

Date: Wednesday, March 11, 2015

To: House Vision 2020 Committee

From: Sean Miller, NW Kansas GMD #4

Chairman Sloan, Members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to address you today. My name is Sean Miller and I am representing Northwest Kansas GMD #4 (GMD#4). The district comprises approximately 3.1 million acres and comprises all or part of the ten most northwest counties in the state. Our governing board is comprised of 11 board members, elected to three year terms, and served by a staff of four employees. The district was formed in 1976, and since that time has worked to conserve and manage the district's groundwater resources while providing local owners and water users the ability to be directly involved in the process of establishing regulations regarding the resource. The district is currently funded by a \$0.05 per acre assessment on land, and a variable assessment on water usage currently assessed at \$0.45 per acre-foot.

In 2001 the State Water Plan, through two specially appointed committees, worked to develop a plan to extend the usable life of the aquifer. The findings of these committees lead to great aquifer subunit delineation and ultimately the "Enhanced Management Plan" that was adopted by the GMD#4 Board in 2006. This enhanced plan identified High Priority Areas (HPAs) within the district. These six HPAs, were tasked with developing a plan to restore their rate of decline to the average rate of decline for the district. While many chose to seek additional usage of existing state and federal programs to encourage better irrigation efficiency, or transition to dryland production, one area, known as "Sheridan-6" chose a different option. Producers in this area chose a more aggressive approach, similar in nature to the current Intensive Groundwater Use Control Areas (IGUCAs). Through a series of meetings of constituents and GMD#4 staff, it was determined that the inability to control the fate of the area through an IGUCA was a significant enough concern that it could keep individuals from participating and helping to achieve the HPA goals. This ultimately led to the development of the Local Enhanced Management Area (LEMA) legislation passed in 2012. Under this LEMA, the 110 producers over approximately a 100 square mile area have agreed to achieve a 20% reduction in water usage. To accomplish this, and still provide production flexibility, the producers have agreed to a five year allocation of 55 inches of water. This water can be used in any year, or spread evenly over the period, but cannot exceed the total of 55 inches in five years. This gives the producer the flexibility to survive an early drought and then adjust his future plantings accordingly to achieve the five year goal. This 20% reduction is estimated to save almost 23,000 acre-feet of water, or approximately 7.5 billion gallons during the life of the LEMA.

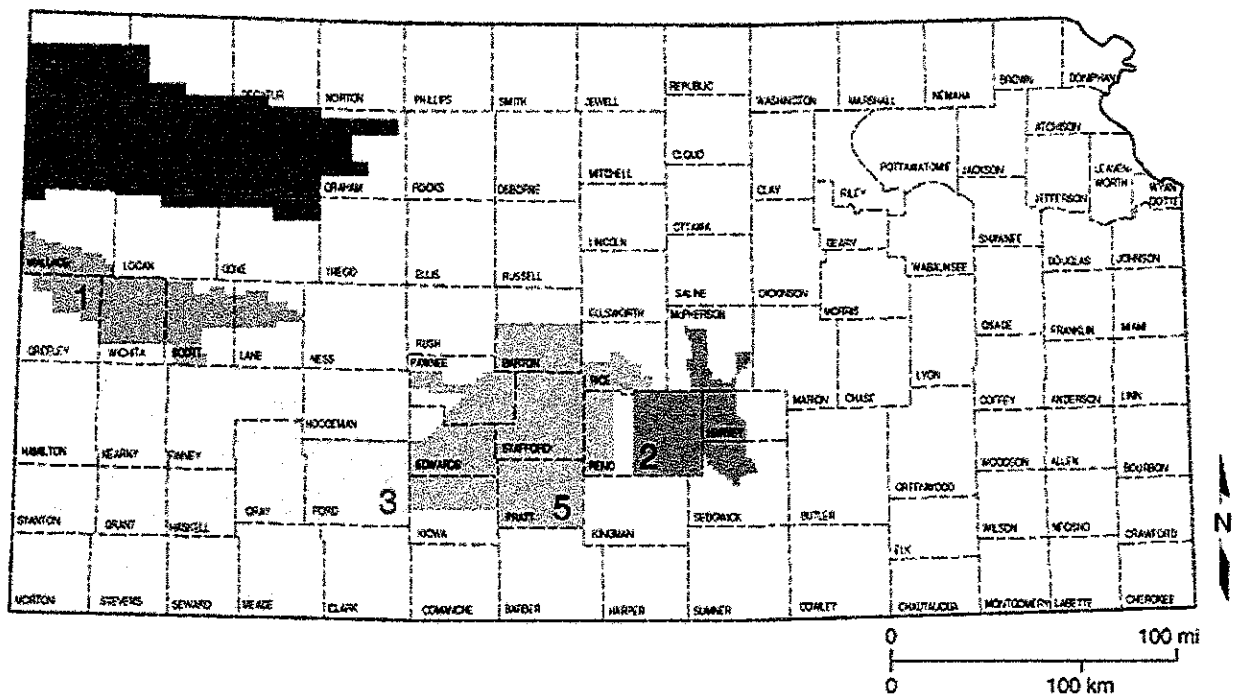
Northwest Kansas is also in the unique position of being in the Upper Republican basin, and subject to the Republican River Compact Administration. This administration, a multi-state venture between Colorado, Kansas, and Nebraska has been the subject of much litigation, and has required significant monitoring and management through GMD#4. Kansas Geological Society (KGS) modeling and data has played an important role in this process, and is likely to

become more important in the future as we move to more section-level driven data to monitor the South Fork of the Republican River as well as Beaver, Sappa, and Prairie Dog Creeks, all of which feed into the Republican basin. The ever moving target of the Republican administration can be challenging as changes in other states, like Colorado's Compact Compliance Pipeline, dictate management changes in multi-state issues.

