



**CONCERNS OF THE NORTH DAKOTA BAKKEN OIL COUNTIES: EXTENSION
SERVICE AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS' PROGRAM RESPONSES TO THESE
CONCERNS**

by

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Section 1. Introduction

North Dakota has been extracting oil in the Bakken region for many decades, continually alternating between a boom and a bust economy. The first major wave of this boom-bust cycle began in the 1950s, and the economy of the area flourished until it peaked in the 1980s. The 1990s was a period that could be described as an economic bust. However, by the 21st century, new technological advances had been made in relation to methods of oil extraction that allowed for a new oil boom to begin in the Bakken region of North Dakota in the late 2000s¹. However, there is evidence to suggest that this boom may last many more years than the previous boom cycle due to the technological advances in drilling methods. This extended boom may be very promising news to the region since the bust that can frequently follow an economic boom brings with it the potential to be devastating to an area. The Bakken oil region is experiencing phenomenal economic and population growth during the current boom and if the population and revenue growth were to slow, a bust could occur that would threaten the economic and social livelihood of the region.

Along with the many positive aspects that the economic boom is bringing to the Bakken region, there also are potential problems often associated with such growth, especially over a short period of time. Some of the largest concerns for the area relate to population change, migration, and quality of life concerns, labor and job-related issues, housing and other infrastructure challenges, and education, crime, and private and public service issues. Leaders and other residents have expressed concern with how the oil is impacting the area and how they can best address these issues.

Various organizations and agencies in the region have been actively attempting to develop and expand existing programs and policies needed to help residents address the stresses associated with the issues listed above. These organizations and agencies are strongly linked to the communities of the Bakken region and include governmental agencies, social service organizations, community and economic development organizations, and the NDSU Extension Service.

This study examines two categories of organizations in the Bakken oil counties in North Dakota: the NDSU Extension Service and non-Extension organizations. NDSU Extension includes the county Extension agents who serve the counties included in the study area. The non-Extension organizations include the various types of agencies that work to benefit the residents of the communities and counties in the Bakken oil region. The non-Extension organizations include governmental offices, social service offices, sheriff's departments, local newspapers, area schools, and many more.

¹ North Dakota Department of Mineral Resources. 2010. "ND Monthly Oil Production Statistics." Oil and Gas Division, Department of Mineral Resources. Retrieved September 13, 2010. (<http://www.dmr.nd.gov/oilgas/stats/historicaloilprodstats.pdf>)

The purpose of this study is to: (1) determine the concerns Extension agents and non-Extension officials noted in the Bakken region as a result of oil development; (2) the steps that are already being taken to address these concerns; and (3) the steps that are still needed, particularly in regards to programs and services offered through NDSU Extension and non-Extension organizations to help the residents of the region who are affected by these concerns. The fourth goal is to identify what both Extension and the non-Extension organizations are already doing in the Bakken oil region to help these organizations, (5) determine the effectiveness of the programs and policies measures that have already been implemented and (6) those that could be implemented in the future. These agencies have some programs that may already have been effective in this goal and they may be able to collaborate on other programs that will be beneficial to the residents.

Section 2. Research Methods

This study extends a previous project with the Center for Community Vitality, NDSU Extension Service. The initial project consisted of a literature review on the community impacts of natural-resource industry boom and bust cycles, particularly those related to oil and natural gas extraction.

Sample

A sample frame list was provided by the NDSU Extension Service, which included the names, mailing addresses, telephone numbers, and e-mail addresses of Extension agents and county commissioners in the following western North Dakota counties: Burke, Bottineau, Divide, Dunn, McHenry, McKenzie, Mclean, Mountrail, Oliver, Renville, Stark, Ward, and Williams. A sampling frame list of non-Extension organizational leaders was developed through telephone book and internet searches. That sampling frame consisted of county and city government officials, community and economic development organization leaders, and social service, education, and health care officials. Ten Extension agents and five county commissioners and organizational leaders consented to interviews. Additionally, three focus groups were conducted, which included both county and local organization leaders and Extension agents. The focus groups were conducted in Williston (Williams Co.), Watford City (McKenzie Co.), and Stanley (Mountrail Co.). Focus group attendees consisted of one Extension agent and thirteen other organizational officials (e.g., sheriff, school superintendent, county commissioners), which brought our total number of participants to 29. The interviews and focus groups were conducted May-June, 2011. Interviews were ceased when saturation was reached, that is, when the interviewers began to hear the same material redundantly and no new categories of material were emerging.

Instrument

Both the interviews and focus groups utilized a questionnaire that consisted of five questions. Extension members were asked the following five questions:

1. What concerns do the residents of your county face that are directly or indirectly related to oil development?
2. What is the NDSU Extension Service doing to address these concerns?
3. Given the NDSU Extension Service's role of teaching and facilitation, what do you think they could do in the future to address the Bakken region's concerns?
4. Given the NDSU Extension Service's role of teaching and facilitation, in what ways do you believe they could participate with other agencies/organizations to address the Bakken region's concerns?
5. How can state-level Extension specialists assist county-level Extension agents, and how can county-level Extension agents provide educational services and materials to county residents?

The focus group participants and non-Extension interviewees were asked similar questions, including the following six items:

1. What concerns do the residents of your county face that are directly or indirectly related to oil development?

2. What is the NDSU Extension Service doing to address these concerns?
3. What is your agency/ organization doing to address these concerns?
4. Given the Extension Service's role of teaching and facilitation, what do you think they could do in the future to address these concerns?
5. What do you think your agency/organization could do in the future to address these concerns?
6. Given the NDSU Extension Service's role of teaching and facilitation, in what ways do you believe they could participate with your agency/organization to address the Bakken region's concerns?

