



Before the
Senate Committee on Natural Resources
Kansas Water Authority Annual Report to the Governor and Legislature
Gary Harshberger, Chair, Kansas Water Authority
January 27, 2016

Chairman Powell and members of the Committee, I am Gary Harshberger, Chair of the Kansas Water Authority (KWA). Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today present the Kansas Water Authority's recommendations for the upcoming legislative session. The Kansas Water Authority's role is to provide recommendations for the coming year, as well as plan for future needs for water and funding of projects.

Last year, *A Long-Term Water Vision for the Future of Water Supply in Kansas* was completed at the request of Governor Sam Brownback. After *The Vision* was reviewed and accepted by the KWA last January, our efforts in 2015 were focused on the development of regional water supply goals and establishment of Regional Advisory Committees to oversee the implementation of priority action items contained in *The Vision*. In August, the KWA appointed 166 dedicated volunteers to serve as our local advisors representing each of the 14 newly created regional planning areas. Rosters of each of the Regional Advisory Committees are contained in the Annual Report. Many of you will also get to meet these RAC Chairs and members as they are around the capitol today meeting with more than 80 legislators. Some were able to join us for this committee hearing, and I would ask them to please stand and be recognized, and invite you to help me thank them for their efforts on behalf of all Kansans in executing the goals set forth in *the Vision*.

The regions are well served by their goals, and many of them are focused on the issues that the Governor has indicated are top priority. In the Cimarron Regional Planning Area, they are addressing the Ogallala through technology adoption, new crop varieties, and conservation methods for all users. RACs are also promoting and making use of past legislative efforts, such as Local Enhanced Management Areas and Water Conservation Areas to extend the usable lifetime of the Ogallala. The Equus-Walnut Regional Planning Area is looking to address recharge issues in the Equus Beds and hope to have a district wide, integrated groundwater and surface water model in place by 2018. I and many others have spoken to the importance of adequate water storage in our federal reservoirs, and how this is being threatened by sedimentation. Many of the RACs also understand the importance of water supply and are developing action plans to address sediment and nutrient run-off, which not only reduce capacity, but put the reservoirs at risk of harmful algal blooms. I could go on and on about the important work these RACS are doing, and I encourage you to engage with your local RAC members and learn more. These are local stakeholders, on the ground in their regions, working to ensure all Kansans have a long-term, sustainable water supply, and again, I commend them for their efforts.

I'm proud to report the Water Vision Team, comprised of Kansas Water Office and Kansas Department of Agriculture staff, and the Governor's newly formed Water Resources Subcabinet, consisting of the aforementioned agencies plus the Departments of Health and Environment and Wildlife, Parks & Tourism have been successful this past year in implementing or initiating 80 percent of the Phase I Action Items contained in *The Vision*. Several of those Action Items are showcased in the KWA Annual Report.

In order to support solutions to priority issues, the KWA prioritized funding this past year to focus on areas most critical to implementing *The Vision*. We appreciate the support of the 2015 Legislature in re-directing State Water Plan Funds to streambank stabilization projects above Tuttle Creek Reservoir. In 2016, we are requesting the Legislature's help in ensuring a key federal program is available to address our priority water resource issues. The KWA supports continued use of the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) in Kansas. Senate Bill 330 and House Bill 2492 have been introduced to authorize the continued implementation of the Arkansas River CREP and implementation of a new CREP targeted above several federal reservoirs and watersheds experiencing significant sediment and nutrient runoff. The use of this program in Kansas is critical to extending the life of the Ogallala Aquifer and reducing the sediment and nutrient impacts in our federal water supply reservoirs.

Another legislative issue of interest to the KWA is the impairment issue and HB 2245 that was introduced last year. A sub-committee has been formed, and we are actively engaging with the Department of Agriculture and other stakeholders in the hopes that a reasonable proposal can be made to the Legislature. It is our hope that we can be a valuable source of information for state agencies and legislators in the discussion of this important water issue.

I share the same belief as Governor Brownback, in order to accomplish what we have heard from more than 15,000 stakeholders, it is time for action. This comes down to two things: first, changing how people think about and value water and second, how we extend the life of the resources we already have in our aquifers as well as in our aging reservoirs.

The Kansas Water Authority looks forward to working with you this session as we continue to address Kansas water resource priorities and implement the *Vision for the Future of Water Supply in Kansas*.