Moving forward, the district Board has recently passed a new goal statement. This statement indicates that GMD#4 will have in place a system that establishes "conservation water use amounts" for all of GMD4 by the end of 2016. This system will include clearly defined areas and triggers under which current pumpage levels will be required to be reduced in order to come into compliance with these established conservation water use amounts. This system will be established by board action and will be included in the GMD#4 Management Program. The system will replace the current high priority area protocol, but will continue to ensure that any needed controls are based on hydrologic and water use parameters. If possible, flexibility shall be afforded so that various allocation alternatives are available for use in any given area.

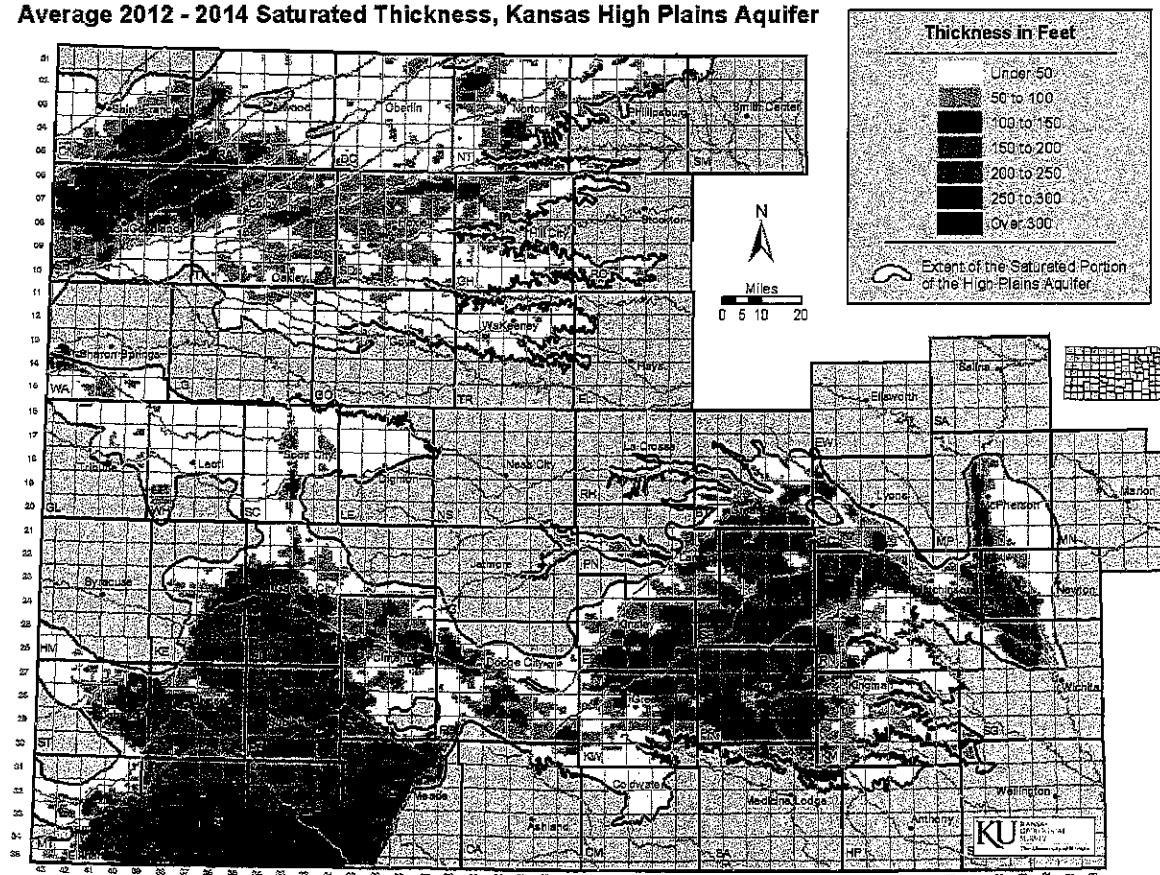
All of the issues above point to a growing, and ongoing need for data to drive decision making. This data, often in the form of aquifer "modeling" is not cheap, but is imperative for good decision making and proper management in the future. To this end, the funding provided by the State Water Plan Fund, to the Kansas Geological Survey is critical to the groundwater management districts and to water users statewide. GMD#4 would encourage the legislature to take a critical look at the state funding of these technical assistance entities. Local water users can develop stringent local management plans with the best of intentions, but without accurate data upon which to base their decisions, all of their hard work will go for naught.

I thank you again for giving me the opportunity to address the House Vision 2020 Committee on behalf of Northwest Kansas GMD#4 this morning. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.



Map Credit to GMD2.org

Average 2012 - 2014 Saturated Thickness, Kansas High Plains Aquifer



Map Credit to Kansas Geological Survey