

1320 Research Park Drive
Manhattan, Kansas 66502
(785) 564-6700



900 SW Jackson, Room 456
Topeka, Kansas 66612
(785) 296-3556

Jackie McClaskey, Secretary

Governor Sam Brownback

**Informational Briefing on Water Conservation Areas
The Senate Natural Resources Committee
By Kansas Department of Agriculture
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Chairman Powell and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to present this informational briefing regarding the establishment of Water Conservation Areas (WCA). The agency is a proponent of the concept. The Water Vision Team met with over 13,000 Kansans during 2014. We heard many good ideas about managing water in Kansas. Conservation and flexibility were two of many issues that Kansans raised during the year-long tour and hundreds of meetings that were held by the Water Vision Team.

Water Conservation Areas (WCA), as proposed, would provide both of those items to water users. As proposed, the WCA would allow a group of water right holders to consent to a conservation goal. They provide a detailed proposal, including the area covered, conservation goal and their own corrective control measures to the agency. An order would be written to authorize the conservation goals. They will then have the benefit of greater flexibility on managing their water, provided the overall goal of the WCA is met.

Currently, the law provides other tools that allow comprehensive corrective control measures in addition to strict water rights administration. In the past, you have allowed the establishment of Intensive Groundwater Use Control Areas (IGUCAs) and Local Enhanced Management Areas (LEMAs). Both of these are great tools but neither have become popular with water users.

We are now requesting WCA as part of the Water Appropriation Act as yet another tool, without as much red tape, to reduce barriers for those who want to conserve.

One important item to understand is that IGUCAs, LEMAs and WCAs could potentially overlap. The language in this bill needs to reflect that the tool with the best conservation goals and corrective control measures should be used to authorize the water use in the affected area. We do not want to create a loophole that would impede a conservation goal.

We have already been asked if it is necessary to change the law because of the 100% agreed to conservation plan. Anyone can be part of a handshake agreement to reduce water use. The WCA, LEMAs, and IGUCAs provide a level of authority allowing flexibility. With any of these, the producer must stay within the terms conditions and limitations of their water right. Please consider WCAs. It is important to provide flexibility to anyone who wants to conserve.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We would be glad to answer questions at the appropriate time.