

DAKOTA COUNSEL

Watchdogs of the Prairie

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Data Centers Are Coming Fast. We Need Your Help.



Aerial drone image of a large data center building exterior, representing the massive technological infrastructure required for storing, processing data, and delivering global digital services.

If it feels like North Dakota is getting hit with announcements of one data center proposal after another, that's because we are. These projects are moving fast, and many across the state are not hearing about them until the wheels are already in motion.

When we talk about data centers, we are not talking about the small buildings that are quietly sprinkled throughout our larger cities. What DRC and many rural communities across North Dakota are concerned with are massive industrial projects called hyperscale data centers moving into our state at a breakneck pace. These facilities take a ton of land, usually productive farmland, and turn them into concrete warehouses. To give you a mental image, just one of the 900,000 square foot buildings in Harwood is similar in size to 15 ½ football fields. They use a ton of power as well. Just one of these hyperscale data centers can use more electricity than all of the residential homes that exist in North Dakota. In a lot of cases, these facilities use a lot of water too, even if they are closed-loop systems. This rapid buildout is pushing increased demand for power and generation capacity, and that demand is fueling a desperate desire to build corresponding fossil fuel development.

This is where Basin Electric comes in.

Basin Electric, along with NextEra Energy, are behind the proposed River Run Energy Center, a new industrial complex that is meant to “attract data center developers.” This facility will include a 1.5 GW natural gas plant that will be
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Letter From the Chair



Across North Dakota, communities are facing decisions that will shape the future of our land, water, and rural economies. At Dakota Resource Council, our work this year has been focused on making sure those decisions are made with the voices of local people at the center, not after the fact.

One of the clearest examples is the rapid push to site large-scale data centers in rural areas. These facilities bring enormous electricity demand and can dramatically reshape local infrastructure and energy systems. In Harwood, Dakota Resource Council members helped organize a community meeting that brought more than 100 people together to learn about the potential impacts and ask questions. Residents wanted transparency about energy demand, water use, and how these projects might affect cooperative ratepayers. In Oliver County, local organizing helped lead to the adoption of a six-month moratorium on data center development, giving the county time to study the issue and ensure any future decisions protect the public interest.

We have also worked to ensure that renewable energy development benefits the communities where projects are built. In New Rockford, years of organizing helped secure a \$15 million Community Benefits Agreement connected to the Flickertail Wind project. Agreements like this help guarantee that when major energy infrastructure is built in rural communities, the people who live there see tangible benefits—from infrastructure investments to long-term community support.

At the same time, our members continue to stand up for family farmers and rural communities facing the aggressive expansion of large Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations. Industrial livestock facilities place heavy strain on local roads, water resources, and rural quality of life while consolidating the livestock

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Executive Committee

Lisa Finley-DeVille, Chair
Linda Weiss, Vice Chair
Curt Stofferahn, Past Chair
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Jenna Vanhorne
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Region Board Reps

Region 1 - Erik Olson
Region 2 - Tracy Potter
Region 3 - Vacant
Region 4 - Shelley Lenz
Region 5 - Vacant

DRC Regions

Region 1 covers eastern North Dakota, including the Red River Valley and communities around Fargo and Grand Forks.

Region 2 includes much of south central North Dakota, including Bismarck, Jamestown, and surrounding rural counties.

Region 3 spans north central and northeastern North Dakota, including the Minot and Devils Lake areas.

Region 4 covers western and southwestern North Dakota, including Dickinson, Williston outside the Fort Berthold Reservation, and the Badlands region.

Region 5 is dedicated entirely to the Fort Berthold Reservation, recognizing its unique geography, sovereignty, and organizing history.

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(COVER STORY CONTINUED)

tied directly to a corresponding data center. That 1.5 GW number can feel vague though, so let's put it into perspective: this size project could power a city roughly the population size of Austin, Texas - but it's all for just one data center. Roughrider Electric and Upper Missouri are circling around this project, too. A common phrase we keep hearing from decision makers and the developers is that data centers need "reliable, steady power around the clock", so natural gas plants are the solution from our cooperatives and tech industry. We've heard similar pitches before, though. Big new development shows up, industry says we have no choice, and our rural communities and neighbors are the ones expected to live with the consequences and just "be grateful" for the tax benefits.

