

**Berthold residents are anxious for NAWs water**  
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BERTHOLD (AP) - Gary Neshem's father signed up three times for rural water that never came. Now, Neshem and other rural Berthold residents hope the dream is finally set to become reality.

"When they are running the line in front of my house, that's when I'll believe it's here," Neshem said. "But it sounds like it's going to happen."

The North Prairie Rural Water District plans an expansion project from Des Lacs to the rural Berthold area. Service would come by tapping into a Northwest Area Water Supply pipeline being built this year from Minot to Berthold.

NAWS eventually will bring Missouri River water to northwestern and north central North Dakota. Until that happens, Minot will supply water to Berthold through the pipeline.

North Prairie manager Ralph Packulak said construction on a distribution system around Berthold could begin next summer, depending on availability of federal money.

Some Berthold-area residents have been waiting all of their lives for a rural water system.

"I am 68 years old and never had a drink of water out of a tap at my farm," said Ralph Birdsall, who like many others has water delivered to his home. "You can't cook with it, and it's not real good drinking water.

"I have been part of several rural water outfits that thought they might come in here," Birdsall said. "But this is the first one that they are really going to make it."

The NAWs pipeline is making the project a reality.

"It's going to be a wonderful deal for everybody out here," said Neshem, who looks forward to throwing away the peroxide he uses to treat water that he collects in a dam designed to catch runoff.

Good water is expected to increase property values and encourage rural development.

"When we sold our house, that was the major drawback on selling," said Carole Luetzen, who lived much of her life on a farm near Berthold before moving to Minot. She said the water was high in sodium and dark like coffee because it came from coal veins.

"Most of the farms in this area are really looking forward to, hopefully, getting rural water," said Berthold Mayor Alan Lee. "We will all be just tickled - really, really happy to get water."

The NAWs pipeline to Berthold is expected to be in place by November. It crosses Wayne Moe's land, and he said the easement money he is getting is not enough to pay for him to hook up to the North Prairie system.

State Water Commission project manager Michelle Klose said NAWs is using only half an acre of Moe's property, but it offered to pay for a full acre.

Moe is considering challenging the NAWs offer in court, even as contractors tear up ground at the edge of his property under eminent domain laws.