

Governor's Water Conference

Approximately 600 attendees with diverse water interests were encouraged at the Governor's Conference on the Future of Water in Kansas to keep pushing forward with implementation efforts for accomplishing regional priorities within the *Long Term Vision for the Future of Water Supply in Kansas* to ensure our state's water future.

"Four years have passed since I first called for the 50 Year Water Vision and the progress we have seen is great, but the state of Kansas needs to remain focused on a sustainable water future," said Governor Sam Brownback. "Kansans must act on a shared commitment to have the water resources necessary to support the state's social, economic and natural resource needs for not only our current generation but most importantly our children and grandchildren."

Attendees heard updates on water resource statuses and continued implementation of the Vision as well as areas of concern throughout the state. Progress continues to be made through local, state and federal efforts to implement conservation practices to improve water quality and decrease reservoir sedimentation but much work still remains. To date 164 failing streambanks have been stabilized but more than 600 still need to be addressed. Reservoirs within Kansas continue to lose storage due to sedimentation. In regards to the groundwater they heard how an expanded Index Well network continues to provide valuable real-time data on conditions to help lead to better water management decisions. The Sheridan 6 Local Enhanced Management Area (LEMA) is having positive impacts on water conservation efforts in the region and Water Conservation Areas continue to be established across Kansas. However, current enrollment only accounts for 0.4 percent of all acres where these water conservation and planning tools can be utilized statewide.

"As we have mentioned many times before, this Vision process was set in motion by the Governor when he asked us to look long-term for water supply across the state, and for sustainability in the Ogallala aquifer. Water supply challenges are not an issue confined to one user group – they are not confined to one area of the state," said Kansas Water Office Director Tracy Streeter. "It is a challenge that crosses state agency lines and we will continue to push forward as this Vision is integrated into our existing Water Plan."

The morning featured the "Water Legacy Award" which was presented to Pat Sauble, who has been an influential and steady voice for water conservation in Kansas for a majority of his 96 years. Among many honorable accomplishments, he was recognized for helping establish the Kansas Watershed Association and

served as the first president and also served as director of the Kansas Association of Conservation Districts for many years. Sauble also represented Kansas on the national level for resource management on the National Cattlemen's Beef Association Property Rights and Environmental Management Committee.

This year's 'Be the Vision' award recipients were also honored for taking extraordinary measures to conserve, reuse or adopt better practices to help ensure the future of our state's water resources. This year's recipients were the City of Wichita for their innovative stormwater best management practice implementation program; the Lower Smoky Access District – agriculture and municipal partnership; the Wichita County Water Conservation Area and the Dwane Roth Family for their leadership in conservation efforts over the Ogallala. Lieutenant Governor Jeff Colyer was on hand to help with the award presentation.

The rest of the day continued with Jim Gulliford, EPA Region 7 Administrator; Michael J. Teague, *Oklahoma Energy & Environment, Secretary*; and four panels highlighting different water topics, *Water and Emergency Response*; *Public Water Supply and Agriculture – Solving non-point source pollution problems together*; *Overcoming Water Scarcity – The Israeli Approach*; *Sustainability Initiatives in Agriculture*; *The Farm Bill's Role in Water and Natural Resource Management*

Tomorrow will build on Vision implementation and water management and policy discussions from the previous day with technical presentations, posters and talks. Graduate and undergraduate students will present their research.

The conference also features the Kansas Water Office Photo Contest. More than 120 photos were submitted to be voted on as the 'people's choice' at the conference. The winner will be featured on the 2018 brochure, website and other locations throughout the coming year.

The Governor's Conference on the Future of Water in Kansas is hosted by the KWO, Kansas Water Resource Institute/K-State and the Kansas Geological Survey/KU. Major sponsors for the event include Black & Veatch, Burns & McDonnell and Great Lakes Dredge & Dock.