Those tax benefits can look mighty tempting to small towns and local decision makers trying to keep schools funded, budgets afloat, and basic services going. But as many of us know, once the industry breaks ground or the infrastructure is in place, there is no going back, and many data center developers have long term plans to build these facilities out to truly unimaginable sizes. This is not happening in just one spot. Hyperscale data center developers are trying to get a corner on the statewide market while we have lax regulations and bountiful financial incentives. More recently, developers have been making moves in Oliver County. The community fought hard for a moratorium to ensure guardrails were put in place before a data center comes in. Not long after, a hyperscale facility developer attempted to use annexation into the town of Center to get around the moratorium and future ordinances. Mercer County is right in the middle of the River Run Energy fight. Grand Forks has already been dealing with data center development for years. Cass County is drawing more interest with the Harwood hyperscale facility under construction. Dickey County is host to a massive hyperscale facility that keeps getting expanded. Other counties across western and central North Dakota are getting approached too, and in a lot of cases local people barely know what is going on until it is almost too late, and that is a big problem.

This is moving faster than counties can keep up with, and industry developers are counting on that. They are relying on public officials being overwhelmed, local communities not hearing about it in time, and people not asking enough questions until the deal is halfway done.

(LETTER FROM THE CHAIR CONTINUED)

industry in ways that often leave independent producers behind. Our members have been working with local residents across the state to ensure communities have a voice when these proposals arise.

Accountability has also been a key part of our work this year. As former North Dakota Governor Doug Burgum serves in a prominent federal role, our members have been organizing to ensure that the interests of rural North Dakotans are represented—not overlooked. Through coalition organizing, public education, and earned media, Dakota Resource Council has helped elevate rural voices and hold powerful decision-makers accountable.

What connects all of these efforts is a simple belief: the people who live on the land should have a real say in the decisions that affect it.

North Dakota's rural communities are strong because people step forward, organize with their neighbors, and demand a seat at the table. At Dakota Resource Council, we are proud to stand with those communities as they work to shape a future that protects our land, supports independent farmers and ranchers, and ensures that economic development truly benefits the people who call this place home.

The challenges facing rural North Dakota are real—but so is the power of organized communities.

Lisa Finley-DeVille
Chair, Dakota Resource Council

(COVER STORY CONTINUED)

If the thought of unchecked processes, unbridled developers, and the destruction of fertile farmland scares you, this is what you can do.

DRC does not have staff sitting in every county courthouse in North Dakota, but you, our members, are out there. These are the counties and communities that you live in. You are already plugged into your local boards. You go to meetings. You know people and you hear things. Right now, that matters more than ever.

So here is what we are asking of you:

Start checking your county commission agendas. Check planning and zoning agendas, too. Most of the time they are posted online a few days before the meeting. Watch for things like: conditional use permits for large industrial projects, rezoning from

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(COVER STORY CONTINUED)

ag to industrial, power line easements, substation upgrades, water use discussions tied to industrial development, or presentations from outside companies. Also keep an eye out for language like “high performance computing”, “colocation facility”, and “digital infrastructure”. That is the kind of stuff that can slip onto an agenda quietly.

And if you see something, say something. Contact us. Please do not assume somebody else already did! A heads up before a vote is worth a whole lot more than outrage after the fact.

In a time where we all need a bit of hope, there is good news: people are starting to push back. Morton County put a moratorium in place back in September 2024. In just March of this year, three counties voted on moratoriums: Mercer County voted to suspend data center development for a year, Oliver County approved a 6-month moratorium after residents showed up and demanded more time, and Dunn County passed a 12 month moratorium. Outside of those recent wins, Divide County has some of the most solid data center ordinances in our state. All of these incredible wins did not happen because county officials suddenly got cautious on their own, they happened because people showed up, spoke up, and made the issue impossible to ignore. That is exactly the kind of pressure and enthusiasm we need more of state-wide, in as many counties as we can.

DRC Statewide Data Center Coalition

DRC is building a statewide coalition of members and allies who want to stay connected on this issue by sharing what they are seeing, and helping each other respond before these projects get rushed through. We will have regularly scheduled calls and Zoom meetings to share updates, compare notes, and suggest tried-and-true actions you can take, whether that is pushing for a moratorium, showing up at a hearing, or asking the questions local officials should have been asking from day one.

