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THE BAKKEN: trucks, dust, flares & fracking

North Dakota farmers and ranchers work to curb oil boom excesses

By John Smillie, Campaign Director, Western Organization of Resource Councils

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Business Insider called it “The Insane Oil Boom,” in a photo essay. According to the essay, Williston, North Dakota’s population has grown from 12,000 to 30,000 in the last ten years. A small one bedroom apartment runs \$2,000 a month, if you can get one; many workers live in trailers and trucks in parking lots. Industry experts forecast four drilling pads per square mile over a 640 square mile area, with several wells per pad.

Already, truck traffic is so heavy in the Bakken—the area in Western North Dakota and Northeastern Montana where oil development has created a huge boom in the last three years—some rural residents don’t venture to town unless they have to. Traffic, road repair and dust kicked up by trucks is a constant headache for everyone.

Most farmers and ranchers in many parts of the Bakken have no say about oil and gas drilling on their land, and some get little, if any, compensation because they don’t own the mineral rights. Talk to farmers and ranchers who have had oil wells drilled on their land and hydraulically fractured, or “fracked,” and you’ll hear stories of contaminated water running off well pads into coulees, wells ruined by drilling and replaced by the oil companies with new, poor quality water wells; neighbors who create “water depots” to sell groundwater to fracking companies out of the aquifers they share; and waste dumps to hold potentially toxic materials from nearby oil wells popping up all over.

The peaceful, slow-paced character of their towns is gone, replaced with the noise, dust, detours, and mess of a construction boom scrambling to meet the need for roads, housing, pipelines, asphalt, gravel, and water. The Bakken is one big boomtown, with exploding crime rates, a skyrocketing cost of living, everything under construction—and everywhere you go, the trucks. There are trucks to haul the oil out, but also to haul in fracking chemicals, sand, and millions of gallons of water; trucks hauling pipe and construction materials; trucks hauling supplies for all the oil wells, oilfield

workers, and oil towns; trucks hauling oil field equipment; and trucks hauling other trucks.

Farmers and ranchers in the Bakken in North Dakota are fed up with all of this, and they are pushing back, working for solutions to the pollution, traffic, and a playing field that is tilted against their property rights. They are joined by townspeople and members of the Three Affiliated Tribes on the Fort Berthold reservation in trying to check the out-of-control growth.

Fracking for oil

Communities across the country are feeling the effects of natural gas development made possible by hydraulic fracturing and horizontal drilling. Opposition to fracking by natural gas companies has mushroomed, especially in areas where previously uneconomic shale formations have yielded big profits for the industry, and big headaches for landowners, water users and other neighbors. In some places the pace of drilling has slowed because of an oversupply of natural gas. But in Texas, and especially in the Bakken, fracking is used to produce oil, and the boom is on. Oil drilling and production have increased so rapidly, in fact, that a huge amount of natural gas—a byproduct of oil production in the Bakken—is flared for lack of infrastructure to get it to market.

State rules in North Dakota say oil companies are only allowed to flare for one year after drilling a new well—but annual extensions are routinely granted. Ranchers and farmers in the Dakota Resource Council think that’s wrong—they resent bearing the brunt of the impacts in the name of U.S. energy security when so much natural gas is wasted. If

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for all the exciting details of
DRC's 35th Annual Meeting.
A great big THANK YOU to all our business
sponsors for the success of this event!

The Dakota Counsel is published six times a year by Dakota Resource Council, a nonprofit, grassroots activist organization. The mission of Dakota Resource Council is to form enduring, democratic local groups that empower people to influence decision-making processes that affect their lives. DRC is committed to preserving sustainable agriculture and natural resources.

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DRC: THE BIGGER PICTURE

By DRC Board Chair Verle Reinicke

“We were a generation who fought. Even if we didn’t win, we fought.” It was Rose Person from White Earth, ND, talking. It’s what she wants to be able to say to her grandchildren about what’s happening with the oil and gas development in her area.



Rose attended “Build a Better Bakken,” a Power-to-Win workshop sponsored on a recent Saturday in New Town by the Oil and Gas Task Force. She’s concerned about what she can do now that will ensure a good future for those who come after her.

“Watchdogs of the Prairie” is how we refer to ourselves as Dakota Resource Council. Like Rose, DRC is concerned with doing the best we can NOW to ensure a good FUTURE for the people, land, air, water and resources of North Dakota.

In less than a decade North Dakota has become second only to Texas in US domestic oil production. Many of our state leaders “bust their buttons,” falling over one another in praise of the development.

The mood at DRC is less ebullient and sanguine. A way of life has been drastically altered and not always for the good. To be sure, fortunes are being made.

At the same time our cities, towns, counties, townships, schools, social services, roads and much else has been adversely impacted. Affordable housing is non-existent. The sky is perpetually lighted at night, because excess natural gas is not captured but flared.

