

Follow the Money

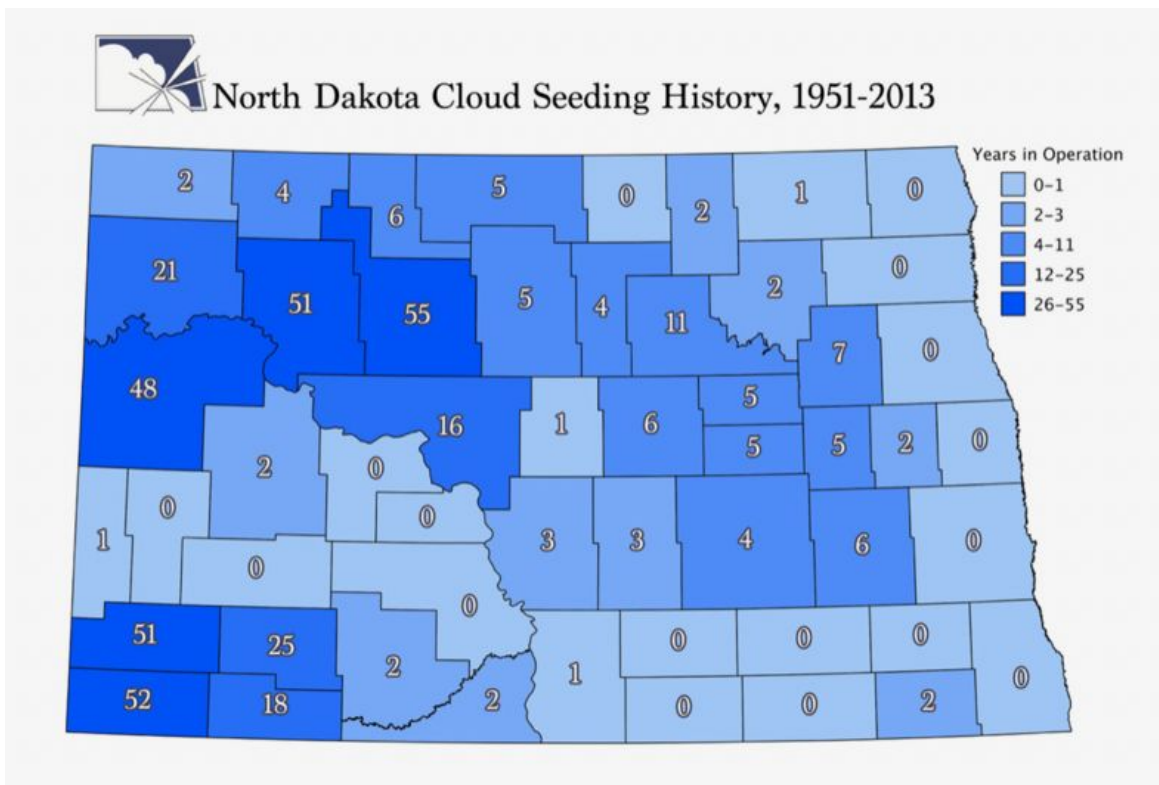
Ward County's Weather Modification Program Makes MILLIONS for Some

Pluviculture *n.* rainmaking; attempts to induce rain artificially

Pluviculture, or rainmaking, began with James Pollard Epsy, the "Storm King", a U.S. meteorologist who proposed burning forests to increase rainfall. His theory was published in 1840 as *The Philosophy of Storms*. His work was the beginning of scientific weather forecasting. In subsequent years, "Rainmakers" came and went, using methods involving explosions, chemicals and eventually airplanes and silver iodide.

In the 1950's, a group of North Dakota Farmers, discouraged by periodic droughts, hired a meteorologist from South Dakota to start cloud seeding to make rain. They raised private funding and proceeded in their attempt to squeeze moisture from the clouds. Somewhere along the line, when goals in rainmaking were not reached, the project was re-imagined to include hail suppression.

At one point, 37 North Dakota counties were involved in the project. As it became apparent to most of them that the project was not cost effective, they dropped out.



The Special Interest Cronyism Ended Almost Everywhere Else

Today, Ward County is one of only 5 North Dakota counties who continue to use tax dollars for cloud seeding. In fact, this project is only 5 of 3,242 counties in the whole United States currently cloud

seeding for hail suppression. **Participation in the project began to shrink due to [uncertainty and ineffectiveness](#), yet funding grew.** How did that happen?