No North Dakotan county should be left trying to fend for itself while tech companies, utilities, and out-of-state developers come in loaded with lawyers, lobbyists, and glossy talking points.

If you would like to be a part of that coalition or if you've seen something happening in your county or community, get in touch with Ishauna Jacobberger at ishauna@drcinfo.com or call (701) 224-8587. She is leading DRC's organizing work on rural energy and data centers and wants to hear from you.

The data center industry is betting that North Dakota communities will not get organized fast enough to slow this down or shape what happens next - together, we can make sure they lose that bet.

Agriculture

Pierce County Residents Push Back on Proposed Hog CAFO

The fight over the proposed Dakota SAO II hog operation in Pierce County has taken another important turn.

This proposed 9,300 pig CAFO, planned for the area between Cando and Wolford near Hurricane Lake, has drawn heavy opposition from DRC members and other community members in the area who are worried about what it could mean for water quality, odor, and property values. From the beginning, local residents and producers have raised serious concerns about the scale of the operation and the risk that manure and runoff could affect Hurricane Lake and even the larger Devils Lake watershed.

Those are not small concerns. They are the kind of concerns people should have when a project this large is being pushed into an area where clean water, quality of life, and the future of nearby property all matter deeply.

Earlier in the process, the Pierce County Planning and Zoning Board denied the permit. Even then, it was clear this proposal was facing real scrutiny and real resistance from local people who were not willing to simply accept the talking points about economic development and move on.

Now the issue has shifted again. News came on April 6 that the proposed hog farm conditional use permit was revoked by a 4 to 1 vote to reconsider the matter that same night. The North Dakota Department of Environmental Quality also canceled the public meeting that had been scheduled for April 20.

That does not mean the fight is over, but it does show something important. Public pressure matters. Local voices matter. When DRC members and others in the community show up, ask hard questions, and refuse to be brushed aside, it can change the course of a project like this.

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(PIERCE COUNTY CAFO CONTINUED)

People in Pierce County have every right to expect careful scrutiny of a proposal that could have long term impacts on their land, water, and communities. This is exactly why local involvement matters, and why people must stay engaged.

Barnes County Planning and Zoning debates and passes the Zoning for Blackhawk LLP Hog Farm

Barnes County Commissioners approved a 7,000-head hog farrowing barn registered as Blackhawk Farms LLP. Request for a conditional use permit to build a hog animal feeding operation in Grand Prairie Township. Under the plan, Pipestone management will serve as the farm's manager for the Bullerman and Karges family partnership. The three buildings, a gestation barn, farrowing barn, and gilt growing barn, and compost site would house a total of 8,511 pigs on 40 acres, about 13 miles North of Oriska, North Dakota. The water source is still under discussion with Barnes Rural Water. If only a limited amount of water is available through Barnes Rural Water, then wells would have to be dug to provide additional water for the facility. DRC has reviewed the Conditional Use Permit (CUP) and has found no barriers to the initial zoning.

On Tuesday, March 17th, the Commission approved the project by a 4-1 vote, with a holdout voter stating that the water issue has not been resolved and that state law could allow her to vote against the project for that reason. DRC will organize members in the Barnes County Area against the project because we feel that the water issue has not been resolved and that the Nutrient Management Plan will need some retooling during the initial review of the project. Many of the fields in the area are next to waterways, and there will be significant construction and renovation on the roads leading to the project. When asked about the infrastructure, the county stated that there could be an 80/20 split of costs between state grants and Blackhawk, initially offering to pay the other 20 percent, but none of that has been put in writing at the time of this article.

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DRC Travels to St Paul to Meet Keith Ellison to Talk about Riverview Dairy



DRC Member Madeline Luke and Members from Dakota Rural Action, Land Stewardship Providers, Farmstand, and Food and Water Watch gathered in the Minnesota Capitol to talk to Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison about Riverview Dairy's growing influence in the Tri-State Area. Ellison, who has recently sued John Deere over its use of unfair practices that have driven up equipment repair costs for farmers while depriving them of the ability to make timely repairs on critical farming equipment, including tractors, was asked to bring the same focus to Riverview Dairy. Riverview is a Minnesota-based company that is heavily expanding into North Dakota and South Dakota, along with facilities in Arizona and New Mexico, and has vertically integrated its operations across all aspects of the dairy industry. This aggressive expansion has prompted members of our organizations to collectively ask Ellison to investigate the company for antitrust violations. The organizations also collectively asked him to look into how the state of Minnesota's water rights are being violated by deals made by Abercrombie and Herberg Dairy, and to work with Canada to ensure that all treaties are properly abided by.

