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NEWS: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

North Dakota Land Board Announces Successful Completion of Missouri River Acreage Adjustment Project – Part I

BISMARCK, N.D. (OCT. 4, 2022) – The North Dakota Board of University and School Lands (Land Board) today announced the successful completion of Part I of the River Acreage Adjustment Project, which returned a net of approximately \$120 million to North Dakota private mineral owners and oil and gas operators.

The project involves adjusting the acreage of state-issued oil and gas leases to align with the newly established Missouri River ordinary high-water mark (OHWM) west of the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation, as determined by a survey commissioned by the North Dakota Legislature in 2017. The OHWM delineates the boundary of state/private ownership on both sides of the river.

“We are pleased to reach this significant project milestone and that tens of millions of dollars have been injected back into the North Dakota economy through private mineral owners and oil and gas operators,” said Gov. Doug Burgum, who chairs the five-member Land Board. “The Board appreciates the North Dakota Department of Trust Lands team for their diligent work and the North Dakota oil and gas industry for their collaboration, with completion of the full project expected by the end of this year.”

At statehood, under the constitutional legal principle called the “equal footing doctrine,” North Dakota was granted ownership of all lands, including minerals, under navigable waters up to the historical OHWM. Over the years, there have been numerous disputes about the exact location of the OHWM at various points along the Missouri River. In 2017, the Legislature commissioned a new survey to determine the OHWM of the river west of the Fort Berthold reservation. The statute also required the Board to work with oil and gas operators to adjust state leases, and their related revenues, to reflect the new acreage ownership as determined by the survey.

The total project includes 508 oil and gas leases covering 39,500 mineral acres. It's broken into two parts: Part I encompasses most of the project, covering 463 leases east of State Highway 85. Part II is much smaller, covering 45 oil and gas leases west of Highway 85.

The five-member Land Board consists of Burgum, State Superintendent Kirsten Baesler, State Treasurer Thomas Beadle, Secretary of State Al Jaeger and Attorney General Drew Wrigley.

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