In 1974, the Pilot Internship Program (PIP) was started with a \$274,000 grant from the National Science foundation to UND. It was called an “experimental project for training pilots in weather modification”. In 1976 the **ND Atmospheric Resource Board** (ARB) signed a contract with UND to employ interns in the cloud seeding program.

This appears to be what launched the stream of money and further involvement in the program coming from a broad spectrum of sources outside Ward and the other 4 counties now known as the North Dakota Cloud Modification Project. Even though an exceedingly small group of ND counties was left in the project, the [state actually controls it via the ARB](#).

What is the Atmospheric Resource Board?

The ARB is a quasi-judicial, quasi-legislative advisory and rule-making board under the supervision of the **ND State Water Commission** (NDSWC). The SWC has ten members including the governor and ag commissioner. The other eight are appointed by the governor.

The ARB is made up of seven districts covering North Dakota. ARB director is Darin Langerud. He oversees Weather Modification for the state. Ward County is in District II, Henry “Hank” Bodmer being the representative member. Now we have a total of 17 people involved in Ward County’s cloud seeding program, only one of them living in Ward County. We were unable to obtain more than a barebones, line-item budget from the ARB. How’s that for transparency? The ARB 2017-2019 budget can be seen below, including its nebulous line-items and general boondoggle-esque appearance.

GRANTS, BENEFITS & CLAIMS	1,847,910	528,765	4,246,447	4,775,212	4,775,212
TRANSFERS	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL GRANTS	1,847,910	528,765	4,246,447	4,775,212	4,775,212
TOTALS	3,436,439	1,183,581	5,552,171	6,735,752	6,688,526
SPECIAL FUNDING SOURCES					
WATER COMMISSION FUND - 397	3,436,439	1,183,581	4,052,171	5,235,752	5,188,526
WATER DEVELOPMENT TRUST FUND - 267	0	0	0	0	0
NAWS RESERVE FUND - 413	0	0	0	0	0
NAWS O&M FUND - 381	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL SPECIAL FUNDS	3,436,439	1,183,581	4,052,171	5,235,752	5,188,526
FEDERAL FUNDING SOURCES					
CAP PROGRAM	0	0	0	0	0
SOUTHWEST PIPELINE	0	0	0	0	0
MR&I ADMINISTRATION	0	0	0	0	0
WET NON-POINT SOURCE PROGRAM	0	0	0	0	0
ND WEATHER DAMAGE MODIFICATIO	0	0	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,500,000
DAM SAFETY	0	0	0	0	0
NORTHWEST AREA WATER SUPPLY (NAWS)	0	0	0	0	0
FEMA RISK MAP	0	0	0	0	0
FEMA CIP	0	0	0	0	0
USGS NATIONAL GRANTS	0	0	0	0	0
FED FUND TRANSFER FROM ANOTHER AG	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL FEDERAL FUNDS	0	0	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,500,000
GENERAL FUNDING SOURCES					
STATE GENERAL FUND	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL GENERAL FUNDS	0	0	0	0	0
TOTALS	3,436,439	1,183,581	5,552,171	6,735,752	6,688,526

