



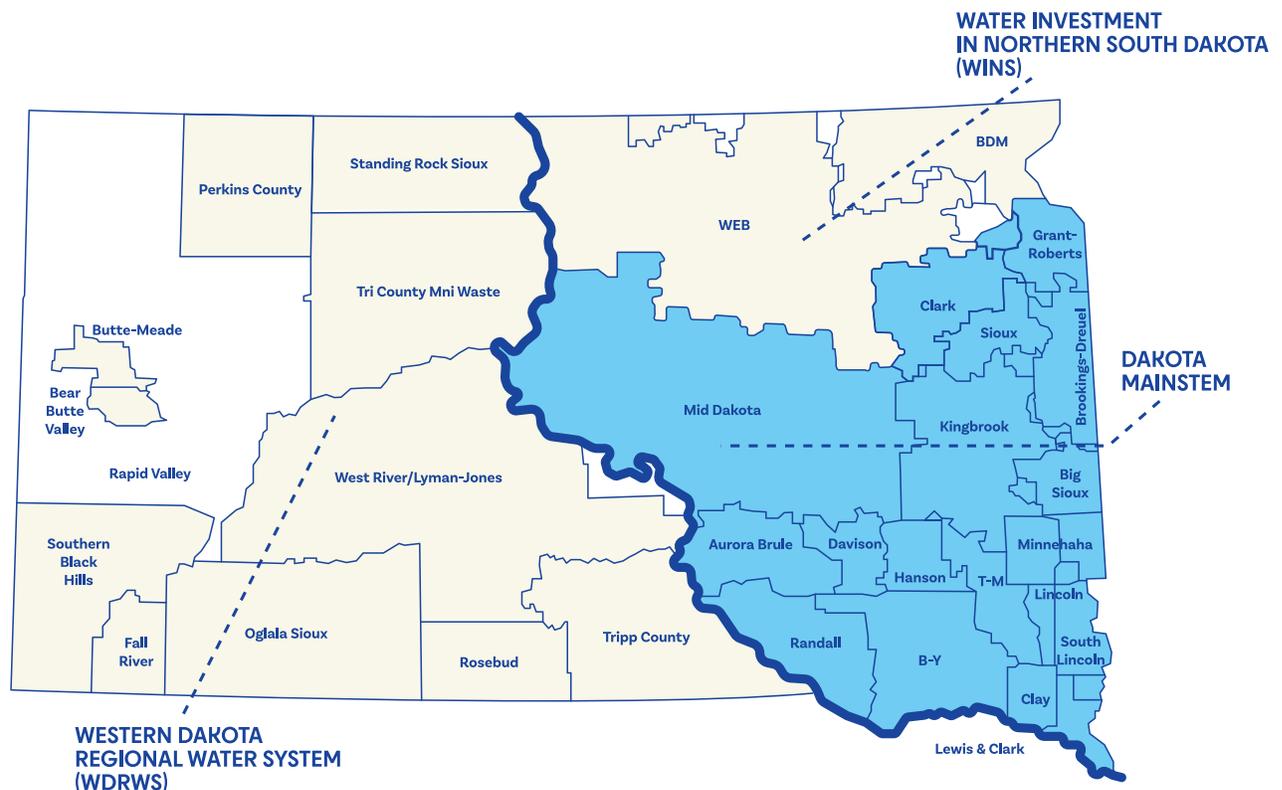
OUR STORY

The Dakota Mainstem Regional Water System emerges as a pivotal infrastructure endeavor to tackle the pressing challenges of water scarcity and quality in the central and southern regions of eastern South Dakota.

Circa 2021, water leaders from eastern South Dakota initiated discussions on the state’s water development trajectory. These conversations often began with acknowledging the state’s past significant accomplishments in water projects such as WEB, Mni Wiconi, West River/Lyman-Jones, Mid-Dakota, and Lewis & Clark. However, a recurring question arose: “What’s next?” This pivotal moment coincided with the emergence of other large-scale initiatives like the Water Investment in Northern South Dakota (WINS) and the Western Dakota Regional Water System, spotlighting the need for a comprehensive water solution for the entire state.