Ellison responded positively to the meeting, stating that he was unaware of the specific actions that the company was taking but was impressed by the follow-up work that our coalition has put together. He was impressed that formal complaints had been filed by Minnesota Citizens, but was not expecting the complaints about the water. The coalition was pleased with the meeting, but our membership will

need to continue to be in correspondence with the office. DRC plans to invite Ellison to Breckinridge, MN, to meet with the Abercrombie Citizens group. Ellison has stated that he was willing to have him and his team travel to receive complaints in person if necessary. DRC will provide more updates in the future.

NFFC Travels to Washington DC/ Selects new Executive Director

The National Family Farm Coalition has been active at the beginning of the year, sending members to Washington, DC, to discuss on-farm slaughter, MCOOL, Dairy Consolidation, Land Access, and Farm Credit Reform. Members of DRC and the coalition were able to voice their opinions about the consolidation of the Dairy industry in Abercrombie and Herberg to Senator John Hoeven's office, as well as to offices in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Vermont.

The NFFC was pleased to announce its new Executive Director, Tim Gibbons (formerly with the Missouri Rural Crisis Center), at the Fly In. Tim will be replacing Niaz Dorry, who has led the organization for the last 8 years. DRC has been a member of the NFFC since its inception in 1986, and the NFFC will celebrate its 40th anniversary in July in St. Louis. If any DRC members would like to contribute stories about the NFFC or are interested in attending the 40th Anniversary, please contact Sam Wagner at sam@drcinfo.com.

LTE: Setting the Record Straight on Agriculture

I am disappointed with the press release in which Agriculture Commissioner Doug Goehring issued a warning to producers not to respond to an open records request filed by Dakota Resource Council with the North Dakota Department of Environmental Quality. I was even more disappointed that Goehring described DRC as an organization "generally opposed to typical agriculture operations."

As a farmer/rancher in Benson County and a member of DRC I want to set the record straight.

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(LTE CONTINUED)

DRC is not opposed to agriculture. They are opposed to ag consolidation in ways that harm rural communities, strain local environments, and leave everyday people holding the bag while a handful of corporations collect the profits. Farms that concentrate livestock into 12,500 to 25,000 head operations are a huge industrial insertion onto land that is shared with people and wildlife.

Our politicians spent years telling the public how hard the state regulates these entities and then introduce bills to remove those same regulations with a machete. DRC refuses to normalize what is happening to agriculture in this state because it is not normal.

DRC filed a public records request to find out how many animal agriculture sites are registered in the state. DRC would never ask for manure records directly from a farming operation. Goehring is using his office to discourage people from engaging in a public process and a nonprofit organization asking questions. That is putting his thumb on the scale.

DRC opposes entities that damage the environment for personal and political gain at the expense of rural communities. Most agricultural operations do not act in that way. DRC will not stay quiet if operations threaten our landscape or our rights to property.

Thank you, Dakota Resource Council, for watching our backs. Keep watching.

Karen Anderson is a DRC member and lives in Warwick, N.D.

• CLEAN ENERGY •

Next Step for Energy Builders

For the last 18 months, the Dakota Resource Council has partnered with the Bold Alliance on its Energy Builders project to make wind and solar energy projects better for communities by helping communities negotiate with developers for extra money. This has already borne fruit, with Eddy and Wells County negotiating an additional \$15 million dollars from their developer with DRC assistance. We have similar projects that will also receive additional benefits in Nebraska and Illinois.

For our next step, we will try to make these sorts of deals the standard in North Dakota, while fixing the broken model described elsewhere in the Jamestown-Ellendale article. Land acquisition is the hardest part of the developer's project, and this phase, more than any other, controls whether a project moves forward. We at Bold and the Dakota Resource Council support clean energy, provided it is developed in a manner conducive to the interests of the host community. We believe we can improve this phase of development for developers and the host community, leaving more money in both parties' pockets.



