



1320 Research Park Drive
Manhattan, Kansas 66502

MINUTES OF THE STATE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

1. The State Conservation Commission meeting was called to order by Rod Vorhees, Chairman and Area V Commissioner at 9:05 a.m., Thursday, September 11, 2014 at the Pride of Kansas Building, Kansas State Fairgrounds, Hutchinson, Kansas.

2. **ATTENDANCE:**

Elected Commissioners:

Ted Nighswonger, Area I Commissioner
Andy Larson, Area II Commissioner
Brad Shogren, Area III Commissioner
John Wunder, Area IV Commissioner
Rod Vorhees, Area V Commissioner

Ex-Officio & Appointed Members:

Eric Banks, State Conservationist, USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Dan Devlin, Director, Kansas Center for Agricultural Resources and the Environment (KCARE), K-State Research and Extension
Chad Voigt, P.E., Water Structures Program Manager, Kansas Department of Agriculture (KDA), Division of Water resources (DWR)
Peter Tomlinson, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Extension Specialist for Environmental Quality Agronomy Department, Kansas State University (KSU)

Division of Conservation, Kansas Department of Agriculture Staff:

Greg Foley, Executive Director
Scott Carlson, Mined Land Reclamation Program Manager
Don Jones, Water Quality Programs Manager

Guests:

Herb Graves, State Association of Kansas Watersheds (SAKW)

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3. ADDITIONS/CORRECTIONS TO AND APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Motion by Ted Nighswonger to approve the amended agenda. Seconded by Andy Larson. Motion carried.

4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING:

Motion by Brad Shogren to approve the July 28, 2014 minutes, as mailed. Seconded by John Wunder. Motion carried.

5. COMMENTS FROM GUESTS:

- a. Herb Graves. – Herb discussed Kansas Senate Bill 147. He also reported on “The Kansas Watershed Story” research project that SAKW has funded with Kansas State University.

6. COMMUNICATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- a. Greg Foley gave an overview of the Sorghum Checkoff Seed Industry Tour he attended. He also discussed the EPA’s proposed rule concerning the “Waters of the US”. – See Attachment A.

7. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

- a. Watershed Dam Construction Program funding recommendations for rehabilitation FY 2015– Greg Foley. – See Attachment B

Motion by John Wunder to authorize revised funding recommendation for Watershed Dam Rehabilitation as outlined in the attachment. Seconded by Ted Nighswonger. Motion carried.

- b. Conservation District document submittal update – Carlson. – See Attachment C.
- c. Budget updates for the 2016-2017 fiscal years –Foley. – See Attachment D.
- d. Review and take possible action on the Buffer Initiative recommendations – Jones. – See Attachment E.

8. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Review updates to the Conservation Partnership Agreements – Carlson.
- b. Review and assign commissioner for the Kansas Association of Conservation Districts (KACD) Annual Meeting – Chairman Vorhees.
 - i. Preside at Monday SCC luncheon: Rod Vorhees.

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- ii. Give invocation at Monday luncheon: Andy Larson.
- iii. Guest luncheon speakers introduction: Rod Vorhees introducing Greg Foley and Tracy Streeter.
- iv. Governors Recognition award winners during banquet: Ted Nighswonger and John Wunder.
- v. Presentation of 20 year awards during banquet: Brad Shogren.
- vi. Hold elections at area meetings for the following:
 - a) KACD areas I, III, and V.
 - b) SCC areas II, and IV.
- c. Authorize Commissioner and staff travel – Chairman Vorhees.

9. REPORTS:

- a. Agency Reports:
 - i. NRCS – Eric Banks. See Attachment F.
 - ii. KCARE/KWRI - Dan Devlin. Dan provided a brief update of KCARE activities and the recent visit by the Israel Consulate.
 - iii. K-State Agronomy – Peter Tomlinson. Peter announced new hires and vacancies for his department.
 - iv. DWR – Chad Voigt. None.
- b. Staff reports:
 - i. Kansas Technical Assistance Partnership report – Don Jones. – See Attachment G.
 - ii. Governor’s Kansas Conservation District Service recognition – Carlson. – Counties recognized in 2014 are: Rooks, Hamilton, Lincoln, Jackson, and Cowley.
- c. Commissioner Reports:
 - i. Area I – Ted Nighswonger. Reported that conservation aid in future years will need significant support from county commissions.
 - ii. Area II – Andy Larson. Reported that they had local budget hearings. The Finney county budget was proposed to be cut approximately 10%. Finney County appealed the budget cut. They solicited a local producer and a school teacher to testify at the hearing and had the cut budget reinstated.

