

What's the cost of oil and natural gas development?

Posted: Friday, September 17, 2010 12:00 am

Are there others out there who are as concerned as I am about what is happening to our great state of North Dakota in regards to the current level of oil and natural gas development?

Please understand that I am not an anti-oil drilling advocate. I am however, a North Dakota citizen who is becoming very alarmed by what I have read, heard and seen regarding this unprecedented turn of events. Infrastructure problems, inflation, housing shortages, crime, traffic congestion, dust and safety issues, massive water and electricity consumption, environmental degradation, the list goes on.

Public officials and politicians repeatedly stress the economic benefits being realized, but I ask, at what cost? It seems much of this monetary gain will be needed to solve the very problems being created.

Conscientious and cautious planning and visions for the future need to be in place to preserve our quality of life. Eventually, outside interests will have plundered and taken advantage of our resources and our beautiful countryside is going to look scarred.

The very character that has made North Dakota one of the last great places in the United States, is going to be damaged to a point that reclamation is going to be a long and arduous process, if even possible. The acceleration has got to slow down to a more manageable pace. The oil will still be here when these problems and issues have been addressed. Public concerns and input have got to be heard and respected. We all have a vested interest in what is transpiring in our state. It may not be monetary for everyone, but that does not make it any less valuable. The results are affecting each and every one of us now and future generations to come.

Janell Hermann

Dickinson

Children should not be taught to glorify oil

Posted: Friday, January 28, 2011 12:00 am

Kudos to the Rickard Elementary students for their accomplishments in reading ("Winning at Reading" article in the Jan. 12 paper).

Reading can offer many perspectives on many different subjects and can open the eyes and minds of anyone. I am hoping that all the "Rockin' the Bakken" hoopla is not glorifying oil in the eyes of the young. Everything comes with a price and the kids should know both sides.

Do they realize the impact it is having on other interests? That lek needed for grouse breeding? Gone. The nesting area where the increasingly rare Sprague's pipit will return? Gone. Maybe it was just a scenic spot to rest your horse and picnic, but it's gone or forever changed.

The quiet and fresh air has been replaced with mechanical noises and dust, exhaust, and unknown fumes. Much of wildlife needs unbroken, undisturbed stretches for breeding, survival, and migrations, but that is disappearing. For many people none of this matters as long as there is money to be had, but there are alot of people for whom it IS important. If the crazy pace continues, there will much more negative impact in all areas, including tourism and hunting. Children have the opportunity to learn that their area has so much more to offer than just oil and money. North Dakota is such an outdoor state. Without a balance, the raw and rugged beauty of this area will not even be known by the younger generation. Young people should know the upside and the downside of things so they are able to make educated decisions and form their own opinions on a variety of subjects. It will serve them well in life.

Shelly Ventsch

New Town

Let's not lower oil tax

Posted: Friday, February 4, 2011 12:00 am

I was at the Williston meeting hosted by former Gov. Ed Schafer and his "Fix the Tax" campaign.

I am really not sure if I will be heard by Gov. Schafer but I will give it a try.

I am a farmer in the Epping area dealing with a great deal of oil activity and these are my thoughts on the matter.

I am NOT in favor of lowering the tax at this time. When oil companies can recoup an oil well's cost of drilling in 3 to 5 years AND tie up 1,280 mineral acres forever at the same time — tax is not the issue. Return on investment is the driving force and getting control of as many mineral acres, in as short a period of time as possible, is the name of the game right now.

I am NOT in favor of the mass amount of money being in the hands of state government and our growing short term dependence on oil revenue.

As a business man I know there are two sides to this ND government problem (income and expense).

The income side needs to be slowed down if ND is truly looking to make this oil last for many years to come and not destroy us in the short term. How do we do that? Let's start with the simplest and fastest way. We need to demand that the State Industrial Commission tell the oil companies they will only permit 75 wells per month, or 900 per year. This is all this state and area infrastructure can logistically handle. Then let each oil company figure out when and where they want to lease, permit and drill. This would spread the leasing and drilling systematically out over many more years than what is presently happening and reduce the money coming into state coffers now and spread it out as well.