Methodological Issues

The sample included public officials. Thus, their interview responses which pertained to their positions were not confidential by nature and open to the public. However, the research team received approval from the NDSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) and complied with IRB research protocol (see Appendix 1). All interviewees and focus group participants were made aware of the Informed Consent policy in written and/or verbal form

The research team encountered challenges in contacting the individuals on the sampling frame list. Part of this challenge occurred because of a scheduling conflict with the focus groups; the county fairs were taking place the same week that the focus groups had been scheduled. Extension agents were particularly busy with their county fair obligations. Reaching people for phone interviews was also difficult; many county agents and other officials were very busy and did not have time for an interview. To compound this, the officials and leaders of Ward County were busy with the flooding in Minot and could not be reached for phone interviews. Dickinson State University was also conducting a project on the region at the same time as NDSU was. Thus, some interviewees had already given information and did not feel obliged to communicate it again.

Through the research, it was observed that a gap existed between Extension and the awareness other organizations had of its services. A brief paragraph was drafted in the event an interviewee requested background information on Extension.

Ethical Issues

Emotions surrounding the topic of oil extraction and its impacts raised some ethical issues. Another issue involved omitting the names and affiliations of interviewees and focus group participants from the final report. The researchers made every attempt to respect confidentiality where appropriate.

Section 3. Information Provided by NDSU Extension Service Agents

Concerns Raised by Extension Agents

County level Extension agents have a high level of involvement in the daily concerns of local residents and they have access to local officials and meetings. As a result, Extension agents are able to provide much information regarding the concerns of their counties' residents. A wide array of concerns was brought forth in the interviews and focus groups in which Extension agents were involved. The concerns they described include population change, labor and jobs, housing and cost of living, infrastructure, education, services (both public and private), crime, and other, more general concerns. Each of these areas is addressed below.

Population Growth and Quality of Living

An influx of individuals and families relocating to the Bakken oil region for work has resulted in changes to the communities of western North Dakota. Previously quiet, rural towns are experiencing the challenges of increased pressures on infrastructure, clashes of values, and displaced individuals and families. Those who lived in the communities previous to the boom miss the familiarity of what "was a farm community but is now a gold rush state." Residents also face challenges of culture gaps that are created by in-migrants of various backgrounds; Spanish-speaking individuals are especially inducing a need for translators and a move to teach Spanish in the schools. For example, sometimes children speak better English than their parents. Children constantly need to translate for their parents, and may be pulled out of school to assist with translation.

One of the major shifts that an increased population brings is the insecurity of not knowing who is living in the town. For parents especially, that causes some safety concerns of whom to trust. The Extension agent explained that there are "some rough crowds in the area who just want to make money but don't contribute to the town. [We] won't let kids walk around by themselves anymore." There is a perception that some of the workers oil companies are hiring are not always trustworthy.

Compounded with the rapid population growth, local residents also face divisions among themselves. An Extension agent mentioned the switch in values, from a "community [that] used to be focused on agronomy, but now people are more concerned with appearances due to oil money." Some of the residents who once planned to retire in the local community now indicate that they plan to leave. They not only want a small town feel back, but also are uncomfortable with all the chaos brought about by the oil boom. There is a resistance to change and growth of the towns; even though communities want to see their local economies thrive, "just not in their backyard." Part of the resistance is also due to the strong feeling of uncertainty of the boom/bust economy, the "What if it stabilizes? What if it leaves?" phenomenon carries implications of uncertainty. As one Extension agent stated:

We have major needs that need to be met before we can go above and beyond the operation level. That's not to say we can't work together, but there are other things that need to be taken care of first. And maybe oil will be gone before that. We've seen some

migration moving south into northern South Dakota and further into Wyoming. Not that people are sitting tight and just waiting for it to leave, because we can't do that to function, but it may be gone before we get all the woes fixed.

Residents know that something needs to be done, but the niggling fear of a bust hinders any major efforts to instigate reformative projects.

Zoning regulations have also come to the forefront with the boom. Communities with weak regulations have no way to stanch the "man camps that can pop up wherever." An Extension agent noted that:

[There is] too much money involved to try and resist, can't slow down and don't know how. [They are] tough to reach with services.

There are also discrepancies between people understanding their rights when it comes to oil communities. Concerns arose over "surface owner rights in regards to compensation," or what the farmer or rancher's rights are to the land in relation to the oil company's rights.

Housing and Cost of Living

Already limited before the oil boom, population growth has only exacerbated the housing situation in western North Dakota. An Extension agent explained that a basic home in their city now costs \$263,000 – "a home only those making oil money can afford." As illustrated by housing costs, the cost of living skyrocketed in the oil region. For example, a gallon of milk now costs \$6.28, and buyers often inquire whether "it's a farm price or an oil price they're being given," especially when it compares to "the price of buying diesel fuel for farm machinery." An Extension agent commented that, because there are no rent controls, rent skyrocketed from \$300 to \$900 a month for some residents. When asked what the average cost of renting or buying was, an Extension agent replied:

There's some new houses that I guess last week they rented for \$1,500 a month. I would say at least \$1,000. People in campers pay \$800 a month to park their campers. We have a gal that's renting a bedroom, \$100 a night in her house.

Although efforts have been made in the past to build more housing, there are attitudinal barriers to change. Residents "don't want to be saddled with the burden of expensive development projects when the boom goes bust, and also do not want to lose the hometown feel." Any housing that is built, unfortunately, is too expensive for those with non-oil wages to handle, especially since some residents are "on a fixed income and can't afford increased prices."

A growing disparity has become increasingly noticeable, especially when it comes to housing. While an Extension agent referred to the divide as the oil paycheck "Haves" and the others as "Have-nots", the real barrier to economic security is the prices. Those making an oil paycheck have been able to brook food and housing costs; those in non-oil related fields (e.g. small business ownership or retail) have problems absorbing price increases. Housing affordability has become such an issue for some families that it is plunging them into poverty or

leading to eviction. For those who are trying to apply for low-income housing, an Extension agent pointed out the barriers the applicants face: “There’s a lot of rules to get into low income housing: background checks and etc. etc. etc. A lot of our individuals coming in can’t meet those requirements.”

Compounded with housing costs, the rising cost of food prices has put even more strain on families. An Extension agent testified to the impact the increased cost of living has had on their community:

Yesterday, I had a gentleman come in and said, “Hey, I just had three guys come. They are living in my yard. Can I take food home for them? They have no work, and they have been out of work for months.” So the face of what we have seen at the food pantry has changed. I would still say 70% are locals, but a lot of those locals are working poor because of the increased cost of living.

