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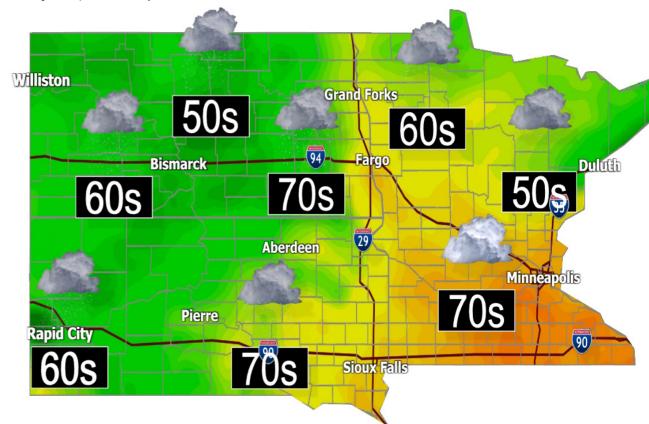
StormTRACKER Forecast

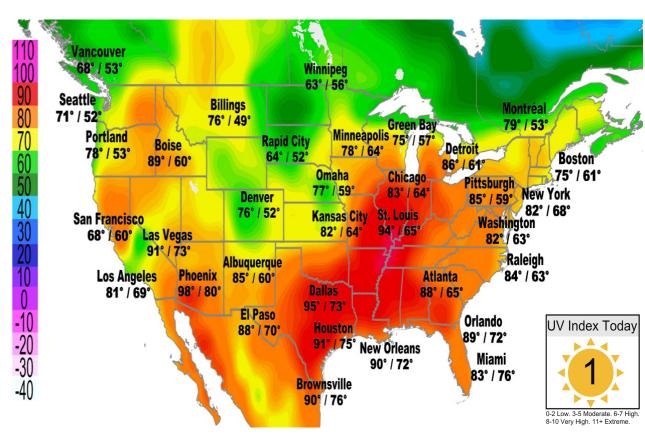
Scattered afternoon t-showers. cooler today. Highs in the 70s today, with rain continuing into tomorrow. Almanac Through 12 AM Wednesday

Temperature	High	Low
Tuesday	82°	56°
Normal	71°	46°
Record	94° in 1979	23° in 1959
Precipitation		In Inches
Tuesday		0
Month To Da	te	.69"
Departure Fro	om Avg Month	To Date -0.52"
Year To Date)	14.92"
Departure Fro	om Avg Year T	o Date -1.53"

Sunrise: 7:16 a.m.	Sunset: 7:39 p.m.			
	Today		Tomorrow	
North Dakota	Hi	Lo	Hi	Lo
Bismarck	66	54	66	54
Fargo	70	60	67	62
Medora	62	48	67	45
Minot	65	52	65	53
Williston	62	51	65	49
	Today		Tomorrow	
Minnesota	Hi	Lo	Hi	Lo
Alexandria	71	61	66	58
Duluth	59	53	55	52
International Falls	64	52	64	51
Minneapolis	78	64	70	62
Rochester	79	62	69	60

Thursday Friday Saturday Sunday Monday Tuesday Wednesday 67/51 75/51 59/56 61/5575/56 75/49 77/52 AM Clouds/PM Rain/Thunder Rain Mostly Sunny Partly Cloudy Mostly Sunny Mostly Sunny Sun Wind: W 13 mph Wind: W 8 mph Wind: NW 12 mph Nind: NE 14 mph Wind: NE 9 mph Wind: S 8 mph Wind: S 9 mph *Average wind speed for each day





ROYALTY

CONTINUED from A1

usually legal unless a lease says otherwise. Most leases signed decades ago don't explicitly mention postproduction deductions, and leas es don't expire unless oil production lapses.

Deductions began surging in North Dakota about a decade ago. About 20% of royalties are deducted, on average, according to two estimates as well as interviews with royalty owners. That would have amounted to about \$1 billion in 2023.

Estimates provided by the North Dakota Petroleum Council suggest companies withhold at least hundreds of millions of dollars in North Dakota every year.

