

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Sharon Schwartz at 3:30pm on Monday, February 08, 2016, 346-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except:

Representative Sydney Carlin – Excused
Representative Adam Lusker – Excused
Representative Joe Seiwert – Excused
Representative Ed Trimmer – Excused

Committee staff present:

Joanna Dolan, Legislative Research Department
Natalie Scott, Office of Revisor of Statutes
Raney Gilliland, Legislative Research Department
Shirley Jepson, Kansas Legislative Committee Assistant

Conferees appearing before the Committee:

Representative Bud Estes

Others in attendance:

[See Attached List](#)

Bill introductions

Representative Waymaster requested the introduction of legislation regarding debt collection.

Representative Boldra moved to introduce the legislation as requested. Seconded by Representative Ewy. Motion carried.

Informational briefing:

The House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee was joined for the presentation by members of the Senate Agriculture Committee and the Senate Natural Resources Committee.

Representative Bud Estes appeared before Committee members to present an informative proposal to reduce water usage for irrigation in Kansas by developing renewable energy ([Attachment 1](#)). The Representative noted that many farmers depend on water for irrigation as well as many other farming applications with approximately 85 per cent used for irrigation.

Representative Estes stated that the proposal also explores a renewable energy development possibility for individual farmers who choose to voluntarily reduce their irrigation water consumption by 25 per cent from current levels.

CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES of the Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources at 3:30pm on Monday, February 08, 2016 in Room 346-S of the Capitol.

Representative Estes indicated that some ways to reduce water usage is by growing shorter season crops such as corn and milo - crops that require less water. To replace the lost revenue from crops, Representative Estes' plan suggests that farmers could lease their land to wind energy developers, who pay the farmer a royalty for the use of their land. In the event a wind energy developer is not available, Representative Estes suggests that farmers could develop a renewable energy source for their own use.

Representative Estes indicated that the ultimate goal of the proposal is to reduce water used for crop irrigation for the long-term viability of Kansas farming. The loss of revenue from crops is proposed to be replaced by renewable energy production.

Representative Estes responded to questions and comments from the Committee members. Several comments brought forth included:

- Many groups would need to be involved in the dialogue for the plan to be successful.
- Transmission lines would need to be available to handle the wind energy produced.
- Farmers would need to be encouraged to participate in the plan.
- Research by Kansas State University and the University of Kansas could be done to find varieties of crops that require less water.
- Legislation may be needed to address the proposal; rules and regulations would need to be written.
- Farmers would need to be encouraged to give up some water rights.

Representative Estes noted that he is hopeful that the plan is a start for more dialogue to address drought conditions and the importance of water conservation to Kansas citizens.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:20 pm. The next meeting of the Committee is scheduled for February 9, 2016.