As the previous quotation illustrates, a divide has been created between the oil field earners and non-oil related workers. This has greatly changed the demographic, or the “face,” at which agencies and programs are directed. Increases in the prices of food, gas, and housing have led to people living in their trucks or leaving the community upon eviction, further eroding that prized community unity.

Labor and Jobs

Infrastructural improvements, child protection cases, and small business opportunity are some of the things that are weighing down non-oil related organizations. While there are many oil workers and jobs, specialized labor is required elsewhere to help deal with the challenges the population increase has brought. For other organizations, such as social services or community development groups, specialists are needed to guide them through strategic plans and increased caseloads.

While the oil industry has brought jobs to the community, there are still labor shortages for non-oil related business. Despite the population growth and the increased revenue from oil production, “some businesses have had to close because there aren’t enough workers. Both public and private can’t compete with [oil] wages.” Other than minimum wage labor, professionals are needed to address topics such as infrastructural work, social service cases, and policy.

Service agencies and small businesses struggle to get employees, not only because employees can earn more money in the oil fields, but because potential employees cannot find housing or childcare. The lack of childcare is a major factor causing problems for families. Frequently, a parent (usually a mother) will stay at home while the other parent goes to work. This conflict may lead to further “economic stress because the family then lacks a dual income.”

Infrastructure

According to the Extension agents, infrastructural problems are yet another challenge facing the rural communities of the Bakken oil region. Small, rural towns were already faced with an aging infrastructure when the oil boom began. The roads especially have posed concern; the two main Highways (2 and 85) are receiving “heavy and continual use” that leads to roads being closed for repairs. This further complicates issues as trucks have to route themselves around, and tourists being unable to access campgrounds or businesses. Heavier traffic has also led to more accidents.

Education

Extension agents who provide parenting and family educational services are concerned about the child population of the community. In-migrants children are not prepared for winter either because of their living situation (e.g., living in a tent or camper) or because of a lack of knowledge of North Dakota winters, such as those families coming from Texas. Students who live in tents and campers are not in an environment conducive to studying. There is no electricity in tents to do homework at night. Some students are sent to school to shower because their living quarters do not have those amenities. The agents noted that some schools are experiencing stress in trying to find staffing to handle the increased enrollment. School officials are attempting to find building and classroom space to for the increased enrollments.

Crime

Extension agents observed that the number of domestic violence reports and child protection cases increased. Although dealing directly with crime is not a responsibility of the Extension Service, it has further exacerbated what Extension agents and other non-Extension organization offices who work with families have needed to address.

Service Organizations

Schools and other services to the community altogether are experiencing a strain on their programs and staff. Budget cuts have added stress to already strained programs and services. More funding was already needed on top of the original budget to adequately run the programs that are offered. Given the current funding cutbacks, Extension agents report that is difficult to initiate new programs to address the concerns that are emerging from the oil boom while still maintaining the quality of the current programs. One of the challenges Extension officials face pertains to hiring new Extension employees. As noted earlier, county Extension programs face a difficult time attracting new employees to the region because of the lack of available housing. With a lack of ability to finance additional salaried employees, getting a qualified individual becomes even more challenging.

Another limiting factor to services, especially for Extension, is the scale of the problems facing the Bakken communities. Roads, housing, and crime are large scale programs outside of the Extension Service’s responsibility. In one of the Bakken counties, Extension agents were “told flat out that their role was not economic or development related.” They are not equipped to handle infrastructure issues or build housing. An Extension agent also commented that “at this stage in their lives [the individuals living in tents and campers] people are not looking for a packaged program.” While Extension exists to educate and facilitate, there are some concerns for

which that they do not have staff or funding to handle, especially with the demand on current programs and the shortage of staff.

Extension staff reported that Social Services and Child Protective Services have seen dramatic increases in their case loads. Social service organizations throughout the region are overloaded. Extension especially has needed “to make tough decisions about what their options are, as adding more programs not only further overloads agents, but detracts from the quality of other programs, such as 4-H and Love & Logic classes.”

General Issues and Concerns

Some of the general problems that Extension agents have experienced pertain to the environmental impacts of oil drilling. Extension’s traditional role with agriculture brings them to the forefront of the environmental impacts of the boom. One county agent stated:

Oil production opens up the earth and leaves patches of bare dirt. Weeds move into these exposed patches quickly, and the increased number of out-of-state vehicles has brought possibly invasive species.

Another issue that arises for the ranchers and farmers of the region is road dust that is kicked up by passing automobiles, trucks, and semi-trailers. The dust drifts on to adjacent crops and livestock, resulting in reduced crop yields and livestock health. Litter along roadways has also become an issue with the increased traffic. Additionally, those who live in trucks or campers typically do not have access garbage pickup service and allow the garbage to accumulate.

Final Thoughts: Extension Concerns and Challenges

Extension agents reported several challenges that present themselves to the Bakken oil region in western North Dakota. The rapid population growth led not only to demographic shifts, but has created cultural and value gaps that divide the community into “locals” and “outsiders.” Population growth has contributed to the need for Extension specialists who understand community and economic development and house construction. Already in short supply before the boom, the lack of housing led to people living in campers, tents, or trucks until an apartment or house opens. The cost of housing, as well as groceries and other goods and services, has skyrocketed, putting pressure on non-oil related workers to pay for necessities. While some residents face eviction, others have joined the ranks of the working poor. Roads, sewers, and other infrastructural elements are under pressure with the rapid increase in population, placing burdens on communities to pay for these expenses. Public funding for education has become an issue as students who attend schools do not live in ideal conditions to do homework. School districts struggle to address the needs of their increases in enrollment. Finding qualified teachers and classroom space has become paramount. Finally, although crimes, such as domestic violence, are not directly related to Extension’s role, agents dealing with Family and Consumer Sciences must address the results of crime. An increased need for foster care or protective services has indirectly increased the work load of Extension agents and non-Extension officials alike.