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- iii. Area III – Brad Shogren. Reported that they received more rain and that the corn was too wet to cut yet.
- iv. Area IV – John Wunder. Reported that the county budgets will be cut 2%. He also believes Northeast Kansas will have some pretty good corn crops. John requested the Agricultural Value economic data, from Josh Roe, be provided to all conservation districts to use during the local budget process.
- v. Area V – Rod Vorhees. Reported that he has a new grandson.

10. ADJOURN:

The next regular commission meeting is scheduled for Sunday, November 23, 2014 at 2:00 p.m. at the Double Tree by Hilton Hotel Wichita Airport, 2098 Airport Road, Wichita, Kansas.

Motion by Andy Larson to adjourn. Seconded by Peter Tomlinson. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 2:15 p.m.



Greg A. Foley
Executive Director



Kansas
Department of Agriculture
Division of Conservation

Water Authority Meeting
August 22, 2014
Greg Foley

EPA and US Army Corps Proposed Rule Changes

- ▶ Two major items of concern:
 - Interpretive Rule
 - Recently published and adopted
 - Waters of the United States
 - Currently proposed rule change

Interpretive Rule

- CWA Section 404(f)(1)(A) itemizes multiple exemptions that include:
 - Normal farming and ranching practices....
 - Upland soil and water conservation practices...
 - Construction and maintenance of farm ponds or irrigation ditches
 - Exempt activities are not subject to Section 404, 1311 (a) or 1342
- KDA made formal comment/request to rescind rule

Interpretive Rule, cont.

- ▶ EPA adopted Interpretive Rule –
 - The Interpretive Rule’s accomplishment was to take agricultural exemptions and remove the exemptions that did not align with re-writes in the Proposed Rule
 - KDA challenges a Federal Agency does not have the authority to over-ride federal law
 - This rule establishes a floor or technical standard that practices must meet to be exempt;
 - Moves a voluntary service agency, NRCS, into a regulatory environment
 - Example – Gradient Terrace; no longer exempt – why; with a defined bed and banks it now would meet WOTUS

Waters of the US, EPA/CORPs

- ▶ Proposed Rule Definitions:
 - Seven Core Definitions; couple big changes
 - All waters used in interstate commerce
 - All interstate waters and wetlands
 - Territorial Seas
 - All impoundments of navigable water, interstate water, territorial seas **or tributary**
 - **All tributaries of navigable waters, ...**
 - **All waters, including wetlands, adjacent to trad. Nav. Water, inter. Water, territorial seas, impoundment or tributary; and**
 - On a case by case basis, other waters

Waters of the US, EPA/CORPs

Major or Primary Issues of Concern to address in Comments:

- Default tributaries to WOTUS
- Default all adjacent waters to WOTUS
- Significant Nexus
- Ditches
- Shallow Subsurface and Other Connections
- Ephemeral Streams
- Did not consult implementing States during development (Executive Order of President)

FEDERAL REGISTER – WOTUS Proposed Rule :

