

WATER PROJECT

Missouri supports NAWS lawsuit

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Missouri officials are supporting the Province of Manitoba in a lawsuit the province filed against the Northwest Area Water Supply project in October.

According to Charles Carvell, an assistant attorney general for North Dakota, Missouri recently filed a friend of the court brief in support of Manitoba.

A friend of the court brief means that Missouri supports Manitoba's position in the lawsuit, but is not legally involved in the case. The National Wildlife Federation and the Canadian government also filed friend of the court briefs supporting Manitoba.

Carvell said one reason Missouri officials are siding with Manitoba is that they are against taking water from Lake Sakakawea for municipal water projects.

Siding with Manitoba could be one more way for Missouri to fight against pressure from North Dakota to limit the amount of water that is released from Lake Sakakawea, which is experiencing below average lake levels.

Several states, including Missouri, are currently involved in a legal battle to determine how much water should be released from reservoirs along the Missouri River.

Manitoba's lawsuit against the NAWS project doesn't have anything to do with water levels on Lake Sakakawea.

Manitoba filed a lawsuit against the Department of the Interior and Bureau of Reclamation in Federal District Court in Washington, D.C., on Oct. 22 to stop construction of the project. North Dakota was also allowed to become a part of the lawsuit.

Manitoba officials are concerned that unwanted plants, animals and microorganisms from the Missouri River Basin will be transferred to the

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Hudson Bay watershed.

The NAWS pipeline is designed to transport water from Lake Sakakawea to the water treatment plant in Minot.

From Minot, water will be distributed to other communities' pipelines in the northwest and north central parts of the state.

Minot is expected to begin treating Missouri River Water in 2007.

The lawsuit Manitoba has against the NAWS project will take at least until August or later to be resolved.

Carvell said North Dakota and the U.S. federal government have made a motion to dismiss the case.

Last week was the deadline for Manitoba to respond for the motion to dismiss the lawsuit.

Carvell said the defendants in the case will have a chance to respond again and a judge is

Meeting to be held Thursday:

Water Supply Advisory Committee will be held on Thursday at 10 a.m. in Minot City Hall.

Committee members will be updated on the progress of the construction taking place on the pipeline, as well as the status of the lawsuit the Province of Manitoba has against the project.

Project engineer Jim Lemington also said the communities of Towner and Belcourt are also interested in hooking up to the pipeline once it is completed. The committee will also discuss those communities' interest in the project at the meeting.

expected to hold a hearing on the case in August.

Although the lawsuit lingers, construction of the pipeline continues.