

Storm

TRACKER

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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 Date

.69"

Departure From Avg Month To Date

-0.52"

Year To Date

14.92"

Departure From Avg Year To Date

-1.53"

Sunrise: 7:16 a.m.

Sunset: 7:39 p.m.

North Dakota

Today

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

Minnesota

Today

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

Map of North Dakota showing temperature ranges and city forecasts. Major cities labeled include Williston, Grand Forks, Bismarck, Fargo, Duluth, Aberdeen, Pierre, Minneapolis, Rapid City, Sioux Falls, and Williston. Temperature ranges are indicated by black boxes: 50s, 60s, 70s. Wind speeds are listed for each day from Thursday to Wednesday.

Day	Forecast	Wind
Thursday	59/56 Rain/Thunder	Wind: NE 14 mph
Friday	61/55 Rain	Wind: NE 9 mph
Saturday	67/51 AM Clouds/PM Sun	Wind: W 8 mph
Sunday	75/56 Mostly Sunny	Wind: S 8 mph
Monday	75/51 Partly Cloudy	Wind: W 13 mph
Tuesday	75/49 Mostly Sunny	Wind: NW 12 mph
Wednesday	77/52 Mostly Sunny	Wind: S 9 mph

Map of the United States showing temperatures across various cities. A color scale on the left indicates temperature ranges from -40 to 110 degrees. Major cities labeled include Vancouver, Seattle, Portland, Boise, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Phoenix, Albuquerque, El Paso, Dallas, Houston, Brownsville, New Orleans, Atlanta, Pittsburgh, New York, Boston, Montreal, and Miami. Temperatures are listed for each city, such as Seattle 71°/52° and New York 82°/68°.

ROYALTY

CONTINUED from A1

usually legal unless a lease says otherwise. Most leases signed decades ago don't explicitly mention postproduction deductions, and leases 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

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REP. DON LONGMUIR, STANLEY

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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

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 said.

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

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 invest in the state.

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.

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