



**Before the
Senate Agriculture Committee**

Kansas Water Authority Annual Report to the Governor and Legislature

**Gary Harshberger, Chairman, Kansas Water Authority
January 30, 2013**

Chairman Love and members of the Committee, I am Gary Harshberger, Chairman of the Kansas Water Authority (KWA). Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today and provide an update from the KWA.

First, I want to thank you for your efforts last session to address water policy issues that will lead to better water management. Passage of legislation related to “use it or lose it”, multi-year flex accounts and local enhanced management areas was a major step forward for water in Kansas. Implementation of these new tools is underway and will have positive long term benefits. Last session showed what can be accomplished when leaders and stakeholders at all levels come together to address water issues.

The drought we saw in 2011 continued, spread and intensified in 2012. Unfortunately the latest seasonal drought outlook indicates severe drought or worse to persist through April. In 2012 every county in the state was affected and ultimately declared to be in a drought emergency by the Governor. Across the state we have seen crops suffer, livestock water sources dry up and water supplies in our streams and reservoirs diminish. Much work has been done at the federal and state level to help alleviate the effects of the drought. Local leaders have also stepped forward to ensure their community’s needs have been met. We should applaud local water suppliers, water districts as well as individual farmers and ranchers for their efforts to conserve water and work with their neighbors during these difficult times.

While our citizens continue to work to address the daily drought concerns, we must look ahead and ensure a dependable water supply for future droughts. In western Kansas, we must support the efforts of local leaders to implement local enhanced management areas and better educate the water users on the current situation, the long term outlook and improved technology and management options. In eastern Kansas we must protect and restore water storage so that future generations will have the benefit of the reservoirs which exists for us today. That means reducing the sediment and nutrients entering our waters and, in some cases, removing the sediment that has already accumulated.

Solving the issues in front of us will take political, human and financial resources. The Kansas Water Authority recommendations for the State Water Plan Fund are included in our Annual Report which each of you should have previously received. Today, I wish to highlight our highest priority – reservoir protection and restoration.

As many of you know, nutrients and sediments continue to accumulate in our reservoirs at a time when our water storage demands are at an unprecedented high. For FY 2014, the KWA has included an aggressive nutrient reduction proposal which targets over \$5 million in Water Plan Funds to the highest priority watersheds for nutrient and sediment reductions. Nearly all of those priority watersheds are located above a federal reservoir.

For FY 2014, the KWA also recommends the development of a detailed dredging plan for John Redmond Reservoir. Earlier this month, a Request for Proposals (RFP) was released soliciting bids from prospective entities qualified to develop and implement a dredging plan for the reservoir. John Redmond has lost nearly 40 percent of its original capacity to sedimentation and today, only 43 percent of the remaining capacity contains water. As a result, we currently have access to only 25 percent of the reservoir's storage potential. The deadline for proposal submission is March 12. At that time, it is our hopes a firm can be selected and initiate the development of the planning phase.

While many water challenges loom before us, I would like to take this opportunity to highlight a few of our recent success stories. Starting with water quality, five watersheds in eastern Kansas experienced significant water quality improvement and were removed from the state's impaired water list. Those watersheds included Big Creek, Eagle Creek and a portion of the Neosho River in the Neosho River Basin, Dragoon Creek in the Marias Des Cygnes River Basin and Mill Creek in the Kansas River Basin.

In 2005 and 2006, drought conditions existed in the lower Smoky Hill River between Kanopolis Reservoir and the city of Salina, prompting Salina to request administration of upstream, junior water rights. Those conditions also prompted the Kansas Water Office (KWO) to request reductions to Kanopolis Reservoir releases which would have placed further stress on downstream river uses. Since then, legislation was passed in 2011 creating the Lower Smoky Hill River Access District and changes to the Kanopolis Lake Regulation Manual now allow for water users to gain additional access to water stored in the lake and improve our ability to conserve water in the reservoir when conditions allow. While work continues to implement the Access District, prospective members of this new organization purchased temporary lake storage last summer, allowing the city of Salina and surface water irrigators to better manage the water resources available without further water regulation.

At Hillsdale Lake in Miami County, individual water suppliers made requests to purchase available water from the KWO in quantities which exceeded the available supply. The scenario was shaping up to put the KWO Director and the Kansas Water Authority in a position of selling water to individual communities based on projected needs and influencing the growth potential of specific areas over another. Instead, the KWO working with the water suppliers, created the Hillsdale Area Water Cooperative or HAWC, an inter-local agreement formed to share the available supply in Hillsdale and allow for water to be allocated for future use among the local entities, rather than by the State of Kansas.

In closing, we understand the difficult budget situation in which the state finds itself. However, the drought of 2012 has once again shown us all the value of investing in our water infrastructure so that we can not only survive, but prosper as a state.

Thank you again for the opportunity to discuss some of the recommendations of the Kansas Water Authority. We look forward to working with you this session as we continue to improve Kansas water resources. I will stand for questions at the appropriate time.