



October 28, 2021

Colonel Mark. R. Himes  
Commander and District Engineer, Omaha District  
United States Army Corps of Engineers  
1616 Capitol Ave #3300  
Omaha, NE 68102

Dear Colonel Himes,

The State of North Dakota has been in a state of drought emergency since April 8, 2021, with over 98% of the state experiencing either severe, extreme or exceptional drought conditions at some point this year, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor. This was the worst drought on record for our state, impacting agribusiness, stressing our transportation sector and contributing to more wildfires this year than any other. Tourism, which is our third-largest industry, is also now at risk due to declining reservoir levels.

The long-range forecast for Lake Sakakawea's elevation next spring is approximately 1,827 feet. At this level, the main boat ramps at 20 of North Dakota's 36 recreation sites on the lake would be unusable. Combined with known siltation issues at seven main ramp locations, access to the lake is expected to be significantly constrained.

According to the North Dakota Department of Commerce, visitors to counties bordering Lake Sakakawea spent more than \$290 million in 2020, supporting over 3,000 jobs. Many of these jobs are provided by private concessionaires who operate in partnership with the Corps on public lands.

During past severe droughts, the Corps allocated funding and had dedicated staff who facilitated low-lake access in a timely manner. The Corps worked with stakeholders to build primitive roads to alternative low-water boat ramps. For the Corps to continue its mission of energizing the economy and reducing risks from disasters, proactive measures are again needed. Specifically, assistance from the Corps is requested to lead coordination efforts, permit improvements and provide funding for access from public lands prior to next spring.

A coordinated approach is critical so contractors can begin addressing access issues immediately after ice-out. The North Dakota Game and Fish Department, Parks and Recreation Department, Department of Water Resources and Governor's Office stand ready to work with you to address restricted access due to the ongoing drought. Thank you for your assistance.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Doug Burgum".

Doug Burgum  
Governor