

MISSOURI RIVER WATER USE IN NORTH DAKOTA

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Abstract

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The nation's water resources will be of utmost priority in the coming years. The Missouri River Basin comprises 38 percent of North Dakota. The level of economic growth which North Dakota is able to achieve will depend on its access to Missouri River water. By the year 2020 North Dakota will be able to utilize between 1.8 and 4.7 million acre-feet annually. The flow of the Missouri River in North Dakota can physically accomodate this level of usage. These estimates were obtained using three different methods, trend analysis, Delphi method and reviewing current popular and professional literature. However, the amount North Dakota is actually able to use will depend on legal and/or institutional constraints placed on it by the Courts, Congress, federal agencies or other states in the basin. If North Dakota is to forestall critical water shortages it must begin now to plan for the future.