Programs Offered by the Extension Service

The participants of this study, both from Extension and non-Extension agencies, highlighted several programs and steps that Extension has taken so far to address the aforementioned concerns. Extension has helped integrate the incoming population into the community, educated both new and long-term residents on various topics, and worked with a variety of agencies to address the many local concerns. Extension provided these services by working directly with individuals and groups, offering educational materials and services, and organizing events and mediation. The concerns ranged from property rights to social services.

With the incoming population, Extension received requests for information regarding local life, how to prepare for winter, what kind of plants can thrive in North Dakota, how to care for plants through the seasons, and even where one might board horses. 4-H and youth mentoring programs have been valuable assets in helping new youth in the community to become involved and make connections with other people. Integration into the community for oil employees is further assisted through events such as the Bakken Rocks Cookfest, which Extension played a role in organizing. There are needs which these new residents do not voice or of which they are not aware, which Extension tried to anticipate. Informational materials regarding money management, nutrition and food safety, and preparing easy meals have been provided to help better prepare the new population.

The programs provided by the Extension Service are not intended to meet only the needs of new residents but also of the long-term residents. Educational materials serve both new and long-term residents, especially in the face of rising costs of living. 4-H has the potential to address social issues among youth. Extension's agricultural knowledge has been widely used by oil companies and land owners for topics ranging from surface, water, and mineral rights, acquiring water tests, land and crop values, and damage compensation. The level of recognition that Extension has in this region has been a great asset, allowing for partnerships with Social Services (giving and receiving referrals), the Weed Board, County Commissioners, various oil companies, and the Bush Foundation, to name a few. These connections have been vital as Extension continues to help organize and mediate meetings, conduct rural leadership programs, and the previously-run Horizons program.

Although many programs have been provided in the Bakken counties by Extension, the concerns presented by the Extension agents suggest that additional programs are needed. It must be noted that Extension's roles of education and facilitation cannot necessarily be expanded to provide programming for all of these concerns. Additionally, many of the interviewees in this study did not know of any way in which Extension could expand its operations and offered no suggestions at all. What follows are the suggestions that were made both by those in Extension and those not in Extension.

Suggestions by Extension Service Agents for Additional Extension Programs

The strongest and most notable suggestion made by Extension agents was that current programs should not suffer. If there programs were to be added to the portfolio of services that Extension offers, there must be an increase in both funds and staff. The agents who currently

work in the Bakken are at their limit and cannot add more responsibilities without abandoning those projects to which they are already committed. Having made this important point, agents made several suggestions regarding materials and programs that are needed and partnerships that can be made. The materials the Extension agents suggested dealt with the following topics:

- Issues within the man camps, such as insects.
- Dust-effects on crops and livestock.
- Extensive information for home-gardening in North Dakota, especially concerning non-native, non-adaptable plants – “police through education.”
- Information for Social Services addressing long-distance family issues.
- Information on how state oil taxes are used.
- Information regarding best zoning policies and practices.

These are the materials that the county-level agents believed were needed and appropriate for the State-level Extension Specialists to develop or acquire. It was strongly noted that such materials should be available in multiple languages.

The agents suggested several services and practices. These included the following:

- Spanish classes for youth and adults.
- Partnerships with the oil industry to support education.
- Partner with Public Health to address immunization, injuries, mental health, etc.
- Monthly newsletters and a weekly news column.
- Formation of local committees assigned to address certain issues.
- Leadership training focusing on negotiating with large companies and state leaders.
- A State-level focus on legislative and long-term policy issues.
- State-level training for Social Service workers.
- New methods of education involving mass media.

Two additional points require discussion. First, it was mentioned multiple times that county-level agents feel “dictated to by State-level agents.” A desire for an atmosphere of cooperation and understanding was voiced, as opposed to an authoritarian relationship between the two levels of Extension. Another point involves the development of program delivery methods other than the meeting style of delivery. Many of the new residents are difficult to reach and agents need help in overcoming this challenge. Greater use of mass media was mentioned; however the agents were concerned that rural residents primarily use satellite television.

Suggestions from Non-Extension Officials for Additional Extension Programs

The uncertainty regarding the role of Extension and how Extension’s programs could be expanded was certainly more prominent among participants from non-Extension agencies. As such, their suggestions for Extension were limited to the following:

- Provide babysitting/childcare classes.
- Take over Love & Logic and the Parenting Coordinator Position for Social Services.
- Provide zoning information.
- Provide job training outside of oil industry.
- Recruit professionals to assist locals with addressing complex issues.

- Assist with recruiting local foster homes.
- Complete a relocation guide.
- Share all information openly.
- Work closely with local officials and county planners by facilitating and attending meetings.
- Develop English language learner classes for adults.
- Increase Extension Service agents' presence in community and awareness of services.
- Help place university interns in the western North Dakota counties.

Several of the above suggestions already are practiced by Extension. They were listed to highlight the fact that some agencies are not aware of Extension and that there is the potential for more partnerships to be made.

Section 4. Information Provided by Non-Extension Service Officials

Concerns Raised by Non-Extension Officials

Agency officials in the Bakken area reported several concerns that residents face due to the oil boom. The topics that arose during Extension interviews were also found in the agency officials' interviews and focus groups. Concerns arose in the areas of population, housing, labor and jobs, infrastructure, education, crime, and social services. Information given in interviews and focus groups highlighted that these seven issues are often linked with one another. For example, population influx affects crime, social services, and housing; housing affects employment. This, at times, made separating issues topically difficult. The proceeding sections are the impacts, issues, and concerns facing residents as stated by agency officials.

Population Growth and Quality of Living

The oil and gas activity causes population fluctuation to the Bakken area. The changes in population are seen to be related to several other impacts, concerns, and needs in the region, such as housing, employment, and crime. The transient nature of the population entering the state is a source of concern and difficulties as officials are unsure of the number of non-residents currently living in the state. Two main population themes emerged throughout interviews with officials: (1) the influx of non-residents to the area and (2) the exodus of residents due to oil activity.