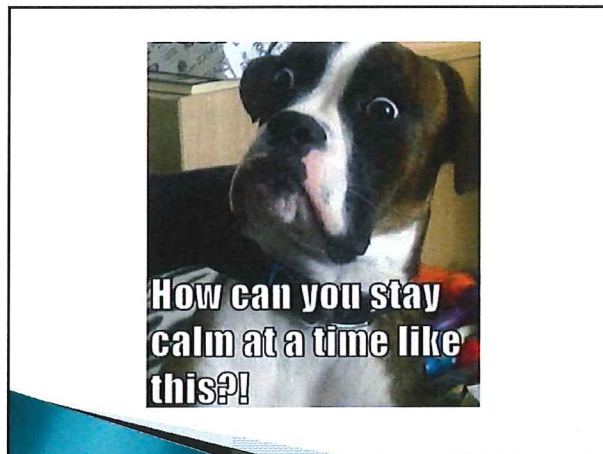
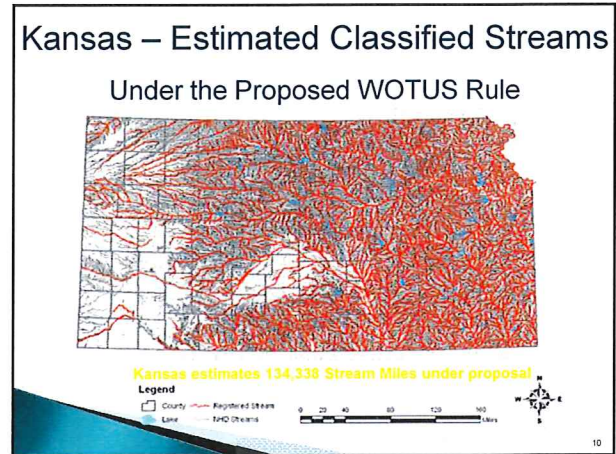
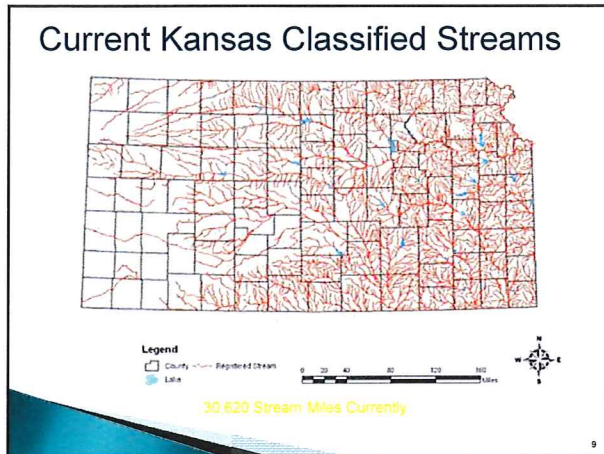
In paragraph (a)(5) of the proposed rule, the agencies propose that all tributaries as defined in the proposed rule are "waters of the United States." While tributaries are "waters of the United States" under the existing regulation, **the rule would for the first time include a regulatory definition of "tributary."**

This will eliminate the need to make a case specific significant nexus determination for tributaries or for their adjacent waters because it has been determined that as a category, these waters have a significant nexus and thus are "waters of the United States."

Default to guilty until proven innocent, by you

Unintended Consequences?

- ▶ Current "Classified" Waters in Kansas
 - Waters with assigned designated uses = Waters of the US
 - Stream miles – 30,620 mi.
 - Perennial – 23,731 mi.
 - Reservoirs – 321
 - Reservoir acres – 189,258 ac.
 - **All other waters = Waters of the State**
- ▶ EPA/USGS National Hydrographic Dataset (NHD)
 - National database with surface water features
 - Many believe NHD constitutes Waters of the US
 - Stream miles – 134,338 mi.
 - Non-perennial – 110,225 mi.
 - Ditch/canal – 382 mi.
 - Doesn't Even count terrace channels???



The Case Against Ephemeral Streams as WOTUS

Tom Stiles
KDHE

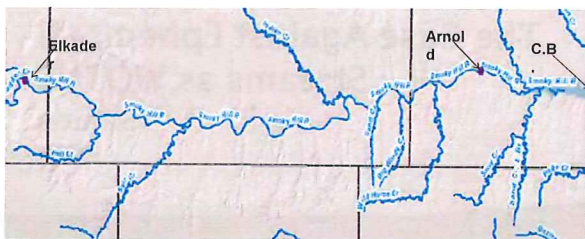
Key Issue of Proposed WOTUS Rule: All Tributaries are Jurisdictional

- ▶ Kansas Water Quality Standards define classified waters (WOTUS) –
 - Designated uses assigned
 - Numeric criteria apply
 - Identified in Kansas Surface Water Register
- ▶ Anything not classified is still a water of the state protected by general (narrative) criteria.
- ▶ K.S.A. 82a-2001(a)(2): *Classified streams shall not include ephemeral streams, grass waterways, culverts or ditches*
- ▶ Streams become classified once a NPDES permitted facility (other than CAFO) discharges into them

EPA Rationale for Tributary Protection

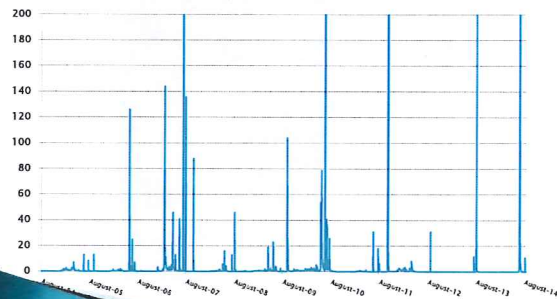
- ▶ Small order streams (headwaters) need protection, also location of adjacent wetlands
- ▶ Headwater, intermittent and ephemeral terminology interchanged freely, yet are quite different
- ▶ Rule defines a stream as having bed, bank and highwater mark (neglects position above water table and within watershed)
- ▶ Even ephemeral streams should be jurisdictional because of their unique ecology, but more so because of contributions those streams make to downstream waters.

