

NDSU Recognizes Garrison Diversion's Partnership



Duane DeKrey accepting the partnership award with Garrison Diversion former board member Norm Haak, former board member Dennis Wendel, Director Kenny Rogers, Director Greg Bischoff, Mike Ostlie, CREC Director, and Director Brian Orn

By Kimberly Cook

The Garrison Diversion Conservancy District (Garrison Diversion) was the proud recipient of the Partnership Award presented by North Dakota State University (NDSU) at the Oakes Irrigation Field Trials in August. Garrison Diversion has supported the Oakes Irrigation Research Site (OIRS) since it was founded in 1970.

NDSU's Partnership Award recognizes the long-term commitment between NDSU and Garrison Diversion and its vision for supporting producers in the area.

When the OIRS was established, it was a 20-acre research site operating under a cooperative agreement between Garrison Diversion, NDSU and the Bureau of Reclamation. Garrison Diversion provided most of the financial resources and NDSU faculty and staff conducted experiments at the site. The NDSU Carrington Research Extension Center (CREC) has been administratively

responsible for implementing the research program at Oakes.

Due to the outdated nature of the site, the OIRS was in serious need of major upgrades and improvements in order to continue irrigation research at the high level expected from the site. Over the past 10 years, there has been a major effort to modernize the OIRS.

"It was a big lift to put this package together," SBARE (State Board of Agricultural Research and Education) representative Mike Clemens said.

In 2013, Garrison Diversion and the CREC set a plan in motion to update the facilities for the OIRS, and in time, for NDSU to take over full funding of the site.

A proposal was developed, which included Garrison Diversion's assistance in constructing a new building at the site, a six-year funding exit plan and passage of the land lease onto NDSU. Several individuals and agricultural organizations worked together for the improvements



Pictured are Garrison Diversion General Manager Duane DeKrey, CREC Director Mike Ostlie, multiple Garrison Diversion former and current board members with NDSU-CREC staff.

to come to fruition. Procuring new equipment, adding additional staff and expanding the acreage became a reality through a generous land donation by Robert (Bob) and Elsie Titus.

The final piece of the puzzle was the construction of a new building to house offices, a research laboratory and equipment storage. Garrison Diversion committed to funding the insulated shell of the building, with NDSU completing the inside of the facility.

“This partnership is awarded to Garrison Diversion because, as a state entity, we can’t do it alone, and we need support from other entities. Everything we do is a service to our community. They have been with Oakes since the site was founded in 1970,” said Mike Ostlie, CREC director. “Garrison Diversion chose to invest in the shell of the building, which is a capstone project in the overhaul of the OIRS.”

“It’s not a stretch to say this place was on life support 10 years ago, but to now come and be in a building like this and see the crops, the research and the progress that’s been done here is totally amazing,” Garrison Diversion General Manager Duane DeKrey said. “Thank you to the



community, NDSU and a great Garrison Diversion board who believed in moving forward with this initiative. Today we’re celebrating a lot of success!”

The OIRS is a highly effective irrigation research facility in southeast North Dakota. The data procured from the OIRS has been invaluable to southeastern North Dakota and throughout the remainder of the state for over 50 years, and now, with the facility upgrades, it will continue to benefit farmers and irrigators for years to come.



Matching Recreation Grants Awarded

The enhancement of one of North Dakota's most treasured resources – our recreational opportunities – is a key initiative for Garrison Diversion, and this spring, the Recreation Committee awarded matching recreation grants to 12 projects, totaling \$282,138.

Garrison Diversion staff and directors are proud to invest in the promotion, development and enhancement of recreation facilities and opportunities within the district.

Garrison Diversion established a Matching Recreation Grant Program dedicated to returning mill-levy funds within the 28-county member district in 1990, enabling communities of all sizes to enhance their recreation facilities or develop new opportunities through this beneficial program.

The Matching Recreation Grant Program distributes 20 percent of Garrison Diversion's one-mill levy to eligible projects within the district. Projects are eligible to receive up to 25 percent of the non-federal share of the project. Garrison Diversion's Recreation Committee meets twice a year, in the spring and fall, to award money to applicants.

More than \$9 million in matching recreation grants has been awarded over the life of the program, enabling the completion of valuable recreation projects around the state. Through the years, projects have included boat ramps and docks, picnic facilities, restrooms, campgrounds, bathhouses, playground areas, and recreational trails.

The following counties received Matching Recreation Grant funds in fall 2025:

- **Barnes County** – \$15,404 to Valley City Parks and Recreation for the Chautauqua Park project; \$6,250 to the city of Rogers for the Rogers Park playground project
- **Benson County** – \$40,175 for the city of Maddock to assist with service upgrades at the Maddock Campground
- **Cass County** – \$17,000 to the Argusville Park Board to purchase playground equipment
- **Foster County** – \$9,720 to the Foster County Fair Board to purchase bleachers for the fairgrounds
- **Grand Forks County** – \$50,000 to the Grand Forks Park District for the Ryan Lake trails and outdoor classroom
- **LaMoure County** – \$12,515 to the LaMoure Park District for the completion of the Sunset Park Swim Center's final phase
- **McLean County** – \$13,830 to the Riverdale Parks and Recreation to make improvements at the Lakeside Park tennis courts
- **Ransom County** – \$32,742 to the Lisbon Park District to make improvements to the Sandager Park baseball field
- **Ward County** – \$25,729 to the Rice Lake Recreation District/Ward County Parks for the Rice Lake pickleball courts; \$50,000 to the Minot Park District to develop the South Hill Complex inclusive playground; \$8,773 to the Ward County Parks for park improvements at Old Settlers, Eastside Estates and No Man's Land disc golf

The spring deadline of March 1 is the next chance to apply for grant funds.