This is no different than me selling deferred grain so as to spread out my income. If I sell all my grain in one year and then run and buy a tractor, so I don't get eaten alive by taxes that year, I have set myself up for dependence on the bank and possible financial disaster the next year.

The ND Fish & Game does this with paddle fishing. They realize over-fishing will destroy this sport so when about 1,000 fish have been caught, the season is closed for that year.

A few years ago it took an oil company about 60 days to drill a well and the rig was moved down the road about every two months. A successful well then would tie up about 160 mineral acres. We had about 150 drilling rigs at the peak. What was the success rate for those wells, 80 percent?

What was the average well cost, including dry holes)? What was the average number of years it took to pay for a successful well? What was the average break-even production number and oil price for those wells? How much water did an average well produce at that time?

Now it takes an oil company about 35 days to drill a well and thus it moves down the road about once every month. A successful well now ties up about 1,280 mineral acres. We now have about 165 drilling rigs and companies are looking for more. What is the success rate today: 95 percent or higher? What is the average well cost (including dry holes) today? What is the average number of years it takes to pay for a successful well today? What is the average break even production number and oil price for horizontal wells today? How much water does an average well produce today?

If we, the citizens of North Dakota, are being asked to lower the oil tax, we have the right to ask the hard questions and receive the true and verifiable answers to these types of questions.

It is my understanding that about 63 percent of the mineral acres are owned by people outside this state and as such about 63 percent of all royalty monies

WHY has the State Industrial Commission sold the state out to Big Oil? They have the power to slow down this destruction of our state and resources and put some order into long term energy growth. They have the power to make this ND BUBBLE last for many years.

I voted for Schafer and had great respect for his leadership of our state and am thus a little perplexed by his efforts to lower the tax at the present time. We as ND united citizens should be able to demand the Industrial Commission slow this train down and let us catch up on all our needs.

Rolf Gjorven

Epping

Reader questions oil and gas effects on cattle

Posted: Friday, April 1, 2011 12:00 am

I noticed the March 29 edition of the Williston Herald featured front page an article titled "Holy Cow." I find it rather odd that the beef industry in the northwest North Dakota region has not been made aware of the effects of oil and gas on cattle. This is yet another failure of our state and local agencies to make sure proper information on the health effects of the oil and gas industry are made aware to the public. Several studies have been done linking cattle to flare type emissions and hydrocarbons and health effects and risks. These studies are easily accessed on the Internet, the following is an excerpt from an article, titled "Sour-Gas Flaring and Animal Health" that appeared in the publication HazMat Management in 1999.

"Acute exposures to flaring-type emissions may initiate irritation of mucous membranes (ocular and respiratory) and cause clinical respiratory signs plus lesions of irritation or "chemical pneumonia." Of concern in young calves is the suppression of normal immune functions that predisposes them to infection.

"A more chronic effect may be on the reproductive-endocrine systems. (Researches) found a negative association between levels of sour gas emissions and an increased calving interval and between levels of SO₂ from large industrial sources and altered calving season. Other adverse effects include: abnormalities in pregnant and post- parturient cows; and (possibly) abortions and increased risk of twins. Studies show that some polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons are endocrine disrupters that can behave as estrogen antagonists and modify the availability of estrogens in target tissues.

"Possibly related to the impact on reproductive-endocrine systems is an association of exposure to flare-type emissions and abnormal nervous system function. This effect reflects a highly lipid organ targeted by xenobiotics. Potential effects include depressed animal productivity that may be reversible but which has an economically important impact on cattle producers. Impacts include: depressed milk production, prolonged feeding time in a feedlot, lowered weaning weights in calves sprayed by condensate, and increased morbidity and mortality."

I would hope that if our state agencies are not going to educate the public, that responsible livestock owners will educate them selves for the sake of the cattle industry.

A concerned livestock owner,

Jacki Boid

Williston

More on oil and bathrooms

Posted: Friday, September 23, 2011 12:00 am

I read Jene Dionne's Sept. 15 column about the oil industry and bathrooms, and it made me chuckle.