There is concomitant concern for air quality. Leases for access to the trapped fossil fuels are a nightmare. Land is taken out of production and sometimes fouled with spills.

Dakota Resource Council is squarely in the middle of this massive turn of events. Not able to address all of these issues, we nevertheless fight for quality of life and care of the land, air and water in North Dakota.

Which brings me to the Annual Meeting on October 26 in Bismarck. All of what I’ve rehearsed here and more is the focus of our meeting this year. I want to urge all of us in the strongest way I can to attend; it is important that we do.

The highlights: 1. “Grassroots Organizing to Win” training, leading to the best and most winnable campaigns possible and shaping legislative policy for the greatest good. 2. The first Art and Grace Link Leadership Award will be presented. 3. A concluding panel: “Experiences of Living in the Bakken.” Stories like those of Rose will be shared from those most directly impacted by this recent development of oil and gas activity and how we can fight for a better future. Stories we will hear help to ground us in the reality of the issues we face and challenge us to action.

See you there.

OIL AND GAS TASK FORCE TALKS LEGISLATIVE ISSUES

DRC’s Oil and Gas Task Force met in New Town on October 6 to discuss legislative issues for the 2013 Legislative Session. Kevin Williams, WORC director of organizing, put on the “Power to Win” workshop and discussed the process of getting bills passed in the legislature.

With so many important issues in the Bakken, members from all parts of the oil fields attended the task force meeting to discuss what needs to be done to make the quality of life better for North Dakotans. Task force members worked their way to prioritize the issues and developed a plan about what to focus on at the legislature.

Task force members shared concerns about the quality of life now and in the future. Rose Person asked, “What kind of state do we want to leave our

children and grandchildren?” This point was brought up a few times as members are motivated by how things need to be done right for the future generations.

Currently, production in the Bakken has slowed down a bit due to price hikes for construction services such as concrete work. Donny Nelson, longtime member of Dakota Resource Council and current task force chair said, “Greed is going to slow down the oil for a bit.” Nelson also discussed how the rig count has dropped in the state, but in one Keene area township, 150 additional drilling rigs are expected to pop up in the future. Task force members talked about state government going so fast that communities and landowners don’t have time to catch up so the infrastructure is falling apart.

Several members have noticed that agriculture has taken a back seat to the oil industry. Steve Davis is concerned about the attitude that the oil industry has against agriculture. Members are worried that oil is slowly wiping away agriculture in a state that used to pride itself on ag production. Now, the state seems to pride itself on oil production and leaving agriculture out in the wind.

After the meeting, the task force members felt good about what needs to be worked on currently and in the future and are looking forward in teaming up with other groups and individuals to make sure that DRC can build a better Bakken.

To help with oil and gas issues, contact Sean Arithson at 701-224-8587 or sean@drcinfo.com



DRIVING IN THE BAKKEN...

by Rena Nelson, Keene, ND

The reason I am writing this letter is because I almost died Tuesday, September 25 at 5:45 a.m. The scary part is that this is not the first time and it won’t be the last.

I live 37 miles from Watford City and 18 miles from New Town. I work in Watford City and love my job. I drive these roads 5 or 6 times a week and every time I get behind the wheel I have to ask myself if this is the day I am going to meet my maker.

I am not sure what gives these drivers the right to take my life into their hands, but they do. There is not one day I drive these roads that a law is not broken. They pass in no passing

zones, drive excessive speeds, pull out in front of you, ride your bumper and pass two or more vehicles at a time. Always in a hurry to end their life, mine, or someone else’s. I guess I thought my life was worth more than getting to a job site five minutes too late or making one extra load for the night. (MONEY)

I work for the city of Watford City and most mornings the pagers for fire and ambulance are called out for car accidents. I have friends going to work out of town and a daughter and grandchildren coming in for work and day care. I panic and get on the phone right away to my daughter, if they are going her way, and keep calling until I know

they have made it to town safe. What a way to live your life worrying all the time.

I am a 50 year old woman with a great husband, three grown children, five grandchildren, a lot of family and friends. I want to die of old age not in a useless car accident because someone has no respect for my life or anyone else’s life on the roads with them.

Drivers need to slow down and follow the laws of the road and respect the people out there with them, because someday it could be their wife, husband, children, grandchildren, dad, mom, brother, sister, aunt, uncle, niece, nephew, cousin, friend or maybe even themselves that die in a stupid car accident that could have been avoided.

AFFILIATES IN ACTION

MVRC



Bismarck—Missouri Valley Resource Council met on September 25 to discuss the future of its curbside recycling campaign in Bismarck and to elect new officers. Travis Schulz was elected as MVRC's new Board Representative. During the meeting

the group determined that it would attend a November 13, 2012 Bismarck City Commission public input meeting regarding curbside recycling.

