



**2024  
2027**

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North Dakota Water Users Association  
**Strategic Plan**

July 2024



## North Dakota Water Leaders,

In January of 2024, the North Dakota Water Users Association (NDWUA) undertook a strategic planning process to chart a course for the organization for the next four years. Today, I am pleased to present to you the NDWUA's strategic plan for 2024–2027. This plan outlines our mission, vision, and goals for ensuring the responsible and effective management of North Dakota's vital water resources.

### Our Mission and Vision

*Our mission is to be the statewide membership organization dedicated to protecting, developing, and managing North Dakota's water resources. We envision achieving this by fostering engagement, collaboration, and education throughout the water community.*

### Our Goals

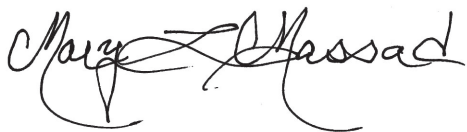
This plan focuses on three key goals:

- **Goal 1: Advocate for Sound Water Policy and Funding.** We will advocate for effective water policies and secure necessary funding at all government levels. This includes building strong relationships with decision-makers, collaborating with like-minded organizations, and providing reliable information to members and policymakers.
- **Goal 2: Provide Opportunities for Member Engagement.** We will create opportunities for members to connect with the NDWUA and the broader water community. This includes collecting member input on water policy and funding issues, keeping members informed, and providing forums for discussion and collaboration.
- **Goal 3: Ensure NDWUA Has the Resources to Succeed.** We will ensure the NDWUA has the resources necessary to fulfill its mission. This includes demonstrating the value of membership, developing a strong membership recruitment strategy, and achieving long-term financial and organizational stability.

### Taking Action Together

The NDWUA has been a leader in the water policy sphere for decades thanks to strong membership and active participation by water leaders from across the state. This strategic plan puts us on a path to continue in that proud tradition by providing a roadmap for the NDWUA's success over the next four years. By working together, we can ensure that North Dakota's water resources are protected, developed, and managed responsibly for the benefit of current and future generations.

With many thanks for all you do,



Mary Massad  
President

# A Strategic Plan Built upon Member Input

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This strategic plan is the result of a comprehensive and collaborative ‘from-the-bottom-up’ planning process facilitated by Jason Matthews of JM Strategies LLC, who worked closely with North Dakota Water Users Association Executive Vice President Dani Quissell and an appointed planning committee.

Per JM Strategies’ recommendation, this plan was built upon a foundation of research. A benchmark survey was distributed to NDWUA members, board, and staff in January 2024, which captured attitudes, perceptions, and assessments of the association. The survey showed wide-spread general satisfaction with the state of NDWUA with several respondents offering positive appraisals of NDWUA’s work.

Specifically, high marks were given to NDWUA for communication and legislative advocacy. Eighty-one percent of respondents found NDWUA staff and leaders to be accessible. Also, 85 percent believe NDWUA’s actions and decisions demonstrate the association understands its role. Respondents did express concerns about the NDWUA’s aging membership, apprehension about the future of Missouri River water, and the threat of aquatic nuisance species (ANS). These findings, along with other topline survey results, and additional topics were explored in greater detail in a member focus group session and stakeholder interviews with state officials.

Taken together, this research approach had a desired funneling effect where information was collected and refined. This resulted in the identification of key themes and areas of consensus in which NDWUA’s planning team coalesced around as they developed an organizational vision and established goals to guide the association’s future work.

The planning team established a clear vision for NDWUA to be **the trusted leader in protecting, developing, and managing North Dakota’s water resources through engagement, collaboration, and education**. The three goals centered on **advocacy, engagement, and resiliency** directly flow from this vision.

As such, issues such as advocacy at every level of government, strategic partnerships, collaboration and communication, membership recruitment and retention, and strengthening NDWUA’s value and ensuring a strong future are all addressed, in one way or another, within each goal.

## The Structure of Our Strategic Plan

This Strategic Plan is organized around goals, objectives, strategies, and tactics.

- **Goals:** Goals establish what NDWUA is trying to achieve.
- **Objectives:** Objectives identify what NDWUA needs to do to achieve its goals.
- **Strategies:** Strategies are the methods NDWUA will deploy to achieve its objectives.
- **Tactics:** Tactics are the specific actions NDWUA will use to implement its strategies.

Each of these four interconnected elements are focused on guiding NDWUA in its work toward fulfilling its mission and vision to the benefit of both its members and all of North Dakota.

# NDWUA's Mission and Vision

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## Our Mission

*The North Dakota Water Users Association is a statewide membership organization dedicated to protecting, developing, and managing North Dakota's water resources.*

## Our Vision

*We are the trusted leader in protecting, developing, and managing North Dakota's water resources through engagement, collaboration, and education.*

## Goals

**Advocacy**

**Membership**

**Resiliency**





# NDWUA's Strategic Plan

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## Goal 1

*Advocate for sound water policy and funding at the state, local, and federal levels.*

