



# INDUSTRIAL COMMISSION OF NORTH DAKOTA

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## **Industrial Commission approves funding for new Lignite R&D grant**

The North Dakota Industrial Commission approved funding last week for a new lignite research project, titled "Lignite Resource Evaluation for Advanced Utilization Opportunities," that focuses on evaluating the potential for extracting rare earth elements and other critical minerals from North Dakota lignite.

The goal of the effort is to provide a sufficient understanding of the quantity, type and forms of critical minerals in North Dakota lignite mines, in order to be able to determine the true resource and opportunity for commercial recovery. The demand for rare earth elements is rapidly growing for use in electronics such as computers and phones, catalysts, electric cars, medical and military applications. The United States relies heavily on importing rare earth elements, with China being the primary supplier. Developing a domestic source of rare earth elements is imperative for supply chain stability.

"The lignite industry continues to pursue new uses for North Dakota lignite, and rare earth elements and other critical minerals present another opportunity to responsibly develop our state's vast resources," Commission members said in joint statement. "This project is one in a long line of opportunities to support the lignite industry that provides reliable, affordable electricity and is so important to the state and its citizens."

The project aims to collect drill core samples to classify and determine the abundance and mode of occurrence of critical minerals in North Dakota coal mines, including from the coal seams and the associated clay and shale materials. This information will be used to characterize the resource in existing coal mines in order to provide information on critical elements, including rare earth elements. Drill core samples will be scanned onsite as well as analyzed in the laboratory. Microbeam Technologies Inc. (MTI) will lead the project in collaboration with North American Coal. The Industrial Commission will invest up to \$1,238,994 in the project, which has a total cost of up to \$2,477,994. The majority of the cost share will be provided by North American Coal as it performs coring activities at the mines.

The Lignite Research Council recommended funding the grant proposal at its Nov. 17 meeting in Bismarck. Prior to that meeting, the proposal was peer reviewed and recommended for funding.

The Industrial Commission consists of Gov. Doug Burgum as chair, Attorney General Drew Wrigley and Agriculture Commissioner Doug Goehring.

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