

Defending Richland and Wilkin counties

The lack of a reasonable plan for farmland impacts of a proposed diversion is troubling to say the least. The Diversion Authority says there are two options, purchase or easement.

Farmland purchase is necessary for any land that will be under the diversion channel and likely where the dam and reservoir will cause more than three feet of water to accumulate. Easement purchases may be

the route for any water depths under three feet, but easements will not cover crop losses to farmers or economic damage to the communities.

Farmers rely on crop insurance to protect them from disaster. Premiums for the insurance, and payments on losses, are based on history. Each year farmers report yields to their insurance company to prove their production. They will typically buy 65-70 percent insurance coverage on

those yields. Crop insurance is expensive, and the higher the proven yield, the less costly the insurance per bushel or ton. It's based on probabilities. The squeeze comes when there are successive years of poor crops. As proven yields fall, insurance the farmer can purchase becomes more expensive and they get less protection. Profits come from the last percent of crop sold, so even though the insurance protects farmers from a disaster, it doesn't protect a profit.

Crop insurance will not cover a manmade disaster. If losses are caused by a dam and reservoir, no payments will be made. Diversion backers promise they will "take care" of farmers who get water on their land, but they will not pay if a crop is planted late or soils are continually saturated and yields fall. Crop yields drop dramatically as planting dates are delayed. Crop insurance yields will fall and less coverage will be available.

Farmland in the 50,000-acre reservoir area will be devalued because the opportunity for a profit will be reduced. Easements are paid to those who occasionally have water covering their property. Direct costs for crop production can range from \$500 for corn to more than \$1,000 per acre for sugarbeets. It is unlikely that easement payments would cover the risk of yield reduction from delayed planting or perpetually saturated clay soils. Easements are usually a one-time payment, whereas the damage will be perpetual.

In addition, no construction of any kind would be allowed on land that has an easement attached. Fargo's diversion can be built without the widespread destruction caused by a dam and reservoir. Upstream farmers and residents should not have to sacrifice their land, lifestyle and heritage to serve as a "sump pit" for Fargo's future development.



Editor's Note: the Richland-Wilkin Joint Powers Authority is submitting a series of letters to the editor on the planned flood control project for Fargo-Moorhead.