Starting in Cass County, we will recruit interested townships that want to attract a project, then market them to developers and utilities. By skipping most of the easement collection process, we can save developers time and reduce their risk, leading to reduced development costs and cheaper power. By pre-organizing landowners, we can negotiate rather than accept the price developers offer.

These projects are appearing in three primary clusters: one centered on coal country in west-central North Dakota, another around the Ellendale data center and upcoming 345 kV line, and a third in Cass and Richland counties near Minnesota transmission lines. We expect this trend to continue over the next several years, with even greater investment likely in Cass and Richland counties.

If you are a rural Cass County resident (or anywhere) interested in recruiting a wind project, contact me at Mike@drcinfo.com, and we will get to work.

Jamestown-Ellendale, A Tale of Dysfunctional Development

Earlier this winter, the North Dakota Public Service Commission held hearings on the proposed JetX 345kV utility line connecting Jamestown to South Dakota infrastructure. A project of Ottertail Power and Montana-Dakota Utilities, this project is the latest in a series of badly bungled projects in the area. Sitting amidst some of the best wind resources on the planet, it's no surprise that developers have piled into the area, with at least 4 major projects from four developers, all hoping to pour money into local communities in order to make money from their wind and solar resources.

The strategies taken by developers can be represented by two ends of a spectrum. On the positive side, when a developer enters a new area, they will present themselves to county and township officials, hold public information sessions, and partner with local organizations for outreach and investment, all with the aim of generating something theorists call "Social License to Operate." This is part of the process of being accepted and welcomed in the community. Many developers make this a part of their business model.

On the other hand, we see the opposite, which can be referred to as cloak-and-dagger tactics. Developers will often sneak around, signing contracts with non-disclosure agreements, and use manipulative tactics to get people to sign on to their project. The idea is that this helps developers avoid organized opposition, but in practice, this alienates residents from the project and their neighbors. In addition to hurting their own projects, these tactics poison the well for future projects.

Developers in the Jamestown to Ellendale corridor seem to have exclusively followed the Cloak and Dagger playbook with a heavy dose of threatened eminent domain. And what has resulted? A checkerboard of competing easement claims across three counties, a rightfully and righteously motivated opposition movement, and several projects that appear to be varying degrees of stalled. This was all avoidable, and would have been avoided had developers acted publicly and aboveboard.

If you hear of a development in your area, contact your neighbors and local officials, and let us know.

We want these projects to go to places that want them and in a manner that returns as much as possible to communities. Early intervention in these projects gives you the best odds of delivering a successful result, regardless of your goals.

Quarterly Clean Energy Roundup

We have had a busy quarter for clean energy development in ND, with several new projects being announced. Flickertail Wind in Eddy and Wells Counties and Longspur in Morton and Mercer Counties progressed toward approval, while Cattle Creek Solar was resoundingly defeated in McKenzie County and looks to regroup. Existing projects in Cass and Morton/Oliver counties have also seen new life.

Project Name	Size (MW)	County	Developer	CBA?
Under Construction				
Oliver IV Wind	200	Oliver County	Next Era	No
Badger Wind	262	Emmons	Orsted Onshore	No
Harmony Solar	200	Cass	Geronimo	No
Abercrombie Solar	300	Richland	Savion, Ottertail Power	In progress
Final Approvals				
Flickertail Wind	400	Eddy, Wells Counties	PRC Wind	Yes
Longspur Wind	200	Mercer, Morton	Allete, MN Power	No
Buffalo Solar*	247	Stutsman	New Leaf Energy	
Delayed, Defeated				
Cattle Creek Solar	150	McKenzie	ibVEnergy	No
In Development				
Unnamed Project	200	Stutsman	NetEra	No
Unnamed Project	?	Dickey/Lamoure	Invenergy	No
Unnamed Project	?	Dickey/Lamoure	EDF Renewables	No
Unnamed Project	?	Burleigh	PRC Wind	Yes
Ruso	200	McLean	PRC Wind	Yes
Red Butte	200	Oliver	PRC Wind	Yes
Unnamed Project	?	Cass	Unknown	No
Prosperity*	?	Cass	Geronimo	No
Prairie Wind*	200	Grand Forks, Nelson	Next Era	No
Blizzard Wind Farm*	up to 300	Dunn	Next Era	No
New Salem 1&2*	up to 375	Morton, Oliver	Next Era	No

* indicates new projects to the tracker



OIL AND GAS

Region 4 Members Urge State to Keep Legacy Fund Money Away from Davis Refinery

DRC Region 4 members are taking action after news that the Davis Refinery is being considered for possible Legacy Fund investment.