It was definitely a unique view of the oil industry, and I also think it was a little bit on the silly side.

I don't think beliefs have anything to do with it. Whether the oil came from God, dinosaur fossils or the flying spaghetti monster, it doesn't change the fact that oil is a non-renewable resource.

I like my bathroom too, as well as my electronics, car and all of the other things made available to me because of oil. I like that oil has provided my husband with a good job and given our family opportunities that we may not have had without it. I would never suggest trying to remove the use of oil from our daily lives.

That being said, we have an obligation not only to our planet but to future generations to ensure that they also have the ability to live a life that has the same level of quality that our own lives have today.

Oil is not going to run out any time soon, but we have the means and technology to start developing renewable forms of energy... so why shouldn't we?

Why not take advantage of ALL of the available options to us? One day the oil could run out, wouldn't it be fantastic if, by that time, oil was no longer a necessity?

Sure, that's not going to happen in our lifetime and probably not even our children's lifetime, but the possibility is out there and if we start now we can give future generations a foundation to build on using renewable energy sources instead of relying on oil.

At the end of the day I don't see a lot of people pushing for us to stop using oil completely, but what I do see are more and more people realizing that maybe we need to start developing new technologies because oil won't last forever.

Lisa Newson

Williston

Be careful with oil

Posted: Saturday, September 24, 2011 12:00 am

In regards to Jene Dionne's column in the Herald on Sept. 15, I believe everyone is entitled to their own religious beliefs, and I will share some of mine. I too believe God is responsible for the earth and its resources. I also enjoy today's lifestyle that is much easier than a century or more ago. I don't believe God cares if we use oil, but I believe He cares how we get it, and how we use it. In the extracting process and in our usage, we should take care to also protect our other gifts, the necessities of our water, air, and food supply. Another important consideration should be the people. Neither the previous residents nor the new residents should consider themselves to have the right of way all the time, literally and metaphorically.

My point is: We do need some fossil fuels, but not at the expense of our surroundings, as I fear is happening. I think the extraction process should be done slowly and carefully, remembering it is a finite resource that took millions of years to create. I (probably unlike many currently living here) intend to live here long term, and want it to be as habitable in the future as it was when I began my life here.

Dorothy Ventsch

New Town

Oil and parks don't mix

Posted: Thursday, September 29, 2011 12:00 am

What is wrong with North Dakota?

I understand that the State has sold its mineral rights to drill just 500 yards north of Lewis & Clark State Park. Have they ever thought of how that could ruin the park? Have they done any studies? What about all the noise, traffic, amount of trucks, spills and smell?

Speaking of smell, there will be children at a playground just 500 yards away to the south and our dominant winds are from the north. As far as spills, just this summer there was a tanker truck that rolled on 118th street (1 mile east of the park) carrying hazard waste and the Emergency Disaster team had to be called to check for spills when the truck was laying and when they set it up. The team was called because of two creeks running into Lake Sakakawea and one of the creeks goes by Lewis and Clark State Park. As for naturalists, where are our natural resource people at?

We are talking about ruining the landscape, making an eye sore and taking away some of the best scenery for camping.

Another thing that bothers me is that we have one of the only states that are financially sound with money. In fact we are in the black as they report.

What I would like to see is that there would be a zone from our parks where they could drill and it wouldn't bother the park. Is our state going to sell out other departments or which park is going down next?

A friend of Lewis and Clark State Park,

David Bauer

Williston

Pay to play in oil country

Posted: Saturday, December 3, 2011 12:00 am

If you go to a casino or a card game you have to “pay to play.” If you go golfing, you “pay to play.”

If you take in sports, you pay; go hunting or fishing, you pay. Go to school, you pay.

My point is the oil field has always been referred to as “the play” in the “Bakken,” the “Red River,” “the Three Forks” and other zones. These are all called “plays.” So how about some up-front money help, engineering and expertise from the participants? All of the costs of acquiring setting up, drilling, producing and moving the product to refineries are documented including all the payouts and royalties. One of the most important expenses has been left out — that is the damage and stress to the existing infrastructure, roads, water, sewage, electric grid, other utilities, schools, park and public entities.

