



Jill Schramm/MDN

Mostad Excavating works on laying pipeline at the south end of the Northwest Area Water Supply project, near Lake Sakakawea, May 17. Contractors are finishing the final nine miles of the 45-mile supply pipeline to bring Missouri River water to Minot.

Comments shaping study

Bureau reviews comments to prepare a plan for studying NAWS

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Manitoba would like a \$17 million pre-treatment facility for the Northwest Area Water Supply project. The state of Missouri would like NAWS to consider a different water source than the Missouri River. Some people just want to know if NAWS is really needed or if the costs are in line.

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation gathered those and other comments in completing a series of public scoping meetings earlier this month. The bureau now is sorting through about 30 letters and e-mails to determine what it will study in developing an Environmental Impact Statement. The bureau decided to conduct the EIS after a federal judge ordered more study.

Manitoba had initiated the lawsuit in federal court over concerns about the potential for transfer of organisms from the

Missouri River Basin into the Hudson Bay Basin. The province has proposed using a dissolved air flotation system and ultraviolet treatment to pre-treat water before it reaches the Minot Water Treatment Plant.

Minot public works director Alan Walter said a dissolved air flotation system uses compressed air and filtration to remove sediment and organisms from water. The system is estimated to cost \$17 million to build and \$1.4 million annually to operate.

Walter said the equipment cost is double what the state has proposed with its flocculation and sedimentation basin and ultraviolet treatment to be located near Max. Operational costs also would be substantially higher under Manitoba's plan, he said.

"The problem with it is this is more than is required by our treaty and it's way more than is being used in any other place in the country," Walter said. Federal officials are

concerned that requiring such extensive treatment would set a precedent affecting other water-basin transfers that are occurring or would occur in the future around the country, he said.

Alicia Waters, the bureau's team leader on the EIS, told the NAWS Advisory Committee Thursday that the National Wildlife Federation, Friends of the Earth and the state of Minnesota are among others who share Manitoba's concerns about inter-basin biota transfer.

The bureau plans to post comments received during the EIS scoping process on its Web site at (www.usbr.gov/gp/dkao). Posting should be completed by the end of next week.

Waters said the bureau will consider the comments and determine whether the issues raised should be addressed in the EIS. The EIS will study alternative water

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treatment methods. People will have another chance to comment once the draft EIS is complete. The entire EIS process is expected to take about two years.

In the meantime, construction on the NAWS project continues.

Kevin Martin, an engineer with Houston Engineering, said work is progressing much faster than it did last year.

"The quality of the work has been good across the board," he said.

The advisory committee discussed the next leg of the pipeline to Berthold. Construction is planned for 2007, after which time the city would begin receiving water from Minot even though Missouri River water won't be in use yet.

NAWS project manager, Michelle Klose with the State Water Commission said North, Prairie Rural Water is looking at tapping into the transmission line to Berthold. The rural water district could apply for U.S. Department of Agriculture funding to develop its distribution system from the transmission line.