

Approved: 1/24/07  
Date

## MINUTES OF THE SENATE AGRICULTURE

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Mark Taddiken at 8:30 a.m. on January 16, 2007 in Room 423-S of the Capitol.

All members were present.

Committee staff present:

Raney Gilliland, Kansas Legislative Research  
Art Griggs, Office of Revisor of Statutes  
Judy Seitz, Committee Assistant

Conferees appearing before the committee:

Pat Lehman, Executive Director, Kansas Association of Conservation Districts  
LaVern Wetzel, President, Kansas Association of Conservation Districts  
Rodney Vorhees, Chairman, State Conservation Commission  
Connie Richmeier, District Manager, Finney County Conservation District  
Keri Harris, District Manager, Franklin County Conservation District  
Fred Cholick, Dean College of Agriculture and Director of K-State Research and Extension  
Constantine Cotsoradis, Deputy Secretary, Kansas Department of Agriculture

Others attending:

See attached list.

Hearings on **SB 60–Conservation Districts, funding**, were opened.

Pat Lehman, Executive Director, Kansas Association of Conservation Districts (KACD), appeared in support of **SB 60** (Attachment 1). He thanked the chairman for holding hearings on Conservation Day at the Capitol. Conservation districts in Kansas are divided into five areas with each area electing a county supervisor to be a director who serves on the Board of Directors of the KACD. Mr. Lehman stood for questions.

LaVern Wetzel, President, Kansas Association of Conservation Districts testified in favor of **SB 60** (Attachment 2). He stated that the KACD believes in a strong commitment to conservation practices that define Kansas and preserves the state's natural resources for future generations. There were no questions for Mr. Wetzel.

Rodney Vorhees, Chairperson, State Conservation Commission, spoke in support of **SB 60** (Attachment 3). He noted that the increase in funds would provide 96 county conservation districts with additional operating funds to assist with implementing natural resource programs to protect and enhance the natural resources in Kansas. Mr. Vorhees stood for questions.

Connie Richmeier, District Manager, Finney County Conservation District, presented testimony in favor of **SB 60** (Attachment 4). She stated that the state has only this moment to conserve our natural resources for they are non-renewable and will be needed for future generations.

Keri Harris, District Manager, Franklin County Conservation District, spoke in favor of **SB 60** (Attachment 5). She said that without the increase in funding many county conservation districts may be faced with reducing staff and services, or even closing the doors completely.

There were no questions for Ms. Richmeier and Ms. Harris.

Chairman Taddiken said the hearing on **SB 60** will be continued to next week.

Fred Cholick, Dean of the College of Agriculture and Director of K-State Research and Extension presented the annual report for the Kansas Center for Sustainable Agriculture and Alternative Crops (KCSAAC) (Attachment 6). He said the KCSAAC works in partnership with state and federal agencies, nonprofit organizations and agricultural organizations to assist family farmers and ranchers to boost farm profitability, protect natural resources and enhance rural communities. He also presented the annual report of the K-State Research and Extension (on file at Kansas State University).

## CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES OF THE Senate Agriculture at 8:30 a.m. on January 16, 2007 in Room 423-S of the Capitol.

Dr. Cholick highlighted a few of the projects mentioned in the report:

1. modified intensive early stocking (strategically and methodically moving cattle on and off grazing land)
2. K-State partners with communities in facilitating activities like Walk Kansas to improve health and reduce health care costs
3. Kansas' Grow the Grower giving local producers training and information needed to be successful in the local market
4. Promoting canola as an alternate crop

He also reviewed the K-State Research and Extension budget responsibilities and fund source data for FY 2007.

Dr. Cholick stood for questions.

During the first five years of the Center's (KCSAAC) operation, \$375,000 of state funding has resulted in approximately \$3.2 million dollars of grant funds.

Dr. Cholick said the focused areas of excellence are bio-economy bioenergy, bio material, agriculture food safety and security, integrating agriculture, and science, technology and youth development.

He stood for additional questions.

Constantine Cotsoradis, Deputy Secretary, Kansas Department of Agriculture, requested the introduction of a bill to create a fund to receive damages from the Republican River Compact should it become necessary to seek monetary damages if Nebraska does not provide the water as required by the Compact.

Senator Marci Francisco made a motion to introduce a bill to establish the Republican river water conservation projects fund.

Senator Pine seconded the motion. Motion passed.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 a.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 17.