

New Laws Will Conserve and Extend State Water

Surrounded by Garden City High School students, Kansas Governor Sam Brownback signed two bills into law today designed to conserve the state's water supply and extend the life of the Ogallala Aquifer.

- House Bill 2451 eliminates the state's "use it or lose it" water policy and gives landowners incentive to conserve water because they won't feel that they must use their maximum amount of water when they don't need to just so they don't lose water rights.

- Senate Bill 272 amends multi-year flex accounts to expand irrigators' capabilities and options so they can manage their crop water without increasing long-term water use under their water right.

Governor Brownback challenged Kansans to embrace the new water laws for the future of their children and grandchildren.

"We must save our water and conserve so we may extend the useful life of the Ogallala Aquifer," Brownback said. "Those of you with substantial water permits, I am now asking you to step-up on behalf of your children and grandchildren. I ask you, if you have options, don't use the water. Save it for them."

Brownback continued, "Talk to your neighbors. Offer to them that you'll use less water if they will so we can save the water in your area. Let's do this like Kansans, working together, each giving a little so we all have a brighter future. Without water, we have no future."

Kansas Secretary of Agriculture Dale Rodman said the new laws will help grow a cornerstone of the state's economy, agriculture.

"Agriculture is key to the economic vitality of Kansas, and water is essential to agriculture production," Secretary Rodman said. "The bills signed today are an important step towards creating water policy that benefits agriculture today and sustains the valuable water resources for future generations."

Work on reforming the state's water laws began a year ago when the Brownback administration started planning the Ogallala Aquifer Water Summit. Hundreds of Kansans concerned about the future of the state's water supply and the future of their children and grandchildren attended that summit. From there, the Ogallala Aquifer Advisory Committee reviewed short and long term water goals. Then the Kansas Water Authority developed the water reform legislative agenda presented to the Kansas Legislature for its consideration.

Kansas Water Office Executive Director Tracy Streeter said the new laws are true examples of how when Kansans work together, can solve an issue.

"I encourage our water users and managers to make full use of the new tools provided," Director Streeter said. "The Kansas Water Office will continue to work with the Kansas Water Authority and Kansas stakeholders to identify and evaluate further policy considerations."

State Senate President Steve Morris, Senate Agriculture Chair Mark Taddiken, Senate Natural

Resources Chair Ralph Ostmeyer, House Agriculture Chair Larry Powell and Kansas Water Authority and the Ogallala Aquifer Advisory Committee Chair Gary Harshberger as well as stakeholder groups joined the Governor for the bill signings.

Including the two bills signed today, Governor Brownback has signed 6 bills into law in the 2012 legislative session.