Employment opportunities bring many people from around the country to North Dakota. According to agency officials, many of those who arrive to the state do so without any previous research of the area or job prospects. As one social services official stated:

Many are coming from depressed economies elsewhere. [They] have sold everything they have except the clothes on their back and the stuff in their car. Promise of the American Dream is bringing them here. What they here is "jobs."

Some of those who leave their home states come to find a lack of housing and they are unqualified for a job in the oil fields. This creates a strain for agencies such as Social Services and Salvation Army when these individuals and families seek shelter, sustenance, and employment. The type of in-migrants the oil boom attracts to the area is also a concern, according to agency officials. One official said, "People that first started coming in were technicians and engineers, family people or whatever. But we're starting to get the dredges of society in here—sex offenders entering the county." The large influx of in-migrants into western North Dakota resulted in some residents saying, as one official overheard, "You wonder what state we live in because there are so many [license] plates." A county commissioner expressed, "used to drive down the street and wave at everyone. I drive down the street now and don't know anybody."

The impacts of oil on the region are the impetus for some local residents to leave the area. Agency officials stated some longtime residents plan to sell or rent their homes and move

elsewhere. One official said that some residents who planned to retire in the region now wish to sell their homes and relocate because of the changes brought by the oil boom. One official said, "...the people who are leaving are people who have been here forever. We always figured we'd retire here and own our home here, but now people are leaving. They've just had it with oil." Others, including elderly, disabled, low-income individuals, consider leaving because they can no longer afford to live in their homes or apartments.

Housing and the Cost of Living

The effect of population increase in the region's communities can be seen in the area of housing. Housing shortages and increased housing costs are areas of considerable concern for agency officials; nearly all agency officials cite housing as one of the biggest issues in the Bakken area. Individuals and families pay high rents, often for small spaces such as a single room in a house. Agency officials reported that there are those in their communities who exacerbate the problem with price gouging. "Some landowners are greedy," reported an official. A county commissioner stated:

If you are not in the oil field, one, don't have your place already and have understanding landlords, which they all are not, your rent keeps going [up]...They say economics drive it and yes, that's true, but greed has absolutely to do with it.

An economic development official said:

[The] oil has started to come hit us more now in the past couple of months and it's starting to make our community member become more greedy and it's kind of making them forget where they came from. And that's where you're seeing these increases in rent and people gouging the crap out of each other, because they can...you know, they've lost their heart. Forgot where they grew up.

It was also reported that some landowners would not sell property to housing developers in anticipation of a continued rise in property prices and "they will make more money." The cost of rent in the various counties in the region were reported ranging from "the upper \$400s, upper \$500s, even \$700s," said one county commissioner. "And that's pretty cheap here," he added.

The boom changed the concept of "affordable housing" in western North Dakota. Much of what is considered to be affordable housing is funded by the federal government for low-income individuals. Many of those in need of housing do not qualify for economic assistance or low-income housing because of their income, but are still not able to afford housing because of the high cost. When asked whether the proposed additional housing the community would be low-income, a Job Development Authority official stated:

We do have low income housing, apartment buildings, that aren't even full because we just didn't have a need for low income housing. I believe now they've changed their regulations, so they're full. I think they changed some rules so that they could get more people in there.

Another agency official also discussed the “rules,” stating that the federal rules on economic assistance for areas such as housing are not applicable locally. In order to have affordable housing, he continued, more housing needed to be built to lessen the demand, thus reducing housing costs. Contractors are needed to build houses and much of the new construction has been is not adequate due to “shoddy workmanship.”

Due to the housing issues, homelessness has become an issue in the area. Homelessness has kept employees in the oil field from reuniting with their families, according to one official. Some families do move together which has resulted in more homeless children. Many people without homes are sleeping in campers in the Wal-Mart parking lot and on the streets. One official stated, “If there’s a vacant lot there’s a semi and a camper on it.” Oil industry employees unable to find housing within a community live in man camps (temporary housing for oil workers consisting of structures such as campers or modular homes) some with populations larger than towns within the state.

The housing costs are one reason for the transient population. Workers both in and out of the oil industry are not able to afford to buy or rent. One official spoke of a man who would not make a permanent move to North Dakota with his family because “even though he’s making a lot more money here he’s not making enough money to compensate for the amount of rent he’s going to have to pay.” Instead he lives in his pickup truck, as others do. The housing issues affect non-oil businesses looking to hire new employees. For some potential non-oil related employees, the housing issue played a role in their decision to not accept jobs in the region. Non-oil related businesses cannot fill many of the empty positions because interviewees will not take jobs in the area due to the inability to afford housing.

Labor and Jobs

The oil boom created a need for new employees in and out of the oil and gas industry. Although agencies and businesses have open positions, hiring employees is a challenge, as well as obtaining quality employees. As discussed in the previous section, one problem businesses have hiring employees is the lack of housing. According to one official there has been a “dramatic difference in the Help Wanted section... [the paper] used to run 2-3 help wanted ads a week, now [they] have a full page. Jobs are there, but the issue is housing.” Another stated, “[It] can be hard to get the workforces to come out here.”

Some businesses experience challenges with the employees already on staff. Agency officials stated that employees currently working in area businesses can be difficult to manage because they can get jobs anywhere if they become dissatisfied, according to another agency official. One Social Services official reported challenges in getting potential employees even to interview for a position because housing prices discourage job seekers. According to an economic developer:

Those people they hire, you know, they’re a body, but they’re running at half speed... [because] someone’s got to do work...people end up doing two jobs instead of one just to maintain.

The reason for the difficulties with staff is due to the fact that employees feel that they can get a job elsewhere if they are unhappy with their current employment.

In the area, business retention is difficult. Businesses need more space in order to grow. One community has faced “issues of how to keep businesses open,” but, stated the official, “businesses aren’t starving anymore.” Businesses in other communities are faced with eviction because they are unable to afford the increased rent. Other businesses find it difficult to find space to rent.