There should be a fixed monthly cost and up-front charge to every entity involved in that production cycle. Not waiting till after they go, before they start we must have someone somewhere in city, county or state government that can jump on this and start a process of “Infrastructure Depletion Account.”

This should be in the form of a monthly tax placed on any monies derived from oil field production or a fixed sort of denominators on different aspect, such as leasing, (both parties) actual drilling, service companies, transportation, etc. The oil companies themselves should be used as guides and their input for calculating.

Every little cost in bringing in a “well” from an “idea” is documented, every dime spent is in that paper trail. It’s just a matter of the infrastructure expense requirements. Not with a six-month study but more or less an immediate “bond issue” or commitment by all parties. The stopping of water hook-ups and the stopping of man camps, tell “em” the news pay to play, not just rent, real long term infrastructure. NOW, not three years from now. If oil companies want to drill bad enough they will come up with acceptable solutions. We’re getting a “glimpse” of what hell looks like, and if we continue to let it go on unchecked and unfunded, we will be guilty of making the same stupid mistakes as last time and expecting a different result. Those entities and individuals that will resist this analogy are probably here just for the buck, and we would be a lot better off without them. We’re not going to get this done by sitting on our butts. Let’s get the legislators, the governor, service clubs, public employees and individuals involved.

John Kraft

Williston

Fed up with the oil boom way of life

Posted: Tuesday, January 24, 2012 10:46 am

Despite its relatively modest sample size, the recent survey by the Dickinson Press on local attitudes towards the oil boom is still instructive: two-thirds of western North Dakotans HATE it.

Perhaps that states the obvious, and yet the so-called "leaders" of our state either don't get it, or they are deliberately ignoring the fact that residents of western North Dakota are fed up with "man camps," unsafe communities and traffic, outrageous rental rates, and unsightly impacts to the very land which supports every aspect of life in western Dakota. While they express concern for the overloaded physical infrastructure in the area, they pay no heed to the equally overwhelmed spiritual and emotional "infrastructure" of the longtime inhabitants of western North Dakota.

Did any of the greedy oil companies or state "leaders" bother to ask if we WANTED to live in an "oil patch" no matter the impact on our way of life?

While greed may be a virtue in some other universe, it is not in ours, and North Dakotans in particular ought to know better.

Most of us longtime Dakotans kind of liked what we had before this extreme "boom," namely the blue sky, good roads with light traffic, an agriculturally driven economy along with modest oil activity, relative safety from the afflictions of the rest of America, and the reasonable expectation that our rural, western innocence was a good thing. Because we are imbued with a good measure of common sense and general absence of greed, we survived the recent economic distress of the rest of America relatively unscathed- yet we are now creating a monster oil "bubble" which will inevitably bust, leaving we stoic "locals" with a very real mess to clean up- again (remember the last boom?).

Good-hearted as western North Dakotans and eastern Montanans tend to be, it was never our job to rescue the rest of America from its greedy excesses by employing America's unemployed, nor is it up to us to supply America with oil. Yes, we do have a responsibility to ameliorate some of both, but not at the cost of annihilation of the people and land.

Common sense would suggest that we keep some of our valuable oil where Mother Nature has kept it for millions of years: in the Bakken, Three Forks and other oil-bearing formations just in case America and North Dakota need oil in 50, 100 or 500 years.

Why the mad rush to extract all of the oil in a few years?

Visionary thinking would also suggest that we keep some of the oil-related jobs we are presently giving to non-residents for future generations of North Dakotans and Montanans.

While it can be said that a "boom" is by definition an explosion of greed, moderation is clearly the better path by any logical measurement- and far less destructive to the land and inhabitants of western North Dakota and eastern Montana. Prudence would also suggest that we start limiting the cause (wild oil boom) of our overwhelmed landscape and communities rather than just treating the symptoms (deteriorating infrastructure and western, rural way of life). We should be able to do vastly better than the current mess. And, imagine how refreshing it would be if the oil companies would for once exercise some self-restraint and responsibility to the land and people of western North Dakota and eastern Montana. Imagine that, and that the so-called "leaders" of this state finally realize that the majority of western North Dakotans have had it with this extreme "oil boom" and its disastrous consequences...if not, we can all vote in the next election.