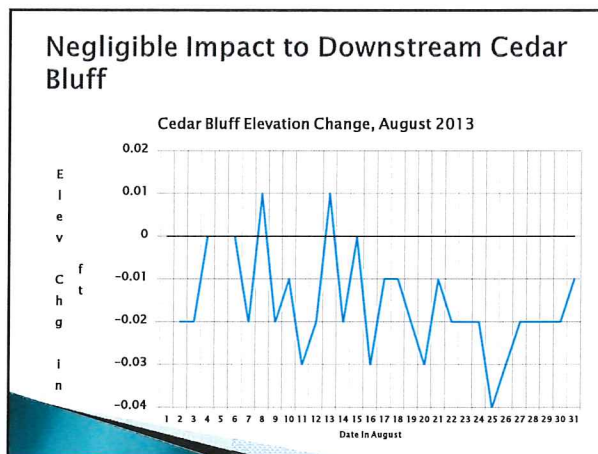
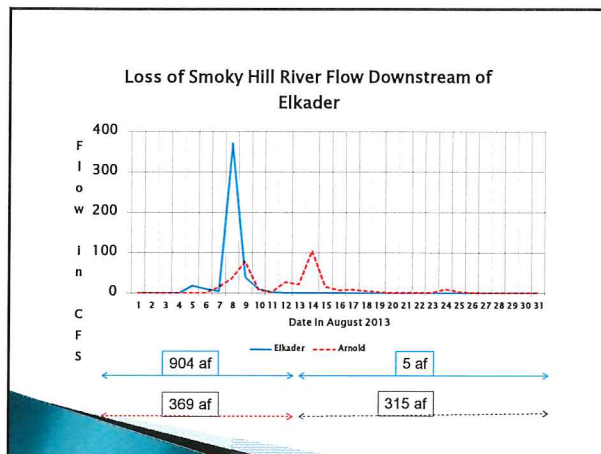
The Smoky Hill River above Cedar Bluff: a large scale, somewhat ephemeral stream



Flow More Intermittent, than Ephemeral

Daily Flow on Smoky Hill River near Elkade, 2004-2014





Observations on WOTUS Debate

- ▶ 1. Rule really about Federal oversight and facilitating workloads, not water quality
- ▶ 2. Issue was created by SCOTUS decisions regarding development and wetlands (404 permits)
- ▶ 3. Proposed solution blankets all waters with all CWA programs (Section 404, NPDES, WQS, UAA, TMDLs)
- ▶ 4. The key is determining what is significant
- ▶ 5. Better to treat ephemeral streams case-by-case as activities and issues arise than instantly classified

Quick Commentary

- ▶ 1. The real impact is diversion of state program resources to marginal waters and disruption of economic production by Federal bureaucracy
- ▶ 2. Don't forget the Corps is in on this, too
- ▶ 3. Hone your message in terms of real impacts (stream mitigation, AFOs, pesticide general permits)
- ▶ 4. If there is a protection gap that needs to be filled by a new regulation, clarify what the real issue is.

KANSAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
DIVISION OF CONSERVATION
WATERSHED DAM CONSTRUCTION: REHABILITATION

