

First of all, thank you Senator Conrad and budget committee members for inviting me here this morning.

At a state hearing on an outlet for Devils Lake back in August of 2000, I was quoted in a Forum news article saying “At what point do you say enough is enough? When will state and federal officials decide they’ve studied the basin’s flooding sufficiently and are ready to do something to solve it?”

That is a question I asked almost 10 years ago. Today, I would have to ask that same question. “At what point do you say enough is enough?” The Devils Lake Basin has been studied and studied. It’s time to move forward.

A few weeks ago, I was shown some aerial photographs of Devils Lake. The devastation caused by the rising lake is hard to sometimes understand unless you see it from the air. It’s hard for me to fathom the helplessness that farmers and city residents must feel as Devils Lake continues to rise.

Through the years, when asked, the West Fargo city commission always has supported doing something to alleviate the problem of rising water. I’m confident that the city commission will continue to do so in the future.

Today, as a city, we do have some concerns about an outlet. These concerns are not insurmountable by any means. These are problems we can solve by working together. I must say, however, these problems might not be facing us had something more been done years ago. Again, we all need to move forward to help our neighbors and this certainly is not finger-pointing testimony by means.

First of all, West Fargo is protected from high flows in the Sheyenne river by two Army Corp of Engineers Diversion projects: Horace and Sheyenne diversions. Of course, the intent of these projects is to divert excess Sheyenne River water around the city during flood events. There is some concern by city staff that the two diversion projects could run continuously depending upon the amount of water released from Devils Lake. The two diversion projects were not built to run continuously, so the Army Corp of Engineers may have to consider changes, such as lining the diversion project with cement. Again, this depends upon the flow released from Devils Lake.

Of larger concern, West Fargo gets all of its water from groundwater sources. That may have to change soon because of our rapid growth. The city has gone from 14,500 in 2000 to approximately 26,000 today. West Fargo is analyzing the need for a water treatment plant along with the city of Fargo and, hopefully, other entities. The treatment plant would utilize water from the Sheyenne river.

A study by Advanced Engineering that was completed for the city of West Fargo states that increased sulfate levels in the Sheyenne River due to releases from Devils Lake potentially could cost the city an additional \$15 million to build a treatment plant. Annual operating and maintenance costs also could be increased by \$1 million per year due to the added equipment and treatment requirements.

Again, thank you for inviting the city of West Fargo to testify.