

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Joann Freeborn at 3:30 p.m. on February 12, 2004 in Room 231-N of the Capitol.

All members were present except:

Representative Bill Light- excused  
Representative Dan Thimesch- excused  
Representative Ted Powers- excused

Committee staff present:

Raney Gilliland Legislative Research Department  
Mary Torrence, Revisor of Statutes  
Mary Ann Graham, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee: Jeffrey Gross, Assistant State Conservationist for Water Resources, Natural Resources Conservation Service, US Dept. Of Agriculture, 760 S Broadway, Salina, KS 67401  
Herbert Graves, Jr., Exec. Director, State Association of KS Watersheds, 2830 Rain Road, Chapman, KS 67431  
Tracy Streeter, Exec. Director, KS State Conservation Commission, 109 SW 9<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 500, Topeka, KS 66612-1215

Others attending:

See Attached List.

Chairperson Joann Freeborn called the meeting to order. She announced that she had appointed a subcommittee to discuss **HB2583** - Recreational Trails; noncompliance by responsible party; remedies. Chairperson, Rep. Joann Freeborn; Rep. Vaughn Flora; and Rep. Tom Sloan are the subcommittee members. They will meet upon adjournment of the House on Friday, February 13. She will announce on the House Floor the meeting room. She announced that the committee will not be taking action on **HB2607** - An act concerning solid waste management. She reviewed the committee agenda for next week, Tuesday, February 17, a hearing on **HB2620** - Irrigation transition assistance loan program for water right owners converting to non-irrigation land use. The agenda will be revised, action on **HB2480** - Membership of the Kansas Water Authority, will be added. Thursday, February 19, Possible action on bills previously heard.

The Chairperson welcomed Jeffrey Gross, Assistant State Conservationist for Water Resources, Natural Resources Conservation Service, US Dept of Agriculture, to the committee. He gave a presentation, with the use of overhead slides, on the Federal Watershed Program. Many small watershed dams in Kansas are reaching their design life, or have had a hazard class change due to downstream development. These dams will need rehabilitation by local watershed sponsors to extend their life and/or comply with hazard class requirements. The State of Kansas provide funding(through loans or grants) to help pay the local watershed sponsors portion (35%) of rehabilitation expenses. The remaining portion (65%) will be provided by the federal government. Small watershed dams are essential to the continued economic and social development of rural Kansas. In the last 50 years, over 800 dams have been built in Kansas with assistance from the US Department of Agriculture (USDA). The dams provide an estimated \$30 million in annual benefits. Benefits include flood protection, municipal and irrigation water supply, water quality, reduced soil erosion, wildlife habitat, and recreation. The dams are federally assisted, not federally owned. Local sponsors own the dams and are responsible for their operation and maintenance. Today, 46 dams across Kansas may be in need of rehabilitation because of either a hazard class change, or the dam has reached its design life. 65% of the cost of rehabilitation will be provided by USDA. (See attachment 1) Committee questions and discussion followed.

Chairperson Freeborn thanked Mr. Gross for his presentation and opened hearing on **HB2674**.

**HB2674: Loan program to pay certain costs of rehabilitation of watershed dams.**