Why some lawmakers are pushing for change

Several lawmakers, including Republican Rep. Don Longmuir, said that because the state's legislative season is a relatively short 80 days, it's important to have an interim legislative committee conduct a study and propose a solution ahead of the 2027 session.

"We can't wait until the session starts," said Longmuir, of Stanley, in the oil-producing region of the state. "That's

"We can't wait until the session starts. That's something that you know really needs to happen before session starts, so that maybe they can come up with something."

REP. DON LONGMUIR, STANLEY

something that you know really needs to happen before session starts, so that maybe they can come up with something.

Assigning a new study to an interim committee would require a directive from Senate Majority Leader David Hogue. chair of the Legislative Management Committee. Hogue, a Republican from Minot, said he "would consider it" and will likely make a decision in the next month or two.

"I really need to do more self-education right now," he said, adding that he recent series has raised "awareness that there is an issue out there."

Sen. Dale Patten, who has served as chair of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee and would likely have influence over any legislation, said he is open to a formal legislative study but said it should be initiated only with input from

the full Legislature. "I would be comfortable

with taking a look at it and see if there's a way to resolve it," said Patten, a Republican from Watford

Some lawmakers are already thinking about ways to address the issue in the next session.

One lawmaker said he may introduce legislation that would limit the length of leases to 30 years. Republican Sen. Jeff Magrum, who represents Hazelton and has supported landowners on other issues, said he hopes limiting leases will give future generations of mineral owners the opportunity to renegotiate contracts and incentivize companies to be more mindful of how they treat North Dakotans.

"I don't think that's right for someone that's not even born yet to have to honor a contract that I signed today. It's just not fair to them," he said. "Look at how times have changed. Everything's changed, and they're

stuck in the contract that was written in the 1950s.'

Magrum has introduced 13 bills related to property rights issues in the past two legislative sessions. All but one failed.

Rep. David Richter, a Republican from Williston, said he thinks it would be difficult for the Legislature to modify existing leases in that way, but it could limit the length of future leases.

"Going forward, I think that might be an option worth taking a really hard look at," he said. "But that doesn't do anything to alleviate the situation of the leases that are already in place."

For those existing leases, Richter said it is often "unclear" whether deductions are permitted, and some lawmakers said they should pass a state law to address the issue.

Richter said he prefers that companies and mineral owners renegotiate the contracts to specify whether deductions are permitted. But if that doesn't happen, he said he is open to legislation that would "clarify" how leases that don't mention deductions should be interpreted by the courts.

Senate Minority Leader Kathy Hogan, a Democrat from Fargo, said lawmakers should pass a law stating that companies can't take postproduction

deductions unless leases explicitly allow them to do so. Sen. Brad Bekkedahl, a Republican from Williston who supports oil development but who also has tried to help mineral owners, proposed such a measure in 2021.

'We could write legislation clarifying this easily," Hogan said. "But we've never been able to get it done."

Industry, state officials respond

Ron Ness, president of the North Dakota Petroleum Council, an organization that lobbies on behalf of more than 550 oil and gas companies, said many of the proposals would be a "substantial infringement" on mineral owners' property rights.

"We believe direct state involvement/interference in the contractual agreements of hundreds of thousands of private mineral leases is the wrong approach," Ness wrote in an email. "Suggested actions like this would have a detrimental impact on mineral development in North

Dakota." Gov. Kelly Armstrong, a Republican who worked for his family's privately owned oil company earlier in his career, did not respond to a request for

comment for this article. During an Aug. 18 appearance on a KFGO

radio program, the governor said he was open to making tweaks to the royalty oversight program. The program was created by legislators in 2023 and was envisioned as a way to mediate disputes about deductions between mineral owners and companies, but that hasn't

happened. "If this one isn't working, we should find out why not and figure out if we can tweak it and make it better," Armstrong

Some lawmakers said they don't see a need to take any action.

said.

Sen. Kent Weston, a Republican from Sarles, said he's discussed the issue with colleagues in the Legislature and North Dakota Petroleum Council staff in recent weeks. He said the status quo is "fair" and necessary to ensure the oil and gas industry continues to

House Majority Leader Mike Lefor and Rep. Todd Porter, the longtime chair of the committee overseeing the energy industry in the House, could not be reached for comment.

invest in the state.

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