Infrastructure

According to many of the agency officials interviewed, roads were another area of great concern, specifically deterioration and traffic. Two agency officials said their counties have had road closures due to increased traffic and heavy loads. An increase in traffic accidents was reported. The increase in accidents was attributed to inexperienced truck drivers, out-of-state drivers not familiar with the area, and drivers running stop signs. Towns have increased demands for infrastructural improvements, but the funds to do so are not available. One agency official spoke of the smaller communities in his county:

None of these communities have been able to repair or replace aging infrastructure. Consequently, now people need to move in, and they can’t handle any additional people. Water lines are breaking, sewers in disrepair, streets. They don’t have the money to keep up with the impact they’re receiving, and so they are looking for help.

Education

Schools districts in the Bakken have faced challenges stemming from the increased population, which include fluctuation of student enrollment, staffing and space issues, as well as issues with academic performance. One issue schools systems face is the transient student population causing a “dramatic” fluctuation in enrollment. According to one school official:

Some kids don’t remain at school for extended periods of time (even a full school year), so we have no idea what [we are] going to get...You can’t plan for what you don’t know is coming.

Schools have issues hiring teachers because of this uncertainty in enrollment numbers throughout the year and according to a school official, there are difficulties hiring teachers the further into summer. The influx and uncertainty of students also created space issues in schools. According to one school official:

People, you know, aren’t sure if they’re going to get housing; if they are going to be able to move families here, and so when things happen they happen real quickly...Two weeks before school started, we had all these people lined up to register their children. And so we don’t have enough facilities. Our schools are pretty much filled to the brim.

Hiring more teachers is difficult when the school system is unsure of how many students will be in the schools until the school term is about to begin or already began. According to one

school official, "...whoever is out there to hire is going to be people who have applied everywhere else and weren't selected."

Some students are removed from the school when expectations of parents and the reality of what the schools can offer do not match. Parents may come to the area expecting busing, occupational therapy, or additional services for special needs students only to find those are not offered by a school in the region. Other students also have their education interrupted because their parents are non-English speakers and need their children to translate for them. There are also language barriers in school due to the fact that some in-migrants do not speak English.

School systems in the area have found that some of the new students are behind academically because of the many moves a family may have made or lower educational standards in their home state. Students cannot be put in "special programs" simply for being homeless because being "homeless is not a learning disability," according to a school official. One community official praised the quality of education in North Dakota and attested to the different state levels of education:

My kids were both a year and a half behind in Math and Science: within six weeks they were caught up, and kept up, and still have. They've had straight A's since they got here, and they still struggle a little, but it's something that we're not willing to give up.

Crime

Agency officials reported an increase in crime with the in-migration of oil workers. An increase in the number, although not the rate of violent crimes, has also been seen. Bar fights have broken out between oil workers, and in more of these weapons have been involved. Several agency officials reported that more sex offenders have entered the area. It is difficult to know how many sex offenders are in the area, according to one official, because of the transient nature of the population. Reporting is difficult as well since many sex offenders live in their cars, according to an official. Other employees with warrants out for the arrest come to the area to work in the oil fields and "lay low" until background checks or other arrests reveal warrants for offenses such as carjacking, sexual assault, or in one case, murder. Communities have also seen an increase of domestic violence cases.

Service Organizations

For the communities in the Bakken area, the agencies providing social services are over-extended in many areas, whereas economic assistance programs are seeing a decline because people are getting jobs. This does not necessarily mean that needs are still not present. Rather, individuals or families do not qualify for economic assistance because, although they earn a good wage, their income is not enough after housing expenses are paid. Foster homes in one community are full and, according to one official, "anything you add is going to disrupt that family and their education." Social Services and Salvation Army are "being pushed to the limits." However, Social Services are seeing a decrease in economic assistance programs because there are new jobs available due to the oil boom.

Programs Offered by Non-Extension Service Organizations

There are various programs that have been implemented by non-Extension agencies and organizations in the Bakken region of North Dakota as a result of the oil boom. Many of these non-extension programs tie into a variety of other types of organizations, such as government, social services, and economic development. All of these agencies and organizations are working, along with Extension, in order to reduce the impact of the issues in the Bakken region. For instance, the North Dakota Senate increased the share of oil tax revenue distributed to local governments. This increase allows local governments to address several problems they are experiencing as a result of the oil boom. Local governments use increased revenues to improve community services such as the following:

- Sewer.
- Water quality.
- Roads.
- Other infrastructure issues.
- Education.
- Social service programs.

Each of these community services have been significantly impacted by the oil boom. For instance, the existing infrastructure that is in most of these communities is not equipped to accommodate the large number of people who are now living in the area as a result of the oil boom. The additional state government funding these communities will receive is critical to update and expand the existing infrastructure.

One issue that counties in the North Dakota Bakken region have had to address with the oil boom is that of social services. Agencies have adopted many programs to aid families through the difficulties they face as a result of the oil boom. Many counties have attempted to address these issues and have developed various programs and techniques to accomplish these goals. For instance, some social services work with homeless coalitions and try to sustain unemployed persons. They also work to intervene in crises pertaining to either a domestic violence situation, a public disturbance, or other situation when an intermediary is needed. Another responsibility of social service agencies is treating addictions, which has become a more prevalent problem with the population increase.

Another issue for the Bakken region is road conditions. Overuse by oil trucks has caused the roads to deteriorate and, in some areas, become dangerous. Efforts have been made by some county commissioners and economic developers to reduce speed limits on area roads that are in poor condition. Reduced speeds will decrease the likelihood of accidents on these poor roads before the roads can be fixed.

Many county commissioners are reexamining zoning rules for the area. Such changes are an attempt to make housing more affordable in certain areas so residents are better able to

purchase homes. Given that there is a severe housing shortage in the region, it is essential that more housing is made available at a reasonable price.

One technique used by county commissioners to address the oil-boom related concerns is to attend area oil meetings and Department of Transportation meetings. Some counties have hired more staff to work on roads and have purchased new equipment to repair roads and infrastructure.

