

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

**Testimony on SB 330 to
The Senate Natural Resources Committee
Susan Metzger, Assistant Secretary and Interim Director Division of Conservation
Kansas Department of Agriculture
January 20, 2016**

Good afternoon, Chairman Powell, and members of the committee. I am Susan Metzger, Assistant Secretary with the Kansas Department of Agriculture and Interim Director of the Division of Conservation. I am here to testify today in support of SB 330. This bill, as introduced, would authorize the Kansas Department of Agriculture Division of Conservation to administer the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) for the purpose of implementing water quality and quantity projects.

CREP is a federal/state partnership conservation program with the Farm Services Agency (FSA) of the United State Department of Agriculture (USDA) that targets high priority conservation concerns identified by local, state or tribal governments, or non-governmental organizations.

Since first offering the program in Kansas in 2007, the Division has relied on proviso language to obtain authority to implement CREP. While the program has received funding on an annual basis, relying on a year-by-year budget proviso does not provide long-term sustainability in the program. In order to provide certainty to this program that enhances water conservation in Kansas, the Department seeks to obtain statutory authority to implement the program. This is a simple solution to further encourage farmers, ranchers and agricultural landowners to adopt land and water conservation practices.

In Kansas, the state's first CREP was created for enhancing water conservation efforts along the Upper Arkansas River corridor from Hamilton County to Rice County. As of September 30, 2015, a total of 99 state CREP contracts on 17,176 acres have been approved with the addition of 1,411 acres this year. These contracts have resulted in the permanent retirement of more than 34,500 acre-feet of annual water appropriations.

With this legislation, the Department could offer CREP in other areas of the state, which has been requested by landowners outside the UAR CREP region. Specifically, the *Vision for the Future of Water Supply in Kansas* calls for the development and implementation of a sediment and nutrient reduction CREP in watersheds above targeted federal reservoirs and watersheds with excessive nutrient runoff.

In summary, SB 330 provides long-term sustainability to a program that allows Kansas to significantly leverage state and local dollars with federal funds to implement high priority water quality and quantity conservation projects. It will also enable landowners outside the UAR CREP region to participate in this conservation program.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. I will stand for questions at the appropriate time.