



Minot mayor Curt Zimbelman signs a water sales agreement Monday as Alan Walter, Minot public works director, left, and Dale Frink, state engineer, right, look on.

Cutting the ribbon on water from the Northwest Area Water Supply in front of a water storage tank in Berthold Monday are, from left, Minot mayor Curt Zimbelman, Berthold mayor Alan Lee, Gov. John Hoeven and state Sen. David O'Connell of Lansford. Behind them, from left, are state Reps. Kari Conrad and Elwood Thorpe of Minot and Bob Schempp, chairman of the NAWS Advisory Committee.

NAWS celebrates water delivery to Berthold

By JILL SCHRAMM, Staff Writer, jschramm@minotdailynews.com August 19, 2008

BERTHOLD Water flowed from Minot's treatment plant into a storage tank at Berthold as Berthold residents and others involved in the Northwest Area Water Supply project celebrated Monday.

"Now we are going to have good water," said Bob Inman, a member of the Berthold City Council. "It will help the city grow."

Berthold's community band kicked off festivities that included speeches, a ribbon-cutting and what might have been the first ceremonial visit by a state governor to Berthold. Joining Gov. John Hoeven were other leaders who have worked on water issues, including area legislators, representatives of the state's congressional offices and officials from the State Water Commission, Garrison Diversion Conservancy District, City of Minot and Ward County.

The State Water Commission is purchasing water from Minot to serve Berthold, a community of about 466 people. NAWS built a pipeline this past year to connect the two towns, located 25 miles apart,

"I know this isn't our long-term goal. Our long-term goal is to get Missouri River water here," said Dale Frink, state engineer with the water commission. "I think it will happen. But this really is a very nice first step."

A lawsuit brought by Manitoba over proposed water treatment has prevented access to Missouri River water. The court has ordered more studies, and the Bureau of Reclamation hopes to finish an Environmental Impact Statement by the end of the year.

Minot is providing water to Berthold in the interim.

Following the ribbon-cutting, Minot Mayor Curt Zimbelman signed an agreement with the State Water Commission to authorize the sale of water. The Minot City Council will consider an amendment to address the city's long-term involvement should water from the Missouri River be indefinitely delayed. The amendment won't affect water sales for the interim projected in the agreement.

"We are going to complete NAWS, and today is a big step forward," Hoeven said during Monday's ceremony. "It really symbolizes the progress we are making on the Northwest Area Water system."

He said the environmental study will ensure the project protects the interests of the state and Canada.

"We are doing it right. We are doing it well. We are being very diligent that it's environmentally sound, but we will not be dissuaded or deterred," Hoeven said. "We are going to keep moving this forward. This is important to our state."

Berthold Mayor Alan Lee credited the project's progress to Minot's commitment, including passage of a 1 percent sales tax to pay local costs of NAWS for the region.

"This is a major day, a major step forward, and without that 1 percent sales tax to push this forward, we probably wouldn't be where we are today," Lee said.

Minot voters enacted the sales tax in 1999. In June, they rejected a plan to divert a portion of the tax to a community bowl.

"We have tried to help the communities around us as best we can," Zimbelman said. "Certainly when we put in this city sales tax, we didn't think it would be in as long as it has been. This thing has been drug out. This has certainly slowed down projects we might have been able to do otherwise, but I know the community is behind NAWS. The importance of water just can't be overstated."

Michelle Klose, NAWS project manager with the water commission, said a delay in getting a pump station into operation has kept the people of Berthold from already being able to run Minot water out of their taps. The state is conducting bacterial testing today on the water in storage. If the water passes the test as expected, the City of Berthold can begin Wednesday to flush its distribution system in preparation for delivering the new water.

Monday's celebration drew some Berthold residents who are eager for the switch-over.

Ever since he was a kid, Gary Gathman said, all he's known is hauling water for drinking. Things finally will change for him.

"I am looking forward to it," he said.

"I am, too," added Klint Hanson. "It will be nice real nice."

Hanson said he has drinking water delivered but must use Berthold's water for other purposes, much to his wife's chagrin. She will be happy when she can wash white clothes and have them turn out white, he said.

Now that a NAWS transmission line to Berthold is in place, North Prairie Rural Water District also can begin branching off to serve new customers. North Prairie will hold a meeting this fall with Berthold-area residents interested in a rural water system.