

# North Dakotas State Rock - Knife River Flint

By Scott Wagar

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The Bottineau Rockhounds, an organized group of 35 school students ages 7 to 15 participated in a rigorous process that involved guidance by dedicated instructors, individual and group research, as well as a democratic voting process that took them all the way to the North Dakota State legislature during 2025 for a success result that everybody in North Dakota can be proud of.

David Cauley, a 5th grade teacher for the Bottineau School District, and Michelle Cauley, a natural resource instructor at Dakota College in Bottineau along with Carrie Reimche, also a 5th grade teacher in the District.

The 35 student participants, ages 7 through 15 and their three instructors all members of the Bottineau Rockhounds which is the largest geology group for juniors in North Dakota. They are also members of the Northwest Mineralogical Society.

In October of that school year, they were shown examples of Teredo Fossilized wood, which is the recognized North Dakota State Fossil. They soon discovered that North Dakota was one of two states that didn't have a state rock. Pennsylvania being the other

David and the students decided to conduct their own research and election process approved by Josh Kitzman, the elementary school principle in selecting a rock that would be worthy of the designation as North Dakota's state rock. The five legitimate candidates were as follows:

- Aventurine: A metamorphic rock found along the Thirty Mile Creek and the Little Missouri River of northwestern North Dakota. It may be used for bowls, beads and jewelry and of a green color.
- Chalcedony: (Pronounced "Kal-sed-knee"): A sedimentary rock composed of microscopic waxy looking crystals of various colors. It may be found world wide as well as near Medora and Bismarck.
- Fairburn Agate: This igneous rock, known for its red, orange and white bands that abruptly change directions. It is the State Gemstone of South Dakota but is also found in Southwestern, North Dakota.
- Knife River Flint: This brownish colored igneous rock can be found along the Knife River in central North Dakota and it has been used for tools and trading for thousands of years.
- Moss Agate: This igneous rock received its name from inclusions that look like moss or foliage. It can be found near Medora, the Cannon Ball River and Bismarck

With these 5 selections having been chosen for the ballot, the 35 students campaigned for their favorite choice. On the Election Day, 449 votes were cast from the three school districts in Bottineau County, the staff and students of Dakota College at Bottineau as well as the Bismarck's Gem and Mineral Society. Knife River Flint won that

election process with 170 votes or 67 percent of the vote.

When the Rock election was completed the Bottineau Rockhounds documented the results and sent them to their representatives in the Sixth District: Sen. Paul Thomas of Velva, and both Reps. Dick Anderson and Dan Vollmar of Willow City; requesting that they consider drafting a bill that would make Knife River Flint the state Rock, which they then proceeded to do, creating House Bill 1186.

On January 15, The Rockhounds, David and Michelle Cauley, and the proper representatives went before the political subdivision committee at the capitol to request that Knife River Flint be approved by the committee and then move forward to the House of Representatives.

There was a lot of support from the Bottineau Students, their parents, District representatives, even samples of the rock were handed out much to the delight of the recipients.

In summary, we can say that House Bill 1186 was introduced January 7, 2025 debated in committees as of March 14, 2025 where it passed 89 to 1 on January 17; crossed over to the Senate on January 20, 2025; and finally passed on March 24, 2025 with a successful vote of 44 to 2. The bill was signed by Governor Kelly Armstrong, enacted and adopted on March 28, 2025.



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