



# 40 *Years* OF PROGRESS

## THE SOUTHWEST PIPELINE PROJECT

The Southwest Pipeline Project (SWPP) dates back to 1981 when preliminary planning and design was initiated, followed by construction authorization in 1985. The SWPP is located in southwest North Dakota and services all or portions of 13 counties, including, Adams, Billings, Bowman, Dunn, Golden Valley, Grant, Hettinger, Mercer, Morton, Oliver, Slope, Stark, and a portion of McKenzie County. Additionally, the SWPP provides wholesale water to the Missouri West Water System in Morton County and to Perkins County Rural Water System in South Dakota.

Since 1986, in accordance with North Dakota Century Code (NDCC) Section 61-24.3, the State Water Commission (SWC) has been working to develop the SWPP. NDCC stated it necessary that the SWPP be established and constructed to provide for the supplementation of water resources through a portion of the area in North Dakota, south and west of the Missouri River with water supplies from the Missouri River for multiple purposes.

The state-owned pipeline project is administered by the SWC and managed, operated, and maintained by Southwest Water Authority (SWA). In 2021, changes were implemented to the agency associated with the SWC by House Bill 1353 during the 67th Legislative Session. The agency formerly known as the SWC was restructured and renamed the Department of Water Resources (DWR). The SWC, comprised



Concrete is poured at the elevated tank in Taylor, ND. The tank is a strategic improvement project to address a waiting list in the Davis Buttes service area.



of ten members, remains intact. The legislative bill also appointed a Director, Andrea Travnicek Ph.D., as the head of the DWR and made the agency a member of the Governor's Cabinet. The Director provides overall leadership and decision-making, has hiring responsibilities, oversees the State Engineer, Department of Water Resources divisions, and staff. Additionally, the Director of the DWR serves as the Secretary of the SWC.

Today, the 10-member SWC is still active. Their primary function is to review and consider cost-share requests from project sponsors seeking financial assistance from the DWR. The SWC consists of the Governor as chairman, the Commissioner of Agriculture, and eight members who are appointed by the Governor to serve terms of six years each. Each appointed member represents one of the eight major drainage basins in North Dakota. In July 2021, Governor Burgum appointed four new members to the SWC which included SWA's Board Chairman, James Odermann, and reappointed four existing members. The Commission includes Michael Anderson, Richard Johnson, James Odermann, Connie Ova, Gene Veeder, Jay Volk, April Walker, and Jason Zimmerman.

The SWC transferred management, operation, and maintenance responsibility of the SWPP to the SWA in 1996. SWA is a political subdivision that was established by the North Dakota Legislative Assembly in 1991. The SWA is governed by a 15-member board of directors.

Recently retired Manager/CEO of SWA, Mary Massad, devoted over 25 years of her professional career serving the elected officials of the SWA Board of Directors. Mary advocated for quality water for southwest North Dakota, and provided guidance to the employees of the SWA. Under Mary's leadership, SWA and the SWPP flourished and are



During the 2021 field work season, two new air chambers were installed at the Richardton Pump Station. These upgrades will help increase the raw water transmission capacity.

positioned for continued success in the future. In January 2022, Jen Murray was announced as the new Manager/CEO of Southwest Water Authority. Jen is known for her strong sense of team responsibility, resilience, and loyalty.

Currently, the SWPP serves a population of more than 58,000 people in southwest North Dakota including 33 communities, 7,185 rural service locations, 23 raw water customers, and 28 contract customers supporting three crew camps and two water depots for the oil and gas industry. Through December 2021, the state has provided a total of \$281.6M towards the development of this infrastructure. Sindhuja S.Pillai-Grinolds has served as the project manager for the SWPP since 2011 and has been an employee at the DWR for nearly 17 years. Recently, Sindhuja was honored with a North Dakota Water Wheel Award. The recognition signifies her continued dedication, notable achievements, and invaluable service to the SWPP.

During the 2021 construction season, work advanced on the SWPP especially towards meeting the goal of increasing the raw water transmission and intake capacity of the project to meet the growing need for water in southwestern North Dakota. Focus also shifted to the three-pronged approach to increase the distribution capacity needs of the Project.

Furthermore in 2021, the DWR funded a Strategic Governance and Finance study to analyze current financing and governance structures of the state's four largest regional water supply systems-Northwest Area Water Supply, Southwest Pipeline Project, Red River Valley Water Supply, and Western Area Water Supply. The study, completed by AE2S, was developed to address water system funding, drive completion of regional water supply projects, and consider multiple governance and finance frameworks. The SWC received the study at their October 2021 meeting for consideration. The DWR team, along with Jon Kelsch, DWR's Water Development Division Director as the project manager for reviewing Strategic Governance and Finance opportunities, will work together with the SWC to determine next steps while receiving feedback from all water systems, stakeholders, legislators, and other interested parties.

"The Southwest Pipeline Project is one of North Dakota's largest multi-county regional rural water supply projects and is imperative to economic growth in southwest North Dakota," said DWR Director Andrea Travnicek. "The project provides smart, efficient infrastructure, continues to increase capacity capabilities to serve growing population needs, and directly contributes to providing the citizens of North Dakota with clean, reliable, quality water."

For more information about the project, visit [www.dwr.nd.gov](http://www.dwr.nd.gov).