	JULY 2015		resent Budget		Base
	Expenditures	MAY 2016	Balance	Budget	Budget
	2013 - 2015	Expenditure	2015-2017	2015-2017	2017 - 2019
ATMOSPHERIC RESOURCE BOARD DEPT 7000					
SALARIES - PERMANENT	570,216	278,975	334,169	613,144	627,672
SALARIES - OTHER	0	0	0	0	0
TEMPORARY SALARIES	183,253	58,114	179,780	237,894	246,816
OVERTIME	6,204	1,511	(1,511)	0	0
FRINGE BENEFITS	222,101	110,727	145,394	256,120	260,444
TOTAL SALARIES	981,775	449,327	657,832	1,107,158	1,134,932
TRAVEL	62,168	20,608	47,819	68,427	70,427
SUPPLIES - IT SOFTWARE	101	0	500	500	500
SUPPLY/MATERIAL-PROFESSIONAL	331,290	73,013	296,687	369,700	369,700
FOOD & CLOTHING	0	0	0	0	0
BLDG, GROUNDS, VEHICLE SUPPLY	5,034	1,468	4,532	6,000	6,000
MISCELLANEOUS SUPPLIES	3,454	66	3,834	3,900	3,900
OFFICE SUPPLIES	2,394	211	1,789	2,000	2,000
POSTAGE	5,623	2,246	5,754	8,000	6,500
PRINTING	1,965	968	1,312	2,280	2,280
IT EQUIP UNDER \$5000	2,392	0	4,000	4,000	4,000
OTHER EQUIP UNDER \$5000	0	490	(490)	0	0
OFFICE EQUIP & FURNITURE-UNDER \$5000	1,572	739	1,261	2,000	2,000
UTILITIES	6,969	2,732	6,268	9,000	7,000
INSURANCE	571	569	2,231	2,800	2,800
RENTALS/LEASES-EQUIP & OTHER	130	65	135	200	200
RENTALS/LEASES - BLDG/LAND	26,586	12,841	14,659	27,500	7,500
REPAIRS	994	314	19,686	20,000	20,000
IT - DATA PROCESSING	0	0	0	0	0
IT-COMMUNICATIONS	5,376	2,825	3,175	6,000	7,500
IT CONTRACTUAL SERVICES	0	0	0	0	0
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	15,748	7,258	7,742	15,000	17,000
OPERATING FEES & SERVICES	90,511	46,845	104,230	151,075	149,075
FEES - PROFESSIONAL SERVICES	2,500	5,885	39,115	45,000	45,000
MEDICAL,DENTAL & OPTICAL	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL OPERATING	565,378	179,142	564,240	743,382	723,382
LAND & BUILDINGS	16,990	22,022	27,978	50,000	0
OTHER CAPITAL PAYMENTS	2,387	4,325	10,675	15,000	0
EXTRAORDINARY REPAIRS	0	0	0	0	0
EQUIPMENT OVER \$5000	22,000	0	45,000	45,000	55,000
MOTOR VEHICLES	0	0	0	0	0
IT EQUIP/SOFTWAREOVER \$5000	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL CAP IMPROVE	41,377	26,347	83,653	110,000	55,000

Hank Bodmer has also served as chairman of the NDARB. He is chairman of the [Kenmare Airport Authority](#) and owns a hangar where he parks his airplane. Even if he doesn't receive monetary benefit from that role, he certainly benefits from all of the improvements made to the airport for the sake of Weather Modification. To date, the Kenmare Airport [has received over \\$2 million in federal grants](#). Airports with higher traffic tend to receive more federal dollars. On the ARB state government website, 2017 North Dakota Cloud Modification Project final report reveals operational items and data, **but not financial details in relation to private contracts.** (<http://www.swc.nd.gov/arb/ndcmp/pdfs/finalreport.pdf>)

Ward County Tax Dollars Lining Pockets in Fargo

The ARB contracts with Weather Modification Inc., for a turnkey cloud seeding operation. **Weather Modification Inc., Fargo Jet Center, and Ice Crystal Engineering** provide airplanes, chemicals, and pilots. All three of these entities are owned by Patrick and James Sweeney. They are a private company, so we are unable to determine if there are other investors or beneficiaries there. According to [Manta](#), **Weather Mod, Inc.'s "has annual revenues of \$7,560,929 and employs a staff of approximately 50"**. The luxurious, multi-million dollar Fargo Jet Center:



It's also worth noting that Darren Hall, chair of the North Dakota Aviation Council Board of Directors as well as vice president for the Fargo Jet Center has [lobbied legislators](#) for significant funds, including a proposal that [will likely lead to property tax increases](#). "One of our most important messages delivered to legislators was to tell them that supporting HB1066 will help to fund airport infrastructure needs and future development at North Dakota's airports, and how their continued support will positively impact the communities served by those airports," he added



Interconnected Interests and Lobbying with Tax Dollars

Another big outside interest in Ward County Weather Modification is **UND's John D. Odegard School of Aerospace Sciences**. We 100% support the students in the School of Aerospace Sciences, but do not feel obligated to spend county taxation dollars to provide a supplemental classroom for them. If our university programs are worth funding, then our state legislature and universities should prioritize them, instead of other interests.

The Weather Modification machine spreads from there to the professional and political realm via **Weather Modification Association (WMA)**, **North Dakota Weather Modification Association (NDWMA)**, and **North American Weather Modification Council (NAWMC)**.

