

PHASE II OF NAWS

Coughlin Construction submits apparent low bid

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BISMARCK - Coughlin Construction Co. of Minot was the apparent low bidder for the second stretch of the Northwest Area Water Supply pipeline to be constructed south of Minot.

According to Jim Lennington of the State Water Commission, who heads up the NAWS project, Coughlin was one of eight bidders for the stretch that will be built starting this summer.

Coughlin's bid was \$4,711,424. The engineer's estimate for the work was \$5.4 million.

The new section, about 9 1/2 miles long, will take the pipeline to North Dakota Highway 23, near the former radar station.

Lennington said Friday that engineers are still reviewing the bids that were opened Thursday at the State Water Commission building in Bismarck.

The NAWS pipeline is designed to transport water from Lake Sakakawea to the water treatment plant in Minot. From Minot water it will be distributed to 10 other com-

munities' pipelines in the northwest part of the state.

Minot is expected to begin treating Missouri River water by 2007.

Part of the project will also supply funds to help three communities upgrade their own water supplies and supply rural areas. Those communities are Rugby, Grenora and Wildrose.

Even as the contract for the next phase is awarded for this spring, the NAWS project still faces a couple of tough hurdles. One of

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them is a lawsuit filed against the project by the province of Manitoba.

The suit was filed last October with Manitoba contending that the Bureau of Reclamation violated federal law by not completing a full environmental impact statement for the project.

U.S. and North Dakota offi-

cials contend that such an extensive analysis was neither needed nor required and that the more limited environmental assessment was sufficient.

The U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia has granted the request of North Dakota to intervene in the suit. Because of that, Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem said he can file motions to dismiss the case and fully participate in any hearings.

The attorney general said North Dakota officials are working to have the lawsuit dismissed short of trial.

Another hurdle that popped up last month was news that NAWS and other water projects in the state could suffer major funding cuts or receive no funding at all under President Bush's proposed budget for the next fiscal year that starts Oct. 1.

Officials at all levels of gov-

ernment from Congress on down are seeking to persuade Bush to reconsider that action and restore funding.

The entire NAWS project has a price tag of about \$145 million.