### Objective 1.1: Develop and maintain relationships with decision makers.

#### ■ Strategy 1.1-A: Engage local, state, and federal decision-makers.

- Arrange meetings with board members and local legislators
- Encourage board members to meet with State Water Commissioners
- Attend and present at relevant interim legislative meetings, including interim Water Topics
- Share information with existing and incoming legislators
- Hold a legislative social during the session
- Meet with congressional delegation and staff twice annually – preferably one time in Washington, DC, and another time in North Dakota
- Develop and maintain strong relationships with the North Dakota Department of Water Resources, North Dakota Department of Environmental Quality, and North Dakota Game & Fish Department
- Develop and maintain strong relationships with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and U.S. Department of Agriculture
- Develop and maintain strong relationships with the governor's natural resources policy staffer and other key administrative staff

#### ■ Strategy 1.2-B: Collaborate with others in the water community.

- Attend regular meetings with the North Dakota Department of Water Resources
- Engage water leaders by attending water meetings, including, but not limited to, Garrison Diversion Conservancy District board meetings, North Dakota Water Resource Districts Association meetings, North Dakota Irrigation Association meetings, North Dakota Water Education Foundation meetings, North Dakota Rural Water Association meetings and events, Upper Missouri Water Association meetings and events, local water resource district board meetings, and other water meetings as deemed necessary.
- Support and encourage attendance at the Water Education Foundation's summer water tours

### Objective 1.2: Build coalitions with like-minded organizations and entities to advance advocacy.

#### ■ Strategy 1.2-A: Identify and connect with key partners and supporters.

- Maintain active membership in the National Water Resources Association
- Develop and maintain a list of organizations with
  - common, shared priorities and
  - ties to where water impacts other policy areas (i.e. economic development, etc.)
- Maintain strong relationships with North Dakota and regional agriculture groups
- Maintain strong relationship with the North Dakota League of Cities, North Dakota Association of Counties, the Greater North Dakota Chamber, and relevant local chambers of commerce and economic development organizations

#### ■ Strategy 1.2-B: Create strategic coalitions.

- Encourage the North Dakota Water Resource Districts Association to actively engage with other political subdivisions and support the North Dakota Water Resource Districts Association as needed
- Develop and maintain an agriculture/water coalition

### **Objective 1.3: Provide reliable information in an effective format to members and decision-makers.**

#### **■ Strategy 1.3-A: Share policy information.**

- Provide regular updates to members and decision-makers including legislators and state water commissioners
- Maintain an up-to-date website
- Identify and prioritize best methods to distribute information (i.e. email, text messages, phone calls, social media, etc.)
- Share news releases with the North Dakota Department of Water Resources, State Water Commission, and relevant legislators

## **Goal 2**

***Provide opportunities for members to engage with the association and the broader water community.***

### **Objective 2.1: Collect information relevant to water policy and funding.**

#### **■ Strategy 2.1-A: Become a trusted water policy resource to policy makers.**

- Promote positive image
- Emphasize water's importance to maintaining and enhancing quality of life
- Promote benefits, including environmental benefits, of water development and management
- Collect information and stay current with developments
- Regularly attend events and meetings
- Get onto other organizations' email lists to stay informed of developments

### **Objective 2.2: Communicate accurate and timely information in an actionable manner.**

#### **■ Strategy 2.2-A: Strategically develop and distribute legislative calls to action.**

- Develop a list of board members and legislative committee members willing to actively engage during the legislative session
- Develop concise messages with a call to action
- Create unique distribution lists (members, legislators, strategic partners, etc.)
- Distribute information to different lists using prioritized methods – emails, text messages, social media, etc.
- When necessary, issue call to action alerts

### **Objective 2.3: Provide forums for member engagement.**

#### **■ Strategy 2.3-A: Cultivate an approachable culture to receive input from membership.**

- Emphasize North Dakota Water Users Association's mission to members
- Focus members' attention on policy development and implementation
- Conduct surveys to collect member input, as necessary
- Conduct regional meetings and town hall forums (focus on non-legislative years)
- Actively solicit member input on local issues



## Goal 3

*Ensure North Dakota Water Users Association has the resources necessary to fulfill its mission.*

### Objective 3.1: Demonstrate the value of North Dakota Water Users Association membership.

- **Strategy 3.1-A: Educate members on the importance of membership and its positive impacts.**
  - Create a shared purpose around strategic goals and policy priorities
  - Celebrate and communicate policy successes
  - Present a “State of Water Users” address at the annual convention
  - Emphasize North Dakota Water Users’ impact on policy and state and federal funding
  - Identify and use relevant communication tools
  - Develop and share slide decks (PowerPoints) with members as directed by the board or executive committee

### Objective 3.2: Develop a member recruitment strategy.

- **Strategy 3.2-A: Strategically target potential members and re-recruit former members.**
  - Develop and communicate a clear value proposition for North Dakota Water Users membership
  - Create a list of potential members based on their water interests and needs
  - Develop recruitment materials
  - Engage board members in the recruitment process

### Objective 3.3: Achieve organizational resiliency.

- **Strategy 3.3-A: Ensure income is adequate and reserve funds are strong.**
  - Develop a new fee structure based on input from members
  - Create and implement consistent billing strategy and practices
- **Strategy 3.3-B: Conduct succession planning.**
  - Examine North Dakota Water Users’ structure and identify possible changes that could simplify and improve the structure
  - Develop succession plans for North Dakota Water Users’ staff







*Dedicated to Protecting, Developing, and Managing  
North Dakota's Water Resources*

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