

\$65M wish list for Oxbow?

By [Dickinson Press Staff](#) on Mar 16, 2013 at 12:00 a.m.

The future of House Bill 1020 was the subject of the testimony heard before the North Dakota Senate Appropriations Subcommittee in Bismarck last Friday. Two weeks ago, on Feb. 27, the North Dakota House voted 90-4 to **prohibit Fargo and its Diversion Authority from using state appropriated tax funds on the \$2 billion Fargo dam/diversion project.** Representative Skarphol, who introduced the bill, stated that the restrictions on the funds were necessary as it appeared that the funds earlier appropriated were being **"spent in a fashion that was thought not to be entirely appropriate."** As to Fargo's plan to dam and divert the area's rivers Skarphol said: **"Your House Appropriations Committee does not believe it is in the best interests of the state of North Dakota to spend additional dollars on a project that may or may not go forward."** ND House Floor, Feb.27.

Last Friday, delegates from Fargo appeared before the Senate Subcommittee to try to undo the House's work. Representatives of the upstream communities in harm's way of the proposed dam and reservoir also testified. Perhaps the most interesting testimony came from Dennis Biewer, Pleasant Township Supervisor and Bakke leader, who spoke against the project. At issue was the state funds Fargo and its Diversion Authority will spend to ring dike the private golf club community of Oxbow that has approximately 100 houses. Oxbow already has a ring dike, and very few of its homes are in the regulatory flood plain. After the '09 flood Oxbow protected itself, with the help of public funds, to a level one foot above the greatest flood in history. The majority of homes in Oxbow are not required to have flood insurance. If successful in getting the Senate to remove the restrictions, Fargo will spend at least \$65 million of these appropriated tax dollars, not on flood protection for Fargo, but on an

unnecessary ring dike and "wish list" for Oxbow.

These state tax dollars will be used to acquire land upon which to build six new holes on the private golf course, modify the existing holes, build a brand new club house complex and swimming pool, acquire additional acreage for building lots, and pay the cost of design, platting and infrastructure. The Oxbow mayor and his people have specifically demanded that the Fargo Diversion Authority pay the cost of retaining the renowned golf course designer Robert Trent Jones Jr. to direct the construction. Fargo's plan to spend \$65 million state dollars to purchase Oxbow's silence certainly validates Rep. Skarphol's concerns.

During his testimony, Dennis Biewer was asked why his community didn't take a leaf from Oxbow's book and create their own "wish list" to present to Fargo. Biewer's response was clear: we don't flood, we have never flooded and we don't need a ring dike. A ring dike is only necessary as a component to Fargo's plan to remove the natural flood plain in Fargo's future growth area, flooding 50,000 acres behind a dam that puts six to eight feet of water on Bakke, Hickson and the farmers and residents of Pleasant Township. The people of Bakke will support their neighbors, their township, their school and their community - all threatened by Fargo's plans. Oxbow supports its country club - - and so will every North Dakota taxpayer -- if the amendments to House Bill 1020 are removed.
