

Growing concern over water the Army will take from the Fordville aquifer, potentially, could stop Safeguard Antibalistic Missile construction.

A growing number of farmers in the area supplied by the Fordville aquifer have expressed their opposition. At least two attorneys have been hired and the issue could result in one of three possibilities:

1. Legal action by the farmer group to halt construction of the \$1 billion ABM site in northeast North Dakota;
2. Assertion of the right of eminent domain by the US Army Corps of Engineers, or
3. A happy issue out of all their afflictions.

There are three wells now from which farmers in the area obtain their water - water for drinking, for bathing, cooking; water for their livestock and water for crop spraying and irrigation.

Don Lindholm, Johnstown, ND, farmer, is one of those who expressed concern and serves as spokesman for the group. His farm property is in the Fordville aquifer area.

"We're opposed until we understand more about it. My feeling is we'd like to have them look elsewhere for their water," Lindholm said.

He declined to say whether or not an injunction would be sought to bar construction if the issue is not settled satisfactorily.

An attorney represents the municipality of Fordville itself although Fordville's city fathers have not formally taken a stand on the issue.

Says Lindholm, "It is the only source we have of good, pure drinking water."

He pointed out, for example, that there are about 30 families living in Johnstown and about 70 in Gilby who haul their drinking water from the wells. He said all of the farmers who live in the area haul their water for drinking, cooking and bathing from the same source.

Some 100 persons, mostly farmers but some students as well, attended an informational meeting January 21 at Fordville. Most of the audience in attendance was in opposition to the Army's proposed water procurement source for the ABM, Lindholm and others said. In addition, Lindholm said that "many" others were opposed.

He pointed out that none were in opposition to ABM, per se, but were concerned that the Army's use of water from the Fordville aquifer would deplete the water supply.

The Walsh County Record of Grafton said in part that many of those at the Fordville meeting were "apparently not satisfied with answers given their questions."

Milo Hoisveen, Bismarck, chief engineer and secretary for the State Water Commission, told the Herald that the Corps of Engineers' application for water use was filed with the commission January 15, 1970.

Hearing date on that application has not been set. "More than likely it will be held at Grafton," Hoisveen said. If it is, it will be the second time a hearing has been held outside the offices of the State Water Commission at Bismarck.

Hoisveen said his office was aware of the growing opposition developing in Grand Forks County area. He said a hearing at Grafton will provide "them" with an opportunity to express their views whether in opposition or support. He said, "We will conduct an orderly hearing whatever their views."

Notification by registered mail must be sent to all landowners within a certain prescribed distance. When this is completed a date for the hearing will be determined, Hoisveen said.

The corps' application said that 10 pumps would be installed with a capacity of 150 gallons per minute for each. They will be so arranged that pumpage output can be staggered to produce a total of 1,000 gallons of water a minute. Total annual need for water is 1,613 acre feet. In gallons, that would be 525,676,700.

"They have endeavored," Hoisveen said of the Corps of Engineers, "to plan their pumps so as not to interfere with anyone else's pumping privileges."

The State Water Commission has made a thorough study of the quality and quantity of the water supply from the Fordville aquifer. "It is very adequate and sufficient," Hoisveen said.

He pointed out that the corps very carefully coached its application language in a vein that leaves open the right to eminent domain.

Joe Downey, hydrologist with the US Geological Survey at Grand Forks, has conducted a study of the aquifer.

"The Army would recirculate the water it uses. It isn't likely it would use that much. And at any rate it isn't very likely that it would affect the aquifer. It has good recharge. That amount of water is more or less lost anyhow and it probably would have no effect whatever on the people using the water. The recharge (from rainfall) is quite ample."

Those in opposition at this point, speak repeatedly of the Grand Forks-Trail Water District plan to pipe water to farms and rural residences in areas of Grand Forks and Traill Counties. They are fearful that both the water district and the Army will be drawing water from the Fordville aquifer.

Downey's comment: "The Elk Valley delta and the Fordville aquifer geologically are the same but hydrologically they are separate units. In other words, under pumping, water coming from the Fordville aquifer is not coming from water pumped from the Elk Valley delta."

The attorney for the Grand Forks-Trail Water District points out, "We are not involved in any way. We do not have a part of that action. Our engineers have not decided exact locations but they will be in the Elk Valley delta miles away from the Fordville aquifer."

Meanwhile, Downey reported that the Corps of Engineers already has dug its 10 wells in the Fordville, ND, area. They stretch along the north branch of Forest River for about three miles. Each of the 10 is from 30 to 42 feet deep and are 12-inch wells.

The Army's water system for the ABM sites includes the 10 wells, three booster pumping stations and 59 miles of water line.