Sincerely,

John A. Heiser

Grassy Butte

Don't blame oil in Arnold case

Posted: Friday, January 27, 2012 9:51 am

In the Bakken oil patch town of Sidney, Mont, life will never be the same. The disappearance and presumed murder of Sherry Arnold has shattered the community's long-held sense of safety and security, leaving its people restless and heartbroken---burdened by the tremendous weight of "why?" Allegedly, there are only two men out there who can answer that question, and both are now in custody. Our challenge is to remain calm and await answers.

In the lull of such an enormous loss, many are haphazardly connecting the dots between a senseless tragedy and the oil boom. I implore you to resist this natural human inclination. The benefits of oil development in the Bakken are well documented. The oil boom is creating jobs, providing security, feeding families, and fueling prosperity. It's a North Dakota miracle that's improving lives well beyond the borders of our state, but it's also hitting these communities at a breakneck speed. Lifelong residents in oil-rich towns from Sidney, Mont., to Stanley, N.D., can attest to how challenging the influx of activity can be. They have a right to be concerned about crime, but let's not cast an entire group of hardworking folks as criminals.

As of right now, we know very little about this case. What we do know is the suspects were in Colorado days before this crime occurred. Did they come here to find work? That's still to be determined. Understandably, folks are frustrated. But instead of leaping to inaccurate conclusions about outsiders who're here to make a better life for themselves, we need to channel our frustrations to find answers. And above all, the most pressing answer we need right now is the location of Sherry Arnold.

Here's a start to that effort---after the senseless murder of a University of North Dakota college student in 2003, serial sex offender Alfonso Rodriguez was given an opportunity to show some compassion by then US Attorney Drew Wrigley. The deal was simple: if Rodriguez would disclose the whereabouts of the victim's body, he would be spared the death penalty (if found guilty). Rodriguez refused, was convicted, and is currently serving his sentence on death row. Shouldn't that story be shared with the suspects who know where the body of this beloved mother, wife and math teacher lies? Might they wish to avoid the same fate, in exchange for a simple answer?

In the meantime, let's not jump to conclusions. We can and must have a productive conversation about crime and community concerns in due time. But the frenetic pace of our North Dakota miracle is not responsible for the murder of Sherry Arnold. Two men in a Williston jail cell are.

Let's look for answers in the name of compassion.

Scott Hennen

Fargo

Scott Hennen is the host of "The Common Sense Club" radio show and author of the book "Grassroots-A Common Sense Action Agenda for America". His website is www.ScottHennen.com. His email is Scott@ScottHennen.com

Putting the pieces together about nation's oil industry

Posted: Friday, February 10, 2012 10:41 am

I read Robert Arrowsmith's column in last Friday's Williston Herald and thought: At long last, an American that is putting the pieces together about our oil industry.

There was a long article in the Wall Street Journal this past year that explained the reasons for our West Texas crude being used for export instead of staying in this country for our use. It seems our oil is of too high a quality to use in our refineries which are designed to refine the heaviest crude oil in the world.

We don't build our refineries to refine our light sweet crude oil, although we have the best refinery technology, instead we send our oil which doesn't require near as much processing to countries in the Middle East who can't refine their own oil or to Venezuela which also can't refine their heavy oils. We are stockpiling our oil in a town called Cushing, Okla., and can't get it down to the Gulf Coast until more pipelines are built. This whole market is driven by demand of course and that demand for our WTC is very high and we can get top dollar overseas for it. Why sell it to the American market when we can buy heavier crude and our refineries are designed to process this heavy crude? This article pointed out that our last refinery was either being built for light sweet crude in this country and than all future ones would be heavy oil refineries.

