The Garrison Diversion Conservancy District (Garrison Diversion) set sights on bringing renewed life to the McClusky Canal through the McClusky Canal Irrigation Project nearly 10 years ago, and since its beginning, the project has continued to grow, successfully utilizing Missouri River water from the McClusky Canal, an original feature of the Garrison Diversion Unit Project, in addition to bringing tremendous benefits to participating farmers.

**McClusky Canal Irrigation Project**

The Dakota Water Resources Act of 2000 authorizes 51,700 acres of irrigation from the McClusky Canal, a 74-mile-long canal designed to carry 1,950 cfs (cubic feet per second) of water for the irrigation of up to 250,000 acres, as well as to provide water for municipal and rural water systems. In an effort to utilize the authorized acres along the McClusky Canal, Garrison Diversion has been working with producers since 2010 to expand irrigation development through the McClusky Canal Irrigation Project. Multiple projects have been completed, and to date, there are approximately 7,200 developed irrigated acres in the McClusky Canal Irrigation Project, with additional projects in the works for the immediate future.

Garrison Diversion provides upfront investment for projects to determine irrigable soils, facility design and the bidding process. The North Dakota State Water Commission provides a one-time cost-share of up to 50 percent for off-farm irrigation infrastructure, such as canal intakes and transmission lines. The irrigator is then responsible for the other 50 percent of the Central Supply Works and 100 percent of the on-farm items, such as pivots, power for pivots and distribution lines to pivots.

**2018 Developments**

A total of 7,241 acres were irrigated through the McClusky Canal Irrigation Project in 2018, putting water on various crops such as corn, beans, potatoes, alfalfa, and sod. A growth in irrigation of 1,840 acres over the 2017 growing season was due to the construction of new irrigation projects and the transfer of water service contracts from the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) to Garrison Diversion.

The expansion of the McClusky Canal Irrigation Project comes at the hands of Garrison Diversion and demonstrates their investment in irrigation development and enhancement in North Dakota. The Mile Marker (MM) 42L Irrigation Project is the newest project along the canal, having just been completed late this summer. The irrigation project utilizes three 150 horsepower (hp) pumps to deliver water to 1,400 acres under an anticipated 15 pivots.

Just across the canal, the early phases of construction began on the MM 42R project in the fall of 2017 and wrapped up at the beginning of the 2018 growing season. The project brings on an additional 75 acres of irrigation from the McClusky Canal and had an alfalfa crop under the pivot this year.

While the irrigation project at MM 15, just southeast of Turtle Lake, was completed in July 2017, an additional 100 hp pump came online in 2018, allowing for the addition of approximately 200 acres. The floating pump is placed directly in the McClusky Canal and joins an existing 125 hp pump, irrigating 540 total acres in the MM 15 irrigation project.

A smaller addition of 65 acres comes at MM 10, near the beginning of the McClusky Canal where the irrigator was able to expand and added a second pivot in 2018 for a total of 200 irrigated acres.

“We’ve had multiple successful accomplishments with
local producers as we’ve worked together developing the McClusky Canal Irrigation Project,” says Ryan Anderson, Garrison Diversion engineer. “As we see ongoing interest in irrigation development up and down the canal, we hope to continue developing additional irrigation projects to benefit even more producers.”

**New Water Service Contracts**

In addition to the newly developed projects along the canal, Garrison Diversion acquired multiple water service contracts held by Reclamation for other existing irrigation developments along the McClusky Canal. The acquisition is beneficial for all parties, as Reclamation only works with Garrison Diversion when dealing with contracts, rather than multiple irrigators. In return, the irrigator benefits from more stability in their water service, as Garrison Diversion and Reclamation hold a long-term irrigation water service contract to guarantee the water supply necessary to provide irrigation waters to farmers near the McClusky Canal.

**Irrigation Provides Positive Economic Impacts**

Irrigation is economically beneficial to farm operations and also provides extensive economic benefits to North Dakota, as determined in a study performed by North Dakota State University (NDSU) in 2014. NDSU studied the regional economic effects of irrigation along the McClusky Canal and found that continued irrigation investment along the McClusky Canal will generate one-time and long-term economic benefits for the state of North Dakota.
The continued expansion of irrigation from the McClusky Canal is a testament to our dedication to agriculture in North Dakota.

– Duane DeKrey, Garrison Diversion General Manager

Based on irrigated corn-on-corn rotation at $4 per bushel and 160 bushels per acre yield, the NDSU study determined the development of 400 center pivots in the authorized area along the McClusky Canal will generate a one-time economic benefit of $82 million statewide, increase crop sales in North Dakota by $18.4 million annually once fully developed, and return an economic impact of $30 million annually after irrigation development is complete.

“The continued expansion of irrigation from the McClusky Canal is a testament to our dedication to agriculture in North Dakota,” says Duane DeKrey, Garrison Diversion general manager. “We are proud to be working with producers in the area to make it financially feasible to invest in irrigation systems near the McClusky Canal.”

For more information on the McClusky Canal Irrigation Project, contact Ryan Anderson with Garrison Diversion at 800-532-0074 or ryana@gdcd.org.