Throughout the summer the group collected over 600 petition signatures from Bismarck residents in support of curbside recycling. It is MVRC's hope to get more than 750 signatures before the November City Commission meeting.

The group plans to do a series of simple videos on Dakota Media Access to promote curbside recycling, as well as branding campaign using social and traditional media prior to the City Commission in November.



MVRC member Marie Hoff collecting signatures at Urban Harvest

REJUVENATING MCETA

Long time members of MCETA met at Donny Nelson's ranch on September 6 to discuss the future of the group. MCETA is DRC's oldest affiliate and it has led in the work for fair trade and doing it right with local oil and gas development.

MCETA has been dormant for a while due to the explosion of oil and gas development and because many members have been taking part on state wide issues through the Oil and Gas Task Force and less on local issues with MCETA. Members decided the best way to bring in new members was to get back to the local issues and hold some informational meetings on who they are and what accomplishments MCETA has won in the past.



Task Force members met at the Nelson Ranch in Keene



SARC

The South Agassiz Resource Council's monthly member meeting was at the Black Building in Fargo, September 25. Members focused on the use of water in North Dakota. State Representative Ed Gruchella told the group that any additional permits for industrial water use would probably not be permitted from the Red River because of limited resources. People in eastern North Dakota are watching the activity in the oil patch and are concerned about the use of water from the Missouri for the fracking process.

The meeting also included discussion of two initiative measures that were dropped from the November 2012 ballot because of fraudulent signatures. The proposals for a North Dakota Clean Water, Lands and Outdoor Heritage Amendment and legalizing medical use of marijuana could be brought to the 2013 Legislative Session. Members are encouraged to contact their legislators about that.

Jesse Wiesenborn was selected to be one of the two SARC representatives to the DRC Board.

CLEAN ELECTRICITY TASK FORCE: Let's Get Efficient

The Clean Electricity Task Force has held two meetings this summer and fall. In late August the group had a face-to-face meeting in Bismarck at the DRC office. During the face-to-face meeting, the group discussed possible future campaigns, which included working on improving North Dakota's implementation of energy efficiency, transitioning North Dakota State University and the University of North Dakota to renewable energy sources, and possibly working to rebuild flood impacted areas in an energy efficient manner.



At the most recent meeting, the task force discussed the legislative agenda for the 2013 Legislature and what actions and events could bring visibility to DRC's clean energy related legislative objectives.

One possible idea that was discussed was to host a tour for North Dakota legislators of the new St. Alexius building in Bismarck to show the benefits of energy efficiency and geothermal.

The task force will likely meet one more time before the end of the year and is looking for new members.

To join the Clean Electricity Task Force, contact Scott Skokos at 701-224-8587 or scott@drcinfo.com



MORE MONEY NEEDED IN NORTH DAKOTA FOR ENERGY CONSERVATION

By Terrence Kardong, Richardton, ND

Since 2009, when organizations like the American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy began scoring states for energy efficiency, North Dakota has consistently been ranked at the bottom for energy efficiency.

Since the early 1980s North Dakota has had a policy in place to promote energy conservation, yet not a single dollar has been used for energy conservation.

To give a little background, the policy that I previously referenced is The Resources Trust Fund (RTF), which was created through passage of an initiated measure in 1980. At that time, the RTF received 10 percent of the 6.5 percent oil extraction tax.

In the 1990 primary election, North Dakota voters approved the RTF as a constitutional trust fund with the

provision that the fund could be appropriated by the Legislature for two purposes: Constructing water-related projects, including rural water systems, and funding energy conservation. Since 1990, all of the money from the RTF has been appropriated for the construction of water-related projects.

I admit that water projects are important in North Dakota, yet to ignore the need to conserve energy in a state ranked as one of the worst in energy efficiency is a failure of leadership, as well as a failure to adhere to the historically conservative values of North Dakota.

It is about time our leaders step up and appropriate money for energy conservation programs that save North Dakotans money on their energy bills.

DRC'S 35th ANNUAL MEETING SLATED FOR OCTOBER 27th “Build a Better Bakken”

AmVets Club

2402 Railroad Avenue, Bismarck

- 9:30 a.m.~Registration
 - 10:00~Introductions
 - Ice breaker featuring
“The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly
by Glimpse Westward
- “Grassroots Organizing to Win” Training
- Lunch (please RSVP 483-2851 or aleta@drcinfo.com)
compliments Brian & Angie McGinnis, DeJon & Jeri Lynn Bakken & DRC
 - 1st Annual Art & Grace Link
Leadership Award Presentation
 - Business Meeting
 - DRC Member Panel discussing
“Experiences of Living in the Bakken”
featuring Donny Nelson, Brenda Jorgenson & Theodora Bird Bear
 - Social and Silent Auction Bidding
 - 5:30 p.m.~ Wrap up and closing



Donny Nelson



Brenda Jorgenson



Theodora Bird Bear

The annual meeting silent auction is a great way for members to purchase new, unique items and for DRC to raise much needed funds. Last year's auction featured all sorts of items donated by small businesses as well as homemade foods and crafts. The silent auction's success depends on you! Please consider making a donation or asking local businesses to contribute.