This type of capitalism which is strictly based on the quarter's profits is exactly what the government should control. Free markets are not always the best long term solution. What about sustainability and those other buzz words like independence from foreign oil. I think the politicians and the corporations just throw them around to convince people they care when they actually refuse to interfere with the market place unless the large companies are failing than they bail them out for their short-sightedness and the cycle continues.

Why should the government actually think further ahead than the next four years? They don't, otherwise this whole oil export industry would have been shaken up years ago. Try and dig up that Wall Street Journal article and then answer your own questions to the public, they need to know and most of them don't read the WSJ.

Mike Zornig

Athens, Ga.

P.S. I am following the Williston area as a possible relocation area for myself and family. I am an out-of-work builder with 30 years experience that needs a new start, and Williston needs housing it looks like. Perhaps you know a contractor in the area that could use my help. Georgia has pretty much shut down.

Oil workers clean up area

Posted: Wednesday, May 2, 2012 1:26 pm

As I was driving out of town Saturday, what a nice sight it was to see people cleaning out ditches. That's not what people want to do on a beautiful Saturday, but an oil field company was doing just that. An oil field company asked their employees to donate their time and help clean up Williston.

Over half the employees of Stallion Oil Field Services along with family and friends volunteered to help. Not only do they make money in the basin, but also donate to several organizations. They sponsor little league baseball teams, hockey teams and the Williston High School band for the energy festival.

There were two other teams out there picking up garbage and I want to give all who cleaned up Williston a big thank you. After cleaning up, Stallion fed all who had participated in the event. They even had their own company pick up all the bags of garbage and dispose of them at the land fill. I was raised in Williston and have lived here all my life and I appreciate the opportunities the oil field has brought the to this area. Not all things about the oil field people are bad. Thank you to all the oil field companies who are helping to keep the Williston area clean.

Teresa Horob

Williston

Reflecting back on the first Williston oil boom

Posted: Thursday, June 21, 2012 11:47 am

I monitor the Bakken Boom from a safe 2,200 miles from my hometown, which I left 19 years ago. The Herald's news and editorial pages paint a picture of a place I can hardly wrap my brain around. And at the same time, great memories come to the surface.

I remember Williston's first oil boom like it was yesterday—and it was 60 years ago. I was seven years old. Williston's population was about 8,000 back then, when suddenly strangers started moving into our neighborhood—people from exotic places like, Texas, Oklahoma and New Mexico.

Their children became some of my best friends. What's not to like about the John and Pauline Auten family who moved in across the street with a boy named Johnny and three little girls who wore homemade polka dot organdy dresses and went by the names of Dickie Fay, Dorothy Jo and Kay Honey? Next door lived newspaperman Jim and Lorraine Key and their young brood. He left the news biz to seek his fortune in the oil biz (which he did several times). Around the corner and down a few houses, a smooth-talking Texan, Bill Walters and Lillian, settled in with their young family. Across the street from them Bob and Cumie Demaree had a houseful. I played with their kids, too. To my young mind, I thought Southern Cumie was as glamorous as the movie stars who graced the big screens at the Grand and Snyder theaters. Somehow, with a houseful of rambunctious youngsters, she managed to float above it all. It was beautiful. She was beautiful.

Many a party took place in our knotty pine basement at 812 Fourth Avenue East. The women dressed in cocktail dresses, adorned themselves with sparkly, chunky jewelry and wore cocktail hats. The men sometimes even wore tuxedos. I observed it all perched at top of the basement stairs, and surveyed the full ashtrays and empty martini glasses after they all traipsed off to the Elk's Club for dinner. Good times. It was all good times.

While this first oil boom went on only a few years, many of those oilmen stayed and continued to build their families and fortunes and remained lifelong friends. More lifelong friendships were forged when the 1970s and 1980s oil boomlets came along. They were less dramatic, but the fun was there. But the Bakken Boom is different. They say I wouldn't recognize my old hometown. From afar it almost sounds scary—the traffic accidents, the crime, the housing shortage, Joad-esque stories of the down-and-out coming up to North Dakota as a last resort. This reality contrasts with my fond memories of so long ago.