Some challenges have arisen to limit the programs non-Extension agencies and programs have implemented. For instance, many counties are still experiencing a lack of funding that prevents them from offering a full range of services to their residents that they would like to. Insufficient manpower is an issue for these agencies and organizations. There are many workers in the region, but they lack professionals able to fill some positions, such as teachers, nursing home staff, electricians, plumbers, and other occupations requiring specific expertise.

An example of a concern is not easily addressed are the economic issues that are evident in the region. The individuals who are working in oil related fields often earn a substantially higher income than workers in non-oil related fields. Thus, the cost of living has increased significantly in the region since the oil boom began. Unfortunately, the only individuals who are able to afford the increased prices are the oil workers. The large majority of the rest of the residents have a difficult time earning enough money to purchase necessities, such as housing and food.

Suggestions from non-Extension Officials for Additional Extension Programs

Several suggestions were made regarding what Extension could do in the future to help the residents in the Bakken who are impacted by the oil boom. Some of these recommendations include the following:

- Take over teaching some social services classes.
- Provide language classes to non-English speaking adults.
- Continue to provide informational pamphlets and material pertaining to things such as:
 - Living in North Dakota weather.
 - Zoning laws and how they are used to protect residents.
 - Gardening and other food practices in North Dakota climate.
 - How to “winterize” a camper.
- Provide these informative materials in languages other than English.

Suggestions from non-Extension Officials for Additional Non-Extension Programs

- Provide services in relation to gambling addictions, which has become a huge issue in the region.
- Make sure that informative materials are available through a variety of networks since not all residents have a permanent mailing address.

- Continually meet with the parties who are involved in the oil drilling and the economic boom in order to keep lines of communication open; this would include:
 - Oil companies.
 - Trucking companies.
 - Sheriffs.

All in all, there are many issues that need to be addressed in the Bakken region; non-Extension groups are working to address those issues. However, it is not an easy task. There are issues, such as lack of manpower and insufficient funds that prevent starting all of the programs that are needed in the area. Some officials believe that not a lot has been done because there is not much that can be done.

On the other hand, it is important to remember that there are many positive aspects to the oil boom in the Bakken region. It is unusual to see in other parts of rural America the magnitude of what is taking place in the Bakken communities. Most rural communities do not have experience with economic growth, so the real issue is learning how to effectively deal with that growth.

Appendix 1. Institutional Review Board Approval of the Research Project

NDSU

NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY

Institutional Review Board

*Office of the Vice President for Research, Creative Activities and Technology Transfer
NDSU Dept. 4000
1735 NDSU Research Park Drive
Research 1, P.O. Box 6050
Fargo, ND 58108-6050*

701.231.8995

Fax 701.231.8098

Federalwide Assurance #FWA00002439

Wednesday, May 25, 2011

Dr. Gary Goreham
Sociology and Anthropology
226 Barry Hall

Re: IRB Certification of Human Research Project:

“An Assessment of Potential Services the NDSU Extension Service May Provide in the Bakken Oil counties of North Dakota”

Protocol #HS11283

Co-investigator(s) and research team: **Shelby Bohnenkamp, Emily Erickson, Audrey Putz, Alex Finken, Lynette Flage**

Study site(s): **varied** Funding: **n/a**

It has been determined that this human subjects research project qualifies for exempt status (category # 2) in accordance with federal regulations (Code of Federal Regulations, Title 45, Part 46, *Protection of Human Subjects*). This determination is based on the protocol form received 5/20/2011 and consent/information sheet received 5/20/2011.

Please also note the following:

- This determination of exemption expires 3 years from this date. If you wish to continue the research after 5/24/2014, the IRB must re-certify the protocol prior to this date.
- The project must be conducted as described in the approved protocol. If you wish to make changes, pre-approval is to be obtained from the IRB, unless the changes are necessary to eliminate an apparent immediate hazard to subjects. A *Protocol Amendment Request Form* is available on the IRB website.
- Prompt, written notification must be made to the IRB of any adverse events, complaints, or unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others related to this project.
- Any significant new findings that may affect the risks and benefits to participation will be reported in writing to the participants and the IRB.
- Research records may be subject to a random or directed audit at any time to verify compliance with IRB policies.

Thank you for complying with NDSU IRB procedures; best wishes for success with your project.

Sincerely,



Kristy Shirley, CIP, Research Compliance Administrator

NDSU is an EO/AA university.

Appendix 2. Programs Available or Under Consideration by Extension Organizations in the Bakken Oil Region

Organization	Bakken Needs/ Concerns	Organizational Programs
Peggy Anderson Burke and Divide County Extension (4-H) Bowbells, ND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Roads * Lack of sufficient childcare * Perspective employees do not come because housing is unavailable * More funding to deal with issues * Housing prices are high; not available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Act as a sounding board * Ensure people are getting proper nutrition * Teach people how to save money * Educate and bring people together * Find a way to connect directly with offices and do employee education
Keith Brown Divide County Extension (CC) Killdeer, ND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Increased cost of living * No rent controls * Damaged roads and infrastructure * Need manpower and specialists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Meeting approximately 1 year ago to identify issues * Winter meeting to talk about technologies * Work with ND Petroleum Council * State-level address issues and create awareness about resources * Provide information to residents (e.g., winterize a Recreational Vehicle)
Becky Buchmann Dunn County Extension (CC and 4-H) Killdeer, ND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Housing * Crime rates * Dust control and weeds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Work with Weed Board and County Commissioner on dust control * Educational seminars on weed control * 4-H to address social concerns * Dust control research at the NDSU Experiment Station

<p>Dan Folske Burke County Extension (CC) Bowbells, ND</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Roads * Rising cost of housing that results in evictions * Law enforcement hassles * Aging infrastructure * Dust impacts crops and cattle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Work with community leaders to do needs assessment * Bush Foundation listening session * Community visioning sessions * Public information meetings with oil companies * Work on community development * Specialists work on long-term policy and legislative issues * Provide materials to residents, training to social services board
<p>Warren and Mary Froelich Williams County Extension (Agriculture, Family and Consumer Sciences) Williston, ND</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Traffic and road damages-overusing Hwy 2 and 85 * Dust: animals can no longer graze near roadside because of dust inhalation, blocks sunlight so limited crop growth * Safety issues with sexual harassment and all-male workforce * Not enough workers for non-oil related business-some have had to close * Trucks park on vacant lots and private property, change their oil there too * Schools cannot find teachers or space * Housing is limited and expensive * Man camps of 2500+ can 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Putting up posters and handing out materials *Program for money management skills *Handle calls dealing with land compensation, zoning rights, etc. *Mediate zoning conflicts between neighbors *Leadership training *Home landscaping education to avoid invasive species *Partnering with Social Services *Partnering with oil companies