Recognizing South Dakota’s arid climate and vulnerability to drought, groundwater availability, as well as the critical importance of water quality and quantity, Dakota Mainstem was conceptualized. This project is not just an infrastructure plan but a commitment to the state’s future, ensuring South Dakota continues to attract top-level businesses, industries, investors, and individuals. The genesis of Dakota Mainstem is a testament to the pragmatic approach of South Dakotans, who understand that such ambitious projects require substantial time, investment, and collaboration at local, state, and federal levels.

Though not unique, the Dakota Mainstem narrative is undeniably urgent! The project is a call to action, emphasizing the need to commence work to secure a sustainable and prosperous future for the state’s water resources. We need everyone to understand, support, and contribute to the realization of the Dakota Mainstem Regional Water System – a project not just of infrastructural significance but of vital importance to the ongoing prosperity and resilience of South Dakota.



THE NEED

RESILIENCE AND SUSTAINABILITY

The availability of quality water in ample volumes through Dakota Mainstem will enhance the sustainability of community and regional water systems in the region. Dakota Mainstem is fundamental in supporting these communities' long-term viability and resilience.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

The health implications of consuming substandard water are significant. The Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) of 1974 authorizes EPA to establish minimum standards to protect tap water. It requires all owners or operators of public water systems to comply with these primary (health-related) standards. Dakota Mainstem ensures communities access to safe drinking water, directly impacting public health and well-being.

REGULATORY CONCERNS

Water systems must always be on guard, ensuring their compliance with EPA regulations. With the advent of UCMR-5 contaminants, such as PFAS and other "forever chemicals," Dakota Mainstem becomes increasingly critical. It offers a solution to these emerging regulatory concerns by providing a clean water source that meets contemporary health and safety standards.

AGRICULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY

The sustainability of South Dakota's farms and ranches is a matter of state and federal interest, vital for ensuring safe and affordable food supplies. Dakota Mainstem is critical in supporting this sector by providing reliable water resources.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Dakota Mainstem project is a buttress for economic growth, providing sufficient water quality and quantity necessary for various economic development opportunities, particularly for water-intensive activities. This aspect of Dakota Mainstem is essential for attracting and sustaining businesses and fostering economic prosperity in the region.

THE ANSWER

ENHANCING WATER SOURCES

Dakota Mainstem will augment existing water supplies as a supplemental water source, particularly during drought periods. This feature is vital for maintaining water availability during both short-term and extended dry spells, ensuring stability in the water supply. In the event existing water sources are of unacceptable quality, Dakota Mainstem has the potential to replace existing water sources, ensuring communities an alternative to provide a reliable quality water source.

THE CONSEQUENCE OF INACTION

FULFILLING PICK-SLOAN ACT PROMISES

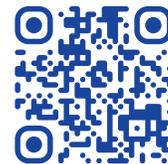
An important facet of the Dakota Mainstem Regional Water System is to address the commitments made under the Pick-Sloan Act that are still owed to South Dakota. Collaborating with state and federal leaders to advance and fulfill these promises is essential, ensuring that the region does not lose out due to fading historical awareness. The South Dakota Legislative Research Council (LRC) has published an "Issues Paper," providing an excellent perspective on the development of the Missouri River and the role played by the Pick-Sloan Act. Issue paper ID: 2023-05

USE IT OR LOSE IT

Finally, the "use it or lose it" principle highlights the risk of inaction. Without Dakota Mainstem, there is a real threat that other states, facing water scarcity, might exert political influence to initiate downstream water diversion or inter-basin water transfers. South Dakota must proactively safeguard its water resources to avoid losing them to external pressures. Dakota Mainstem does not have the authority or ability to address downstream diversions or inter-basin transfer concerns, these are concerns best addressed by governmental leaders on the state and federal levels. However, Dakota Mainstem does have the capacity to "lock-up" a significant amount of water rights for use in South Dakota.

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

The Dakota Mainstem Regional Water System is not just an infrastructure project; it is a vital initiative for ensuring water security, supporting economic growth, protecting public health, and maintaining the agricultural backbone of Eastern South Dakota. A broad base of public and governmental support is key to securing a sustainable future for our state.



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