The WHS Class of 1962 holds its 50th reunion this year. We will come together in the fall from across the United States to remember Williston in a simpler time, when we played in the snow in the winter and ran through the grass in the summer, coming and going out of unlocked doors. We've got our plane tickets, and the motel room and rental car are reserved. I guess the goal is to make it out of Boomtown alive.

Liz Cantarine

Lakewood Ranch, Fla.

Rock Steady in the Bakken

Posted: Tuesday, July 24, 2012 12:06 pm

A lot of good news has been coming out of North Dakota recently. Most notably, the Bakken oil field has helped North Dakota buck the national economic slump by creating new jobs and tax revenues. Thanks to the Bakken, North Dakota has the lowest unemployment rate and fastest growing economy in the nation.

As the oil industry completes its infrastructure design phase and enters its full development phase in 2012 and 2013, there's good news for residents, officials and community leaders in the oil communities experiencing this remarkable growth. Soon, nearly all of the infrastructure needed to develop the Bakken will be in place, and western North Dakota is settling into a period of steady growth.

We appreciate North Dakotans' cooperation and patience in tackling the challenge of infrastructure in the Bakken. Now that the area of the oil field is defined, the objective going forward is to optimize production and improve efficiency over the lifespan of the field, which is projected to be longer than 30 years.

So while North Dakota will continue to benefit from the Bakken for many years to come, the need for new oil field infrastructure and workers is leveling off. And with the Bakken field being well defined, development will be limited to the western third of the state in primarily rural areas.

There will be thousands of new wells drilled in the Bakken, but that drilling activity will be spread out over the next 30 years using the most efficient and ecologically sound technology available.

In addition to using advanced technologies, the oil and gas industry is building permanent employee housing and installing new oil, gas and water lines this summer and beyond to reduce truck traffic on the roads. Through oil and gas taxes, the industry is also responsible for \$1 out of every \$4 of state revenue. Due to the dramatic increase in tax revenues, North Dakota is making unprecedented investments in infrastructure in this region. Last year, the legislature approved \$1 billion in improvements, including the expansion of highways, water treatment plants, and sewer lines in oil and gas producing counties.

North Dakota has been blessed with an abundance of natural resources, including some of the richest agricultural land in the world and now the nation's largest oil field discovery in more than 40 years.

Adding the development of the Bakken to the arsenal of North Dakota's resources has made North

Dakota the premier state in America, lessening our dependence on foreign oil and, in fact, leading the way to achieving North American Energy Independence in the next decade. Continental Resources is committed to the Bakken and to “Doing it Right.” I believe the best of the Bakken for North Dakota is yet to come—it’s going to be a bright future in the Peace Garden State.

Harold Hamm

Chairman and Chief Executive Officer
of Continental Resources

Preparing for the oil bust

Posted: Wednesday, April 10, 2013 10:31 am

The money from oil is only temporary.

Within four or five years, the current oil boom will go bust. North Dakota receives 11.5 percent of the oil revenue now. Please spend it wisely.

Our dad was born in Williston in 1915 and our great aunt Claudina homesteaded at Charlson more than 100 years ago. The Amerada Oil Company struck oil on her property more than 60 years ago. Our family has received royalties on this ever since.

I think it is only temporary, and we need to prepare for the coming oil bust in four or five years. Let's not depend too much on the oil money. Thank You.

On the other hand I am only a poor cousin and I need all the royalty money I can get. But I think it will all go bust in four to five years.

Lynn Olsson

Sandpoint, Idaho

Oil companies should start bailing this town out

Posted: Saturday, April 20, 2013 2:52 pm

Here we go again.

Everyone got their favorite letter from the property assessor's office. When does the greed quit here? I want to know where all the money is going from the city's oil wells.

Who is pocketing that? My property taxes are now equal to one month's wages. I don't have one of those fancy oilfield jobs. I now know why all the elderly and lower-income people are moving out of here.

Looks like it doesn't pay to believe in the state Legislature either. It's too bad. Just remember we're "keeping it local" right? It should read "Keep it loco."

