



Tom Rafferty/Staff Writer

Two construction workers place a special plastic bag around a piece of pipe for the Northwest Area Water Supply project before burying it underground about 12 miles south of Minot Thursday.

NAWS delayed

Construction behind schedule; completion date moved back

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The original completion date for this year's stretch of the Northwest Area Water Supply pipeline has been moved back two weeks because construction has been behind schedule.

Jim Lennington, project engineer with the State Water Commission, said the second phase of the pipeline, about 9.5 miles, is only about 55 percent complete.

Lennington said it would be speculation

to say when this year's phase of the pipeline will be completed.

"There is still a chance they can get it done so we have to wait and see," Lennington said.

The original completion date of Oct. 31, has been changed to Nov. 14.

Coughlin Construction of Minot was awarded the contract to build phase II, which will take the pipeline to N.D. Highway 23, 16 miles south of Minot.

Rick Craig, project manager with Coughlin Construction, said his crews are behind, but they have been picking up the pace recently.

"We're not quite as far as we'd like to be but we're still cruising along," Craig said.

The pace has been increasing as more of the company's resources are being freed up from the South Broadway reconstruction project in Minot, according to Craig. Coughlin Construction was one of the companies that was awarded the bid for the South Broadway project.

Lennington said so far the cold weather hasn't affected the project, but if the ground freezes hard enough, dirt doesn't compact

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properly.

The busiest construction Thursday was about 12 miles south of Minot in the east ditch of U.S. Highway 83. At that section of the project, backhoes could be seen digging and laying pipe into the ground.

A few miles past where crews were laying pipe, some of the ground was cleared and large piles of the iron pipe were set up every few hundred yards ready to be put in place.

The location of the old radar base was about the point where signs of construction progress ended.

Although the second phase is still in progress, engineers will be finishing plans for the third phase, which will begin in 2004. Bids for phase III could be opened in January.

The third phase will take the pipeline to Max, which is a 10-mile stretch south of the N.D.

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Highway 23 corner.

Plans to build large holding tanks near the radar hill and a booster station near Max are not included in the third phase of the project, Lennington said those items will be held off until more federal funds are released.

Earlier this year, some funding for NAWS in 2004 was cut by the Bush Administration but later restored.

"We are fairly certain we will have enough funding for the pipe," Lennington said.

Sixty-five percent of the \$145 million NAWS project is being funded with federal dollars and the remaining 35 percent with a 1-cent city sales tax in Minot that will expire when the project is complete.

Once the entire NAWS project is done, water from Lake Sakakawea will be pumped to Minot where it will be treated and used by about 63,000 people in a dozen cities in northwestern North Dakota.

The water could reach Minot as early as 2007.