



News and Notes

December 2014

A Progress Report on the Northern Plains Nitrogen Fertilizer Production Facility

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From the President's Desk

The demand for regional supplies of nitrogen fertilizer will continue to grow as farmers face pressure to produce more and to produce more efficiently. Even though the United States is the world's third-largest nitrogen producer (according to the Fertilizer Institute), nitrogen suppliers must import from up to 19 different countries by some estimates. And while new production is coming online from Northern Plains Nitrogen and others, North Dakota producers on their own already use more fertilizer annually than any one of the proposed plants can produce; add the demand from producers in Canada and neighboring states, and the need for new production is clear.

That's the message I've been delivering whenever I've had the opportunity to speak to different audiences. Most recently, Don Pottinger, the CEO of Northern Plains Nitrogen, and I told the NPN story at the Northern Ag Expo in Fargo during the first week in December.



Darin Anderson speaking to Northern Ag Expo earlier in December

Increasing regional production of nitrogen is good news for producers throughout the northern plains and Canada. When a product is purchased by the ton, keeping transportation costs as low as possible is key. Northern Plains Nitrogen's Grand Forks site is adjacent to the BNSF railroad and the north-south Highway 29 and east-west Highway 2. Shorter distances from production to market eliminates logistical issues and costs associated with long distance freight.

The demand for food production will continue to increase as the world's population continues to grow and more people in developing countries gain the wealth to purchase more food. But this year's low commodity prices reinforce the importance of managing costs as effectively as possible. That was the heart of my message to the Ag Expo.

While NPN still faces hurdles, we continue to be confident that we are on track to be a valuable partner in cost-management for area producers.

Sincerely,
Darin Anderson
Darin Anderson
President, NPN Board

State Approves Water Plan

The North Dakota State Water Commission recently approved a proposal to supply

water for users in a growing Grand Forks industrial area, including Northern Plains Nitrogen.

NPN's core plan relies on using reclaimed water from the nearby Grand Forks' wastewater treatment plant (WWTP). The reclaimed water will conserve the region's supply of fresh water and reduce and prevent pollution.

The Water Commission's approval is for a backup plan to draw water directly from the Red River if needed. The commissioners approved the proposal, noting that levels in the river should not be affected by the plan.

Drones in Your Future?

Unmanned Aerial Vehicles – drones – could be a great benefit to farmers, but future uses depend on still-pending regulations expected from the Federal Aviation Administration. That's the opinion John Nowatzki, an agricultural machine systems specialist at North Dakota State University, shared with an audience at the Northern Ag Expo in Fargo, according to a Dec. 8 report in [*Prairie Business*](#).

The rapidly-developing technology could be especially useful and cost-efficient in identifying areas of fields that need special attention, including the use of fertilizer, pesticides or herbicides.

According to *USA Today*, "The Association for Unmanned Vehicle Systems International, the trade group that represents producers and users of drones and other robotic equipment, predicts that 80 percent of the commercial market for drones will eventually be for agricultural uses."

According to *Prairie Business*, drone research conducted by NDSU has convinced Nowatzki, "that many farmers would find drones useful in their operations, as the conventional photos and thermal images drones provide can help farmers pinpoint areas that need attention.

"The unknown right now, Nowatzki said, is how future regulations may affect the agricultural applications of drones. There's a possibility, he said, that the FAA will require any drone flown for commercial use, including farming, be guided by a licensed pilot.

"I don't think that's needed," Nowatzki said, adding, however, that he believes

it would be wise for drone operators to have some pilot training.”

Updated Website

NPN has a new look to its website. The site includes current news articles and updates on the project and background information on how NPN will serve producers throughout the region.

The site is available at www.NorthernPlainsNitrogen.com

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