This refinery project near Belfield has been hanging around for years. It was first proposed back in 2016 and still has not been built. Even now, after all this time, the site remains empty and the project is still surrounded by questions about financing, delays, and whether it will ever actually move forward.

Now there is talk of a possible \$10 million investment connected to the project through the Legacy Fund program. That should concern every North Dakotan. Public money should not be put on the line for a project that has spent nearly a decade struggling to get off the ground. Meridian Energy has faced lawsuits over unpaid invoices and wages, and even people friendly to the project have questioned whether this is the kind of thing public dollars should touch.

That is why Region 4 members have been writing letters to the State Investment Board urging them to stay away from this bad investment. The Davis Refinery was already a bad idea because of its location near Theodore Roosevelt National Park. It is an even worse idea to prop it up with public money.

We need the rest of our DRC membership to speak up too. If you are willing to write a letter and help discourage this from happening, contact me at sean@drcinfo.com or call me at (701) 224-8587. I can help with information, talking points, and how to get your letter in front of the right people.

DRC NEWS

Regions Hit the Ground Running

Since we rolled out the new regional structure in February, things have started moving fast in a way that feels real.

Regions 1, 2, and 4 all held their first meetings within just a few days of each other. The turnout was strong across the board. People showed up ready to talk about what is actually happening in their communities, not just listen. Each region elected a board representative and started laying out the issues they are seeing on the ground.

Region 2 really set the tone. Members came in and raised more than 40 issues. That tells you something right there. People are paying attention, and they are ready to engage. At their second meeting, they rolled up their sleeves and narrowed it down to a few clear priorities, including data centers, water, and some community-level project work. That is exactly how this is supposed to work. Start broad, then focus where it matters most.

Out west in Region 4, the timing could not have been more important. The Davis Refinery is once again trying to come back to life, and earlier this year, there was talk of it seeking \$10 million from the State Investment Board. Folks in that region did not wait around. They got to work writing and calling board members and making it clear that putting public money into that project is a bad idea.

At the same time, they were getting real-time updates from DRC organizer Ishauna Jacobberger, who was at a zoning meeting in Oliver County. The room was packed with people opposed to a proposed data center in their community. By the end of that meeting, the zoning board had drafted language for a three-year moratorium, and the county commission moved forward with a six-month moratorium. That lit a fire under Region 4. Members started digging into county agendas and minutes and looking at how to bring that same kind of action to their own areas.

Region 1 met in Casselton at the local Vets Club, and the energy in that room was something you could feel. Good turnout, strong conversation, and a sense that people are ready to build something together.

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DRC has continued to speak out and to call on our members to do the same. The Clean Air Act requires public involvement for a reason. Decisions about air quality affect our health and our land. When federal agencies try to move forward without hearing from the people who live here, it is our responsibility to respond. North Dakotans have always stepped up when their communities are at risk and this year has been no different.

Region 3 had to cancel its first meeting due to the weather, which is just part of life here, and Region 5 will meet soon.

It has been a strong start. Now the work is to keep showing up, keep building leadership in each region, and keep turning that energy into action.

DRC working to protect ballot initiative process



Dakota Resource Council (DRC) has stepped forward as a leading voice in North Dakota to defend the state's ballot initiative process while better understanding what voters want from it moving forward. In recent months, DRC has focused on educating the public about two proposed ballot measures that could significantly weaken direct democracy: a 60 percent supermajority requirement for constitutional amendments and a restrictive single-subject rule.

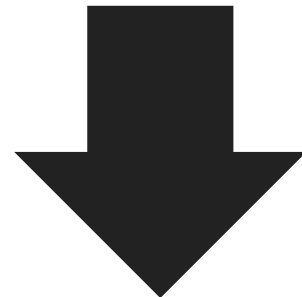
This effort has included a series of public events across the state, including a kickoff gathering in Bismarck at the North Dakota Kennedy Center, a statewide Zoom event to reach those unable to attend in person, and community conversations in Valley City and Dickinson. Together, these events have created space for voters to ask questions, share concerns, and better understand how these proposed

changes could impact their ability to bring citizen-led initiatives forward.