	<p>pop up wherever, make it difficult to reach people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Long time residents moving out * Uncertainty of boom/bust 	
<p>Jim Henessey Mountrail County Extension Bowbells, ND</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Disparity between Have's and Have-Not's * Prices are so high * Housing is impossible to find * Evicted families leave community * Gold rush state/ "armpit of nation" * Red light district by high school * Increased crime, rough crowds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Horizons and Rural Leadership programs * Try to pull community together * Address poverty * NDSU publications on how to winterize a camper; inform people how to deal with man camp problems * Publish in other languages * send out a monthly newsletter * Spanish classes in schools and for adults
<p>Karla Monson Bottineau County Extension (Family and Consumer Science) Bottineau, ND</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Housing * Roads and infrastructure * Trailers use up available space for tourism * Students not prepared for winter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Local chamber investigating ways which community can prepare * Partner with economic development center and chamber
<p>Tim Semler Bottineau County Extension (Agriculture and Natural Resources) Bottineau, ND</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Roads * Housing * Surface owner rights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Provide support and information to agencies * Act as consultants * County level agents needs are being worked on * Surface rights information

<p>Calli Thorne McKenzie County Extension (Agriculture and Natural Resources) Watford City, ND</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Road safety * Zoning regulations * Increased crime * Increase cost of living 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Come in for information to make connections in town, gardens, board horses * Water testing * Partnerships with agencies, attend meetings * Williston State college placed rep/ continuing education
<p>Heather Wissness McKenzie and Williams County Extension (Family Nutrition Program)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Roads and infrastructure * Students being in poor living conditions * Stress to services and schools- lack of staff * Lack of housing, childcare * Increased cost of living 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Modify programs for easy cook meals * Attempted a community garden * 4-H mentoring program * Food pantry leadership restructure

Appendix 3. Programs Available or Under Consideration by Non-Extension Organizations in the Bakken Oil Region

Name/Organization	Needs/Issues/Concerns	Organizational Programs
<p>April J. Economic Developer Dunn County Job Development Authority</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Crime * Increase in domestic violence * Bar fights * Litter * Resistance to Growth * People coming without jobs and unqualified for oil jobs * Daycare shortage * Housing * A little price gouging * Tourism adversely affected * Deterioration of roads 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Looking to add more housing
<p>Rick L. McKenzie County Commissioner</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Rural: Roads * Towns: Housing * Shortages and high costs * Increased domestic violence * Oil companies get price gouged * Tourism: no place to stay 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Training childcare providers
<p>Brian Q. Director Lutheran Social Services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Decrease in economic assistance programs * Housing * Homelessness 	

<p>Kevin H. Principal Stanley High School</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Dramatic school population fluctuation * Some students don't remain full school year; difficult for planning * Language barrier in schools * Students learning about other cultures * Students not best academically * Students are not in one place long enough * McKinley Act-homelessness not learning disability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Change in education philosophy * Checking student's backgrounds in order to anticipate situation
<p>Mary K. Editor Stanley newspaper</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Differences in Help Wanted section * No need to advertise for housing; news spreads by mouth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Provide classes and materials to newcomers to teach them how to survive in North Dakota as well as language instruction
<p>Diane O. Bottineau Economic Development Center</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Road conditions * Little awareness of zoning regulations and how they can be used to protect residents' interests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Worked with commissioners to reduce speed limits * Looking at clarifying zoning regulations in the county * Adopt the use of industrial parks * Putting together a proposal for the county
<p>John A. Senator North Dakota State Legislature</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Boom making it difficult for services to get done * Some have environmental concerns * Shortage of professionals * Huge demand for workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Increased share or oil tax distribution to local governments

Allan R. Burke County Commissioner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Roads * Housing: Most livable housing is occupied 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Try to work with those impacted * Go to oil company meetings and ND Department of Transportation meetings
Tim S. Divide County Commissioner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Roads * Housing shortage * Possibly more crime 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Hired more staff * Bought new equipment
Viola L. Superintendent Williston Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Increased enrollment * Uncertainty in enrollment * Trouble hiring teachers * Expectations of parents are not the same as reality of school situation * More students special needs * More homeless students * Language barriers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Portable classrooms * Opened alternative school * Implemented Kick Start High: Prepares “at risk” students for high school
Deann L. Manager Community Action Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Housing * Staffing issues * Funding cuts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Manage apartments
Lois R. Director Williams County Social Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Housing * Especially affordable housing * Difficult to find staff * Increase child protection reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Parenting and Independent Living programs * Could shift Parenting Coordinator position to Extension * Divorced parent classes

Casey H. Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Decrease in economic assistance numbers * Staffing issues * Issues with employment quality * Businesses finding it tough to rent space 	
Doug G. Resource Conservation and Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Housing * Infrastructural deterioration * Not enough funds to fix infrastructure * Increase in traffic * Landowners do not want to sell for development 	* City is applying for funding to repair infrastructural damage
Scott B. Williams County Sherrif	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Lax of affordable housing * Influx of criminals * Social Services, Salvation Army stretched to limit * Crime more violent * Increasing lax background check by oil companies 	* Added more highway patrol
KayCee H. Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Lack of housing * Difficulties of businesses keeping and hiring employees because of housing * Price gouging * Drivers running through stop signs, trucks through school zones, etc * More students with special needs 	

Edna T. Williston Chamber of Commerce	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Poor employment quality* High housing costs* People moving to area with about being properly informed* Families living in parking lots	<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Temporary, mobile classrooms* Educational expense aid* Facility planning
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