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Proponent Testimony on Senate Bill 52

To: Senate Committee on Natural Resources

By: Orrin Feril, Manager, Big Bend Groundwater Management District #5 (GMD#5)

January 29, 2015

Chairman Powell and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on Senate Bill 52. My name is Orrin Feril and I am the district manager for Big Bend Groundwater Management District #5. I testify today in support of SB52. It is the understanding of GMD#5 that SB52, as written, applies statewide in Kansas. Should amendments be made to limit the use of these amendments to within GMD#5 boundaries, GMD#5 will still support this proposed legislation.

GMD#5, with technical cooperation of Kansas Department of Agriculture – Division of Water Resources (KDA–DWR), United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and Water Pack, has developed a comprehensive hydrologic model of the entire District. The model can evaluate the impact of precipitation and pumping on groundwater levels and streamflow. Various scenarios of the model have been developed. These scenarios indicate augmentation of surface water with groundwater is a viable and sustainable option in the Rattlesnake Creek subbasin. Augmenting surface water flow with wells is possible by using aquifer storage sources operated in a removal and fill cycle. It is analogous to a release from storage in a surface reservoir, but uses the aquifer reservoir. Under times of shortage, groundwater can be pumped for a short period up to a few months, and used to provide water to downstream prior users on the schedule when it is needed. The water that is diverted from the aquifer storage reservoir and released to streamflow for augmentation is restored naturally during times of subsequent surplus-flow.

The USFWS at Quivira National Wildlife Refuge filed an impairment complaint against junior groundwater appropriations within the Rattlesnake Creek subbasin of GMD#5. The approach of augmentation may be a solution to that complaint. Streamflow responds quickly to augmentation, in contrast to the delayed response from turning off wells.

Further coordination with local stakeholders regarding development and management would be critical in the success of such a project. Darrell Wood, who is the GMD#5 board president and local water user, and Dave Romero, consultant Balleau Groundwater Inc. is present today if further explanation would be helpful.

Thank you for this opportunity to appear before you today. We would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.