the 2007 Legislature.

Plans are to build a Minot supply line out to the U.S. Highway 83

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Bypass, where other distribution lines would connect. The plan also includes constructing the distribution line that would take water from the supply line to Berthold. A high-service pump station would be built in Minot, but existing funds are available for that work.

State officials are also investigating funding options to install a pipeline to Minot Air Force Base, which could serve other communities to the north as the project expands.

The State Water Commission could begin calling for bids on the 2007 work as early as January if engineering work is completed as expected and money is available.

Bob Schempp of Minot, chairman of the NAWS Advisory Committee, said he doesn't expect the funding situation to hold up construction. Even if bid letting is delayed, it still should occur in time to lay pipe next summer, he said.

Construction on the pipeline to Lake Sakakawea is nearly complete. Klose reported at a NAWS Advisory Committee meeting in Minot Thursday that contractors will need to replace some pipe in the final stretch because of leaking. It's uncertain whether the work can be done before the end of this construction season.

An Environment Impact Statement must be completed before work can

start on an intake structure. Alicia Waters, team leader for the EIS, estimated the study is about 25 percent complete.

"We have identified all the issues we need to address, so that gets us to the second phase," she said. "Now we are going to be in the phase where it's going to be, from the outside, appearing quieter because we are doing some of the analysis, getting all the information ready in order to produce a draft. You might not see a lot of activity, but it's all behind the scenes at this point in time until the draft comes out."

The study will investigate four water treatment options.