

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE VISION 2020 COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Tom Sloan at 9:00 am on Wednesday, March 11, 2015, 218-N of the Capitol.

All members were present

Committee staff present:

Scott Abbott, Office of Revisor of Statutes
Iraida Orr, Legislative Research Department
Natalie Teemer-Washington, Legislative Research Department
Mary Koles, Kansas Legislative Committee Assistant
Renae Jefferies, Office of Revisor of Statutes

Conferees appearing before the Committee:

Larry Biles, State Forester, Kansas Forest Service, Kansas State University
Sean Miller, Representative, Northwest Kansas Groundwater Management District No. 4

Others in attendance:

[See Attached List](#)

Presentation on: Forestry and the State Water Fund

Larry Biles, State Forester, Kansas Forest Service, Kansas State University, noted that Kansas was the fifth state in the nation to have a Forest Service (1887) and had forestry legislation as early as 1865. He examined the role of the Service in the state's endeavors to protect, secure, correct, and restore surface water.

Streambank stabilization, he reported, is a legislated duty. Collapsing stream banks are the main source of sediment transfer to Kansas reservoirs and lakes. Trees, Biles said, provide the best land cover for streambanks. Kansas received a \$13 million USDA grant to implement forestry practices and assess riparian areas in our priority watersheds, the Federal Reservoir watersheds. Cooperating with partners and landowners, four assessments have been completed to date, ten remain.

The grant money will be used immediately and as more watersheds have been assessed. These actions support the Water Fund Plan by slowing sediment and nutrient loading and, ultimately, reducing dredging (dredging costs \$56,000/mile/year) and sustaining water quality and quantity for outdoor recreation, a \$7 billion industry. ([Attachment 1](#)) Following his presentation, questions were asked and discussions ensued. Participants included Chairman Sloan and Representatives Francis, O'Brien, and Campbell.

Presentation on: Water Issues and Groundwater Management Districts

Sean Miller, representing the Northwest Kansas Groundwater Management District No. 4 (GMD), provided a brief history of both water rights ("first in time - first in right") and the 3.1 million acre northwest district. The district was formed in 1976 and works to conserve and manage the district's groundwater resources. Local owners and water users can be directly involved in establishing

CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES of the Committee on Vision 2020 at 9:00 am on Wednesday, March 11, 2015, 218-N of the Capitol.

regulations. The district is funded by a \$0.05/acre assessment on land and a variable assessment on water usage, currently \$0.45/acre foot.

The 2001 State Water Plan called for a plan to extend the usable life of the High Plains Aquifer which resulted in an Enhanced Management Plan, adopted in 2006, and identified six High Priority Areas in District No. 4. These six areas worked to restore their rate of decline to the average rate for the district. One, "Sheridan-6," chose an aggressive approach, a 20% reduction in usage, and developed the Local Enhanced Management Area (LEMA) legislation passed in 2012. This reduction is estimated to save almost 23,000 acre-feet of water, approximately 7.5 billion gallons during the life of the LEMA. Recently, the district embraced a new goal: establish conservation water use amounts for all of GMD No. 4 by the end 2016.

Miller observed that aquifer modeling by the Kansas Geological Survey is not cheap but is imperative for good decision making and proper groundwater management in the future. There is, he said, an ongoing and growing need for data to drive decision making. He encouraged the legislature to look closely at state funding for much needed technical assistance. ([Attachment 2](#)) He recommended reading and provided committee members with Lane Letourneau's extensive work on Kansas' water starting with a historical perspective from 1945 forward. He focuses on groundwater and its management and concludes with water management trends. ([Attachment 3](#)) Following Miller's presentation, several questions were asked by Chairman Sloan and Representative Francis; discussions occurred.

The Chairman thanked Larry Biles and Sean Miller for their presentations today.

The meeting adjourned at 10:15 a.m.

The next meeting will be March 16, 2015.