

Reclamation Working Group Conservation Initiative

SBARE Testimony 12-13-23

My name is Jason Leiseth. I am a fourth-generation farmer and rancher, and along with my wife and sons we have a diversified cow/calf and grain farming operation in McKenzie County northwest of Watford City. I am also the current President of the North Dakota Stockmen's Association. I am here today to ask for your support of the Reclamation Working Group Conservation Initiative. I am from an area of the state that is heavily impacted by oil and gas development and can tell you from my own experience that the need for improvement in reclamation and protecting our natural resources is real and necessary. I currently have over 40 miles of pipeline on my operation. These pipelines date back as far as 1985, and most recent lines installed in 2023 with more planned for 2024. The pipelines carry oil, gas, saltwater, and rural water. The disturbed area for pipeline installation is 75-100 feet, or about 10 acres per mile which is over 400 acres of impacted soil on our operation. The one thing that is common to all of the reclamation efforts is that the productivity of the disturbed area is always less than it was previously. There is a variety of reasons for this such as poor preparation, wrong varieties, wrong timing, using practices from other parts of the country that do not work in our region, and lack of knowledge or information. As a producer dealing with oil companies, it would be extremely beneficial to have North Dakota based research outlining best practices for reclamation and seed selection to use in negotiations. Some of this research is being done, and more is needed, but the other part of the equation is getting the information to the country so landowners and oil companies both can benefit from it. A prime example is the program that rates how successful reclamation will be for a proposed pipeline route based on soil type and topography. It is an excellent tool, but not many people know it is available. In fact, if I weren't part of the Reclamation Working Group, I likely wouldn't know about it. I know of one company that is starting to use it, and I think it will be an excellent tool for both oil companies and landowners.

There are going to be pipelines continue to be built, and they are the safest way to transport product, so we need reclamation research to help ensure the impact can be lessened and the acres can be as productive as they were prior to disturbance. I also have hope that we can do research on how to improve poorly reclaimed projects that have very little production and negatively impact our farmers and ranchers every year. Support this initiative and help us do the research and get the message to the agricultural community and to the oil companies so we can do reclamation right.

Jason Leiseth

McKenzie County Farmer and Rancher