

Kansas Water Vision-Development of the Second Draft

Nearly a year ago, in recognition of the critical importance water serves in our state, Governor Sam Brownback challenged the Kansas Water Office and Kansas Department of Agriculture to develop a 50 year vision for our water supply. His message was clear we needed to get out across the state and listen to stakeholders, and we did just that. We have visited with more than 12,000 Kansans, attended more than 250 meetings and now are preparing to release the Kansas Water Vision at the Governor's Water Conference early next month.

As we prepare for the conference, the focus is now on the development of the second draft of *The Vision for the Future of Water in Kansas*. It is important for Kansans to be updated on the process and to have an opportunity for feedback. The feedback we've received on the Preliminary Discussion Draft release in July has been phenomenal. As a result of the input we've received, we are planning a number of revisions. A preview of some of those changes includes:

In the Preliminary Discussion Draft, examples of statewide and regional goals were included as means of generating discussion. Did they ever! As most know, our water resources are diverse across the state and the goals we strive to meet must be diverse as well, and applicable to the water resource conditions of the area. As a result, we will be including a goal setting process in the second draft to replace the existing examples. We will enlist the help of the Kansas Water Authority in developing regional water resources goals, working in concert with stakeholders. The Vision and Mission will remain statewide in nature, but the goals will be regional.

While some aspects of the Kansas Water Appropriation Act may be considered for change through the normal legislative and regulatory processes, the evaluation of the pros and cons of priority under the Kansas Water Appropriation Act will be eliminated. We've heard from many stakeholders regarding this strategy who are very concerned with the potential implications of modifying the fundamental premise of the Act. We feel that any change in the Act as it pertains to the "first in time, first in right" provisions will achieve little and divert attention away from the dozens of strategies in the Draft that are widely supported by Kansans.

We understand you can't discuss water quantity without recognizing the importance of water quality. One example of where quantity and quality overlap is in our watersheds. The adoption of watershed best management practices continues to receive overwhelming support as the most cost effective

means of preventing sediment from entering our reservoirs. The second Draft will encourage the implementation of more projects aimed at reducing nutrients and sediments from entering our targeted water courses and reservoirs.

The priority in the second Draft will remain on voluntary, locally driven and market-based solutions. We continue to hear and recognize that locally developed plans have the highest opportunity for long-term success. The state should provide the necessary tools and support to allow greater flexibility for the management of water resources at the local level. The Vision Team also continues to hear a local desire to conserve and extend the life of their aquifer. Local landowners and water right holders have the right and responsibility to determine their destiny with respect to long-term water use while balancing conservation and economic growth.

Your input on the next Draft is critical and the deadline of October 15 is fast approaching. If you have not registered for the Governor's Water Conference, there's still time. The conference will be held November 12-13 at the Hilton Garden Inn in Manhattan. Please register by going to the Kansas Water Office website at www.kwo.org.

We truly appreciate the effort and commitment by those Kansans who have participated in the Kansas Water Vision process. We look forward to continued discussions as we finalize the next Draft and ultimately all work together to implement the Vision.