



Since 1894

To: Senate Committee on Natural Resources
Senator Larry Powell, Chair

From: Mike Beam, Sr. Vice President

Re: **Testimony supporting SB 275, a bill creating Water Conservation Areas**

Date: March 18, 2015

The Kansas Livestock Association (KLA), formed in 1894, is a trade association representing over 5,000 members on legislative and regulatory issues. KLA members are involved in many aspects of the livestock industry, including seed stock, cow-calf and stocker production, cattle feeding, dairy production, grazing land management and diversified farming operations.

The Kansas Livestock Association (KLA) supports SB 275, a bill that authorizes the formation of "water conservation areas" (WCA's) and establishes parameters for such areas.

The concept of a WCA is similar to the Local Enhanced Management Areas (LEMA's) statute the legislature approved in 2012. While LEMA's must be organized by a Groundwater Management District (GMD) and be confined within the borders of a GMD, the new program prescribed by SB 275 may be outside the boundaries of a GMD.

Since the passage of the LEMA law, our members have expressed concern with the potential of future LEMAs that may be forced upon water right holders who are not supportive or agreeable to such a project. In some instances a landowner or producer may have made a substantial investment in their irrigation system and/or signed a long term lease on a parcel of irrigated farm land with the understanding they would have full access to their authorized use of groundwater for the immediate future. Organizers and proponents of a LEMA can force a water right owner(s) to involuntarily participate and reduce their water use despite the parameters and privileges of their water right granted to them by the state of Kansas.

KLA appreciates the Kansas Department of Agriculture's (KDA) willingness to address this concern while proposing a new water conservation program with the introduction of SB 275. The provision set forth with Section 1, (a), (2) makes it clear that all participants in a proposed WCA are in agreement with the project. KLA believes this is an important and necessary provision for WCA's. We appreciate the willingness of KDA to address our concern and recommendation and we urge this committee to give the bill favorable consideration. Thank you!