

Western Kansas GMD #1
Sean Miller
Written Proponent of HB 2560
House Agriculture Committee
Tuesday, February 1, 2022

Chairman Rahjes and members of the House Committee on Agriculture:

Western Kansas Groundwater Management District No. 1 (GMD1) appreciates the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of HB 2560. This bill extends the sunset on Department of Agriculture fees and programs with no increase in the amount of any fees.

Western Kansas GMD1 was formed on May 1, 1973 and lies in west-central Kansas including portions of five counties. The District is currently managing and supporting various programs to enhance water management and conservation to extend the usable life of the aquifer. GMD1 has six Water Conservation Areas (WCAs), a Local Enhanced Management Area (Wichita County LEMA), is in discussion on a district wide LEMA, and has utilized the Water Transition Assistance Program (WaterTAP) to help protect municipal water supplies within the District.

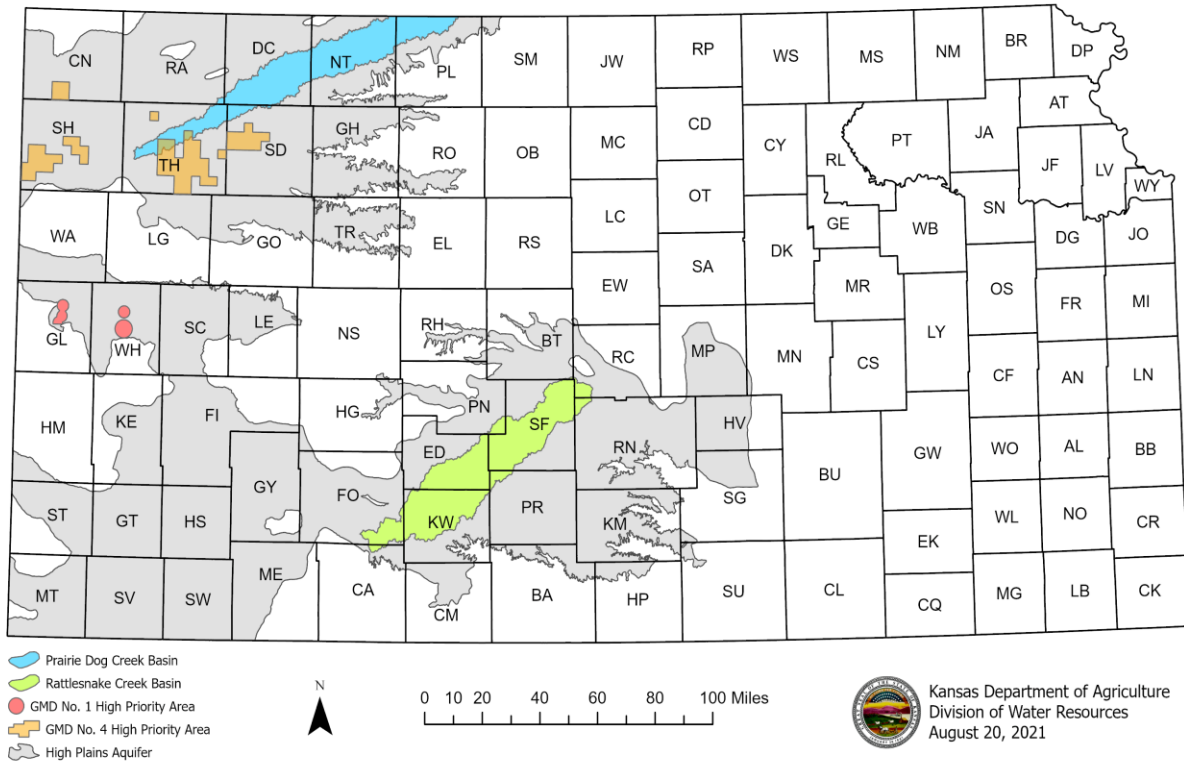
WaterTAP, authorized by the Kansas Legislature in 2006, was extended in 2012 and without legislative action will sunset at the end of this fiscal year. HB 2560 would extend the sunset on WaterTAP until July 1, 2030. This program provides for incentive-based voluntary retirement of irrigation water rights in specifically targeted high priority areas. Unlike some other programs available, WaterTAP allows for total, or partial retirement of water rights and it allows for dryland farming of the property after retirement of the irrigation rights. It does not require the land to be taken out of production for any period of time.

In GMD1 WaterTAP is being utilized in conjunction with other efforts, including playa restoration (through Playa Lakes Joint Venture) to help sustain the municipal water supplies of Leoti and Tribune. On the attached WaterTAP “Target Areas” map you will see those high priority areas designated by red circles in the far west-central portion of the state.

In the past year there have been three applications to voluntarily retire water rights in these areas. One application, near Tribune, KS was approved and funded. Two additional applicants, near Leoti, KS were not approved due to a lack of funds available within the program.

In conclusion, Western Kansas GMD1 is fully supportive of the extension, and funding, of the WaterTAP program as a tool that is important to the long term sustainability of water supplies in Western Kansas. We ask that you support HB 2560 and recommend it favorable for passage.

WTAP Target Areas



(WaterTAP Target Areas map on the back side of this testimony)