Early donations are particularly helpful. If you can contribute any silent auction items, please call Aleta at the DRC office (701) 483-2851 or e-mail aleta@drcinfo.com

MEASURE 3 WILL NOT PROTECT FARMERS

by Link Reinhiller, Hazen, ND

Measure 3 on the November ballot will not actually protect farmers and ranchers. Instead, it will open up a flood of problems.

Let's say your family has been ranching for generations in North Dakota. Your neighbor sells his land to someone who shows little regard that what he does effects your land and the water you use. Your new neighbor could make it almost impossible for you to succeed.

If Measure 3 passes, you and your family's farm or ranch will have no options to protect your livelihood or your investment.

The language in the proposed addition to the North Dakota Constitution says "no law shall be enacted which abridges the right of farmers and ranchers to employ agricultural technology, modern livestock production and ranching practices." While that may sound attractive, it is not needed. Farmers and ranchers already are able to employ agriculture technology and



modern livestock and ranching practices.

The amendment actually would infringe upon the private property rights and good stewardship practices of farmers and ranchers.

The public, including many farmers and ranchers, have had little discussion or time to think this through. The real impact is little understood. This is not good government.

A more reasonable approach would be to introduce a measure at the state legislature and have a thorough and complete discussion. Legislators could send a more thoughtful measure to the people for a vote, if it is actually needed.

Measure 3 Campaign
At the 2011 Annual Meeting, DRC members passed a resolution to oppose Measure 3. To help in the effort, contact Lynn Wolff at 701-298-8685 or lynn@drcinfo.com



I'D LIKE TO SUPPORT DRC ENCLOSED PLEASE FIND:

General Membership
___ \$500 • Watchdog of the Prairie
___ \$250 • Sustaining
___ \$100 • Century Club
___ \$ 55 • Household
___ \$ 35 • Individual
___ \$ 15 • Student/Low Income

BARC/DRC Membership
Household \$60___ Individual \$40___

GFC3/DRC Membership
Household \$60___ Individual \$40___

MCETA/DRC Membership
Household \$65___ Individual \$ 45___

MVRC/DRC Membership
Household \$60___ Individual \$40___

SARC/DRC Membership
Household \$75___ Individual \$ 45___

Name _____
Address _____
City, State _____
Zip _____ Phone _____
e-mail _____



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THE BAKKEN (from Pg. 1)

oil companies were denied new permits until they stopped flaring from wells they have already drilled, it would reduce the waste and slow down the out-of-control pace of development across the Bakken. They are also pushing for much tighter controls on the release of toxic fumes from oil wells and from gas flares, which can be just a few hundred feet from their homes.

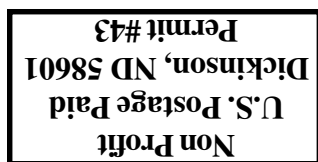
Along with landowners and neighbors of fracking operations nationwide, residents of the Bakken want to know what chemicals are pumped underground, with water and sand, in the fracking process. North Dakota recently joined the list of states that has adopted weak rules on disclosure of fracking chemicals by oil and gas companies, but the rules don't require disclosure before fracking, so landowners can't prepare before fracking happens. These rules allow companies to keep chemicals secret by claiming the information is "proprietary."

DRC is helping farmers and ranchers deal with oil field waste after it comes back out of the well, too. Last year, after heavy snow and rains caused waste pits on dozens of wells in North Dakota to overflow onto neighboring land,

the state adopted rules prohibiting disposal of liquid wastes on oil pads. Now proposals are popping up all over for new waste pits to store the clippings from oil well drilling and other solid wastes. Residents of Dodge, North Dakota organized to block one waste pit proposal—they now brag that they forced the company to "get out of Dodge."

Many people living in the middle of the boom will tell you things would be better if they could just slow it all down. The traffic wouldn't be quite as bad, the cost of living would moderate, local business people would have a chance to benefit instead of choosing between selling out to a chain store or an oil company or losing everything; and state and federal regulators would have time to do some enforcement, instead of devoting all of their time to processing new permits for even more drilling.

Until things slow down, though, the thought of heading into Tioga, North Dakota (which has gone from a population of 250 to 1500 practically overnight) from their farms and ranches is not a pleasant one for long time residents. One rancher thought about the man camps, the construction, the torn up roads, and all the wells and flares along the way. "It's like driving into Hell," he said.



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