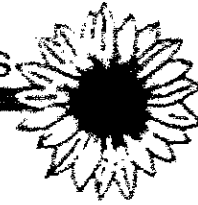




STATE ASSOCIATION
OF KANSAS WATERSHEDS



SAKW Comments and Discussion on the Benefits of HB 2014

House Committee on Vision 2020

February 11, 2015

Chairman Sloan and the committee on Vision 2020.

My name is Herb Graves, Executive Director of the State Association of Kansas Watersheds (SAKW). We understand this is not a formal hearing for HB 2014, but we stand in support of any legislation that can increase potential funding for water quality/quantity projects in Kansas.

SAKW feels water projects can only be as good as the protection of the watersheds that lie upstream. That protection seems to be deemphasizing upstream land treatment for stream bank stabilization projects. Our opinion is that land treatment and we include watershed district dams (here after referred to as district dams) here or the lack there of has a direct affect on unstable stream banks.

Stream banks feel the most pressure and therefore the most instability during high flow events. Conservation practices and watershed dams reduce or control the amount of water that leaves a watershed, and therefore the peak rate of flow into the streams of Kansas.

This fact does not even address the amount of sediment trapped in district dams. Most watershed dams are designed to trap 1/2 to 1 inch of sediment per acre of drainage over their design life.

At the current time district dams contribute \$50 million dollars of average flood reduction benefits per year in Kansas. Through a current study being conducted by Kansas State University we hope this number increases in value. Does this mean that without the flood reduction benefits of district dams that stream banks would be even more unstable? We think so.

In the past 5-10 years funding for district dams has decreased 50% for state funded dams and 100% for federal PL-566 dams. With some 500 dams still on the books yet to be funded, it is conceivable the total flood reduction benefits in Kansas could increase by 20%. This seems like a wasted opportunity that could better serve the water quality and quantity efforts in Kansas.

Now with reduced federal environmental costs associated with Section 404 permitting being considered both in Washington DC and in Topeka, we feel at least the state funded dam construction program will get back on track in the near future. The federal PL-566 program is receiving increased

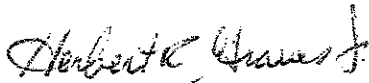
debate through the provisions of the NRCS Regional Conservation Partnering Program for resurrection to some level of funding.

→ The current funding level for the state dam program is near the \$600 thousand level. This funding level is expected to build about 3 dams in FY 2016. At this rate, flood reduction and sediment retention benefits to Kansas will increase, but at a very minimal rate. It is realistically possible that 10 dams could be constructed in Kansas each year with a \$2 million appropriation level for DOC's dam construction program. Keep in mind that each and every state and federal dam project must show a positive cost to benefit ratio. Just show me any other water quality or quantity project with this same requirement.

Let us dream a bit and say the current list of federal PL-566 dams were funded through NRCS. This is the same list of 20 priority dams left hanging in 2007 when federal dollars were shut off. The price tag for these 20 dams is approximately \$13 million using 2007 figures. Of those 20 dams 14 are located upstream of federal reservoirs. What a lost opportunity to impact the sediment loads into our federal reservoirs.

Taken right out of the latest version of the Governor's 50 year vision plan finding available project sites for multi-purpose small lakes with their water quantity capabilities is a good vision. Why look any further than planned watershed district projects they could be modified for a greater purpose.

Thanks for the opportunity to bring before this committee one viable option for using the potential financial aspect of HB 2014.



Herbert R. Graves Jr.
SAKW Executive Director