At the same time, DRC is taking a forward-looking approach by assessing voter sentiment on potential pro-democracy reforms. Through these events, along with ongoing conversations and informal polling, the organization is identifying which reforms resonate most with voters and have a viable path to the ballot. DRC is encouraging North Dakotans to take part in this process—please take our survey so we can get a more accurate understanding of what residents across the state are thinking.

This dual strategy—defending against harmful changes while exploring constructive reforms—positions DRC and its partners to protect voter power today and build toward future ballot initiatives that reflect the will of North Dakotans.

FILL OUT THE SURVEY HERE



Sauter Joins DRC Staff



Dakota Resource Council is glad to welcome Judy Sauter to the staff as our Membership and Database Coordinator.

Judy also helps with website and social media updates, and she has already made her presence felt in a big way. She stepped into work that needed regular attention and started improving it right away. That has been a huge help to the organization. On a small staff, it means a lot when someone comes in ready to take hold of important work and make it stronger.

Judy grew up near Powers Lake, North Dakota, on a family farm that raised Hereford cattle and small grains. She knows rural North Dakota and understands the values and concerns that matter to DRC members. She also brings a strong background in marketing and communications, research, and nonprofit work.

She earned her bachelor's degree in political science and history from UND and brings a thoughtful, steady approach to the job. Judy has already shown that she is someone who pays attention to the details, looks for ways to improve systems, and helps keep things moving.

A lot of important work at DRC happens behind the scenes. Keeping member information organized, keeping communications current, and making sure the organization stays connected all matter. Judy is helping make that happen, and it is already making a difference.

We are happy to have Judy on board and excited for what she brings to DRC. Please join us in giving Judy Sauter a warm welcome.

North Dakota Pushed Back to a 1988 Land Plan

WHAT CHANGED IN NORTH DAKOTA'S BLM LAND PLAN?

The 2025 Resource Management Plan was nullified, so North Dakota falls back to the 1988 plan.

2025 PLAN

What it did

- Replaced the 1988 North Dakota Resource Management Plan.
- Covered about 58,500 acres of BLM surface land and 4.1 million acres of federal mineral estate.
- Set what BLM called a modern framework balancing energy and mineral development with wildlife habitat, water resources, cultural sites, and recreation.

Big examples people can understand

- Limited oil and gas development in low potential areas.
- Made federal coal outside a 4 mile area from existing mine permit boundaries unavailable for future leasing consideration.

1988 FALLBACK

What it means now

- The 2025 plan was nullified under the Congressional Review Act.
- That means North Dakota is back under the older 1988 framework.
- BLM had said the 2025 update was needed because land use, technology, and environmental conditions had changed over the past 36 years.

Why this matters

- The newer 2025 restrictions and management approach are no longer in force.
- North Dakotans are now governed by a federal land and minerals plan written in 1988.
- This is not process trivia. It affects how federal lands and mineral estate may be managed going forward.

Bottom lineNorth Dakota lost a modern federal land plan and got thrown back to 1988. That has real implications for coal, oil and gas, water, wildlife, recreation, and public oversight.

Sources: BLM Jan. 14-15, 2025; GAO June 25, 2025; White House Dec. 11, 2025.

North Dakota just got pushed backward in a big way.

A newer federal land and minerals plan for our state has been wiped out, which means we are now back under a framework written in 1988. Yes, 1988.

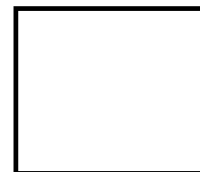
That might sound like some boring government shuffle, but it is not. These plans help shape how federal land and mineral estate are managed, what kind of development can move ahead, where limits get set, and how much public interest is taken into account.

The 2025 plan was supposed to replace the old one and reflect the world we live in now. A lot has changed since 1988. Land use changed. Technology changed. Development pressure changed. The stakes for water, wildlife habitat, recreation, and local communities changed too.

Instead, North Dakota got thrown back nearly 40 years.

That should concern anybody who cares about the future of this state. This is not just process. It is about who gets heard, what gets protected, and whether North Dakota is being managed with today's reality in mind or yesterday's.

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