The oil companies should start bailing out this town. They should assess the new people building here and the wealthy, not the people that actually want to live here and that have been here for a long time.

Troy Johnson

Williston

Things are really looking up

Posted: Saturday, October 26, 2013 6:05 pm

When horizontal drilling kick started the Bakken in 2007, few of us expected the energy industry to grow so large so quickly.

Similarly, we never expected the immense change to our communities in western North Dakota, changes of both tremendous challenges and incredible opportunities.

Today, our communities are evolving and we are better able to handle our growth. Relief funding from the state is building better roads and helping us hire essential personnel. Permanent housing is under construction. Retail and service businesses are emerging. We see new residents choose our communities as a long-term place for their families and careers.

For the first years of the boom, our communities played catch up. We were inundated with traffic, workers and construction. Our cities lacked the capacity, experience, funding and shared vision needed to handle explosive growth. Today, the storm has calmed and our cities and counties are formulating long-term growth plans.

We've put in place zoning requirements, developed plans for new development and increased the safety of our communities with new police officers and judges. New proposed projects will increase the quality of our healthcare, better our water and sewer infrastructure, and add hundreds of homes to our small towns — in addition to the thousands of new homes in Williston.

New commercial projects, such as the grocery store in Watford City, are bettering the services we utilize every day. Our local governments have balanced growing state relief funding with the ever-growing demand for city services. In Arnegard, we have utilized state funding and created strategic partnerships to meet our challenges.

The city recently added its first police chief with the help of an \$83,000 grant from the Oil and Gas Impact Grant Fund and hopes to build new affordable housing for city employees using special funding options from the North Dakota Finance Agency.

But even with record funding from the state, local governments are still strained and are looking to creative sources of developing infrastructure.

Because funding sources are thoroughly tapped, communities in the Bakken expect developers to fund the entire costs of new infrastructure, a practice not required by cities on the eastern side of North Dakota, who routinely split the costs for new development.

Similarly, Arnegard partnered with a private company to add the city's first sewer services, unlocking our community for further growth. Encouragingly, as the energy industry transitions to controlled growth and our area's infrastructure improves, involvement in our community is growing from new residents and investors.

Our new neighbors are joining the community, volunteering for local groups and efforts, and even taking local leadership roles. When a seat opened on Arnegard's city commission, new residents applied for the opening.

A hopeful vision for the future is forming in western North Dakota. While we have a lot left to do, we see what our communities can become as our cities grow and new residents join the community. We'll have great careers and better services. We'll have fewer trucks and safer roads. We'll build new homes and add new families.

In Arnegard, we hold this hope and vision. After fighting for decades to reverse out-migration, the energy industry has brought a tremendous opportunity to our city and we look forward to welcoming new families into our community.

Together with them, we will build a vibrant small town, a growing community full of character and shared values.

Virginia Elliot

Mayor of Arnegard

Dakotans should embrace oil industry

Posted: Saturday, November 9, 2013 5:25 pm

North Dakotans should have a strong perception and outlook of its energy industry.

Because of oil and gas, our state is thriving. Record-setting tax revenues are reducing income and property taxes. Oil production is driving manufacturing growth for equipment and oilfield supplies. Construction is up across the state as new businesses and new residents move to North Dakota and power our real estate markets.

While other graduates across the country fight for any job at any pay, our college students are finding great jobs in professional fields. As a student myself, I see my friends receive job offers from North Dakota firms who can't find enough people to hire. They get to stay here at home while pursuing ambitious careers, a very different situation than the North Dakota of just a few years ago.

It's time to stop being shortsighted in our attitude of the growth in western North Dakota. While ! we can recognize the needs of the region, the vision of what's to come is so much better. Communities are growing and adding new services they have never had before. As time continues, they'll build better infrastructure allowing for new housing and businesses. These communities will be full of young families with incredible opportunities.

The oil and gas industry has given our state great jobs and wages, opportunities for professionals and workers, unlimited potential for entrepreneurs to start small businesses, and a thriving economy.

Bryce Heustis,

Fargo