Enter **Clearwater Communications**, an association management and public relations firm located in Bismarck. [District 47 State Senator Michael Dwyer](#) is a founder of Clearwater Communications and heavily involved in Weather Modification. He is the representative of Weather Modification Inc. in their business registration with the Secretary of State's office. Dwyer is also Executive Director of ND Water Education Foundation and editor of ND Water Magazine. The magazine devotes space for an article about cloud seeding in each issue and is distributed to all ND county commissioners and other officials to promote Weather Modification.

Weather Weather Modification Association is basically an information exchange for cloud seeding. Ice Crystal Engineering, LLC, North Dakota Atmospheric Resource Board, and Weather Modification International (Patrick Sweeney) are all members of WMA.

Former N.D. Commissioner of University and School Lands, Lance Gaebe, is an account executive at Clearwater Communications. He, too, is involved in Weather Modification, managing NDWMA. As you can see below, these entities are conveniently located together in the same office.



North Dakota WMA has only about 10 members and flies under the radar with little online presence. Gayle Yuly, a long-standing board member on the Ward County Weather Modification Board, is a member. NDWMA receives an annual "donation" of **YOURS AND MY TAX DOLLARS** from the Ward County Board and goes on to lobby the state for more weather modification funding. Our tax dollars are circling around to lobby for more tax dollars to be spent on weather modification. See below:

Disbursements

Prepared By	Initials	Date
Approved By		

2018	Issued to	Total check	Contract	Director expense	Misc	
2 10	Minot Daily	1314			1314	#1216
2 10	NDWMA	18000			18000	1217
2 23	Minot Daily	511			511	1218
5 17	NDARB	135500.00	135500.00			1219
6 26	Minot Daily	730			730	1220
6 26	Frank Bodmer	15400		15400		1221
	- void -					1222
6 26	Jerome Bekum	12650		12650		1223
6 26	Roger Nestem	11220		11220		1224
6 26	Gail Yule	23540		23540		1225
6 26	Gail Yule	120000			120000	1226
6 26	Tanner Vist	11440		11440		1227
	- void -					1228
8 16	Minot Daily	657			657	1229
10 31	wifBank (fed tax)	01			01	
		13927463	13550000	74250	303213	

You can view the entire Ward County Weather Modification budget [here](#).

The mission of the North American Weather Modification Council (NAWMC) is to advance the proper use of weather modification technologies through education, promotion, and research. NDARB represented by Darin Langerud and NDWMA represented by Lance Gaebe, are members.

Clearly, there is a great deal more money coming into this project than Ward, Mountrail, Williams, Bowman and Slope Counties' tax dollar contributions. (Actually, only a handful of townships in Slope County are in the project.) For reasons we have been unable to determine, Ward County's contribution is higher than the others.

And what goes out? Weather Modification Inc., of course is a major financial benefactor of Ward County Weather Modification. **Beyond that, there is no way to trace individuals who may have investment interests in Weather Modification.** Some, of course, benefit by way of salaries and expense accounts in their capacity with Boards, Commissions, and Organizations. They all represent a cartel of special interests invested in Ward County Weather Modification in various ways and having nothing to do with bumping up crop acre profits by increasing rainfall or suppressing hail. It is about their own profits, career advancement, and status within their own professional organizations.

The Ward County Weather Modification Project has become excessive and gone beyond the control of county residents. Weather modification in Ward County has lost its purpose. **Clearly, even the Ward County Commissioners could not control it, or it wouldn't be a ballot measure now.**

What is the True Cost to Taxpayers?

Since 2006, Ward County has led the nation for taxpayer money spent on convective cloud weather modification, with over \$4.2 million dollars! We have been funding this program for over 40 years and have nothing to show for it except higher taxes and lower rainfall rates.

On June 9th, the county is asking for an additional \$250,000 with a 3% escalator. If the program were to continue, we would waste almost \$2 million over the next 5 years. The only benefactor of this program is a private company out of Fargo called Weather Mod, Inc. Not only do they produce all of the materials used, but they are paid a base daily rate plus flight hours for 91 days.

These tax dollars could instead be spent on much needed infrastructure like roads & schools, or perhaps reducing our tax burden. They should NOT be spent on scientifically unproven programs.

VOTE NO on Weather Modification in the June 9th vote-by-mail primary. For information on how to vote go here: <https://nddagainstweathermod.com/ward-county-primary-voting/>.