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## Letter from W. E. Potter to Representative Burdick Regarding Garrison Dam, US Army Engineers, and Water Systems for Van Hook and Sanish, North Dakota, April 6, 1950

W. E. Potter

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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF ENGINEERS  
WASHINGTON

James F.

IN REPLY REFER TO  
ENCGWD

6 April 1950

Honorable Usher L. Burdick  
House of Representatives  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Burdick:

Further reference is made to your letter dated 16 February 1950. You requested information regarding the extent to which the Corps of Engineers is authorized to participate in the construction of new water and sewerage systems for the towns of Van Hook and Sanish, North Dakota, which are to be relocated outside the Garrison reservoir area. Your letter was referred to our District Engineer, Garrison District, Bismarck, North Dakota, for further information upon which to base a reply.

The towns of Sanish and Van Hook have no publicly owned water and sewerage systems. Water for Sanish is obtained from privately owned wells and cisterns and from a private vendor who pumps water from the Missouri River into a settling basin and distributes water to the users by tank truck. Sanitary facilities at Sanish and Van Hook consist of a few septic tanks and a larger number of pit latrines all privately owned. The town of Van Hook owns three small wells.

In previous meetings with Sanish village officials and other interested personnel invited to the meeting by the Chairman of the Board of Trustees, it has developed that the residents are divided in their choice of a new townsite. Sites proposed consist of a location north of the village at an existing golf course, a site on the adjacent high bluffs to the south and a site approximately two miles to the east.

It is the desire of the Corps of Engineers to give advice and guidance to local officials in connection with their relocation problems, and at the request of the Sanish village officials, the District Engineer's staff has made engineering investigations to determine the comparative suitability of several sites considered. In connection with the proposed relocation of Sanish, officials have been advised as follows regarding the several sites:

a. North Site - Topography at the north site is generally too steep to provide a satisfactory location. The rough terrain would make relocation of the Soo Line Railroad into this site impracticable. Relocation of State Highway No. 23 through the north site would result in

increased length and greater cost of the new highway bridge across the reservoir. Also, the North Dakota State Highway Department does not favor this location for the highway and bridge. No test wells have been drilled at this site, however, the geology of that area indicates that a ground water supply probably could be developed.

b. South Site - The site located on the high bluffs south of Sanish contains terrain suitable for a townsite. The site is on a bluff about 320 feet above the river and about 230 feet above the maximum normal operating pool. This high, unprotected location would expose the town to severe winter winds. Relocation of the Soo Line Railroad to serve this site would necessitate excessive grades and for that reason is not favored by the railroad officials. No adequate ground water supply was found during exploratory drilling operations.

c. East Site - The third site studied is east of Sanish about two miles where the terrain is adequate for a townsite. It can be directly served by economic and desirable relocations of the railroad and State Highway No. 23. This location further lends itself to the most economic location and best alignment and grade for the highway bridge across the reservoir. Drilling operations revealed an extensive water-bearing sand and gravel formation. Bailing tests indicated that an adequate supply of ground water is available. Analyses of this water by the North Dakota State Health Department laboratory shows the water is of a quality comparable to that in use at neighboring communities.

Preliminary estimates have been made to determine the approximate cost of a water system taking water from the reservoir to serve the site located on the bluffs south of Sanish and the site approximately two miles east of Sanish. Those estimates considered a system using water from the reservoir for both sites and a well water supply for the east site. It is estimated that water intake facilities with the necessary water treatment plant would cost \$123,000 and in addition a distribution system with an elevated tank would cost \$140,000 for a total of \$263,000 for the south site. The additional transmission main for the east site would cost an additional \$24,000 for a total of \$287,000. Operation and maintenance costs are estimated at \$4,600 annually. It was further estimated that an adequate well system at the east site could be constructed at a cost of \$12,000 for wells and \$140,000 for a distribution system with an elevated tank, a total of \$152,000. Annual maintenance and operation for the system using well water is estimated at \$2,200.

Estimates for a separate sewerage system and sewage treatment plant are \$93,000 for the south site on the bluffs and \$111,000 for the east site. The additional cost for the east site is due to a longer outfall sewer to discharge the effluent into the reservoir at a suitable location. Operation and maintenance costs for this facility are estimated to be about \$1,500 annually.

Information from the studies and explorations described above has been presented to the Sanish village officials to assist them in choosing the most desirable site for the proposed relocation of their town. The Corps of Engineers authority to take action in connection with relocation of towns in reservoir areas of authorized flood control or navigation projects is based upon its legal right to acquire land. The question of relocation is a matter of choice with the residents and town officials and the primary responsibility for formulating relocation plans rests with the local people through their representatives. The District Engineer acts in an advisory capacity lending assistance and guidance to the local officials in their search for a suitable location.

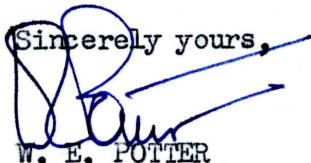
All problems and questions relating to relocation of Sanish should be considered in respect to similar problems and questions involved in the relocation of the nearby town of Van Hook. Many factors indicate the desirability of combining the two towns into a single unit at a new site. Public Law 355, 81st Congress, authorizes the expenditure of funds allocated to the Garrison reservoir project for acquisition of all property within the incorporated village of Van Hook, and the adjacent area known as Legion Park, North Dakota. Officials and other representatives of both towns have indicated that most of the residents would favor combining the towns at a new site. Van Hook is similar in size and population to Sanish and has no publicly owned water and sewerage systems, with the exception of three small town-owned wells. It is estimated that the cost for water and sewerage facilities would be about the same amount for either town.

It appears that maintenance and operation of a water supply and distribution system, using water from the reservoir as suggested in the Sanish Townsite Committee's letter, would be an economic burden on a town the size of Sanish. If Sanish and Van Hook were combined, the larger community could better afford operation and maintenance of modern water and sewerage systems. The most economical modern water system of those already investigated would be one using wells, either for a combined town or separate relocation.

Under present authorities, in regard to the Garrison Dam and Reservoir project, the Corps of Engineers is not authorized to provide, at Government expense, for public water and sewerage systems which have no existing counter parts in the present towns. The owners of private water and sewage disposal facilities will be compensated therefor by acquisition of real properties of which such facilities are a part. I trust the above information is sufficient for your needs.

FOR THE CHIEF OF ENGINEERS:

Sincerely yours,



W. E. POTTER

Colonel, Corps of Engineers  
Acting Assistant Chief of Engineers  
for Civil Works