



Since 1894

To: Senate Committee on Natural Resources
Senator Larry Powell, Chairman

From: Mike Beam, Sr. Vice President

Re: Testimony in **support of SB 330**, a bill establishing the Kansas conservation reserve enhancement program

Date: January 20, 2016

The Kansas Livestock Association (KLA), formed in 1894, is a trade association representing over 5,000 members on legislative and regulatory issues. KLA members are involved in many aspects of the livestock industry, including seed stock, cow-calf and stocker production, cattle feeding, dairy production, grazing land management and diversified farming operations.

Legislation giving the state authority to enter into an agreement with USDA for a Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) first surfaced during the 2007 Kansas Legislative Session. The Kansas Livestock Association supported the legislation because we viewed the program as a tool to address the over appropriation of water rights, on a voluntary and targeted basis. Furthermore, the federal-state partnership allowed the state to leverage approximately \$150 million of federal monies by using \$5 million of state funds for the program. While a bill did not pass in 2007, the legislature authorized the program by including a budget proviso and has reauthorized the program each year in this manner.

It's our understanding SB 330 is intended to provide statutory authority for a continuation of the Upper Arkansas River CREP after the 2015 fiscal year. KLA supports this legislation.

The Kansas Department of Agriculture's Division of Conservation has provided a detailed performance report of the program's actions during the last eight years. To date, over 34,000 acre-feet of annual water appropriations has been retired, on a voluntary basis. This reduction of water use will surely extend the life of the acquirer and irrigation opportunities for nonparticipant landowner/farmers along the targeted area of the Upper Arkansas River. The report also notes the \$8 million of state, local and private expenditures has been matched with an estimated \$28.3 million of federal USDA program funds.

When the legislature first considered this program we concurred with other industry groups that allowing continued dry land farming of land enrolled in CREP would be preferable to complete land retirement during the 15 year enrollment period. This would require a change in USDA's program requirements and such a change has not been made thus far. Regardless of this federal policy, KLA continues to support the Upper Arkansas River CREP and urges the legislature to pass SB 330.

Thank you!