Revised Recommendation

FY 2015

	Watershed District	Site	Hazard Size	S/F/P		Cost/Share Requested	Cost/Share Approved	Cumul
1	Rock Creek WJD 28 (Sup)	21	L	F		\$9,398.00	\$9,398.00	\$9,398.00
2	Rock Creek WJD 28 (Sup)	12	L	F		\$8,524.00	\$8,524.00	\$17,922.00
3	Rock Creek WJD 84	208	S	S		\$49,120.00	\$49,120.00	\$67,042.00
4	Pawnee WJD 81	2-18A	S	P		\$74,083.00	\$74,083.00	\$141,125.00
5	Delaware WJD 10	C-111	L	S		\$34,400.00	\$34,400.00	\$175,525.00
6	Pony Creek WJD 78 (a)	422	L	S		\$62,112.00	\$0.00	\$175,525.00
7	Long-Scott WD 93	5-29	L	P		\$61,672.00	\$61,672.00	\$237,197.00
8	Snipe Creek WD 69	SC-1	S	F		\$22,720.00	\$22,720.00	\$259,917.00
9	Delaware WJD 10	C-115	L	S		\$34,400.00	\$34,400.00	\$294,317.00
10	Snipe Creek WD 69	SC-2	L	F		\$15,180.00	\$15,180.00	\$309,497.00
11	Wet Walnut WJD 58	136	L	P		\$52,904.00	\$52,904.00	\$362,401.00
12	Wet Walnut WJD 58	137	L	P		\$43,907.00	\$43,907.00	\$406,308.00
13	Pawnee WJD 81 (b)	5-17	H	P		\$120,000.00	\$77,911.54	\$484,219.54
1	Pawnee WJD 81	5-17	H	P		\$42,088.46		
2	Switzler Creek WD 63	3	L/H	F		\$120,000.00		
3	Delaware WJD 10	A-1	L	S		\$56,486.40		
4	Rock Creek WD 45	75A	L	S		\$35,850.00		
5	Rock Creek WJD 28	20	L	F		\$24,500.00		
6	Long-Scott WD 93	1-33	L	P		\$112,911.00		
7	Snipe Creek WD 69	SA-4	L	F		\$20,584.00		
Total						\$958,751.40	\$484,219.54	

(a) The Pony Creek WJD 78 Board of Directors opted to forgo the state funding as documented in the attached Minutes.

The "turned down" funding amount has been added to the last partially funded site
 - Pawnee WJD 81, Site 5-17.

(b) Partially Funded

Funds Available: \$6,810.54 + \$477,409.00 = \$484,219.54

SEP 02 2014

Pony Creek Watershed Joint District #78 Special Meeting

August 19, 2013 10:30 am

The Board of Directors of Pony Creek Watershed held a Special Meeting on August 19, 2014 10:30 am at the Morrill Community Building, Morrill Kansas.

President Harlan Bailey called the meeting to order. Present were: Harlan Bailey, Pres., Brian Schweitzer, V. Pres., Charles Gruber, Treas., Jesse Ploeger, Sec., Weldon Aue, Dir., Craig Strahm, Dir., Kevin Wikle, Dir.

Site #122

President Bailey outlined our options for the rehab of site #122. First option was to go with a full rehab of the site. The cost of that would be more than what the cost of construction of the dam when it was built. The second was to just hire a contractor ourselves and have him just fix the tube, place rip-rap on the face of the dam and fix a small cut on the edge of the spill way.

Charles Gruber made a motion to get Keith Feek to fix the tube, Rip-rap the dam face and fix the small cut. Kevin second. Motion passed 6-0

By this motion the watershed board of directors forgo the approved state funding for site 122.

President Bailey had talked to Keith and he hopes to be at the site by mid-sept time frame.

With no further business Charles moved for adjournment. Weldon seconded. Motion carried 6-0

Jesse Ploeger, Secretary

Harlan Bailey, President

Harlan Bailey Pres.

**Conservation District Documents
Not Received by the DOC as of 9/9/14**

Monthly Board Meeting Minutes, Treasurer's Reports & Unpaid Bills Reports:

**Meade County – February 2014, April 2014, June 2014

Mitchell County – *April 2014, May 2014, June 2014

Rooks County – May 2014

Wyandotte County – *April 2014, June 2014

2012 Audit & Notification of CD Audit Review Form (Due 1/1/2014)

Greenwood County

2014 Annual Meeting Minutes (due 10 days after meeting)

Comanche County*

2013 Annual Report (due March 1, 2014)

*Scott County

*Letter to Chairperson sent on August 1, 2014.

**New District Manager will provide list when training is completed.

State Water Plan Fund

Agency/Program	FY2014 Actuals	FY2014 Carry Forward	FY 2015 Appropriated	FY 2015 w/ Carry Forward	FY 2016 Draft	FY 2017 Draft
Department of Health and Environment						
Contamination Remediation-1802	\$ 768,076	\$ -	\$ 691,114	\$ 691,114	\$ 691,114	\$ 691,114
TMDL Initiatives-1805	\$ 214,345	\$ 127,648	\$ 149,731	\$ 277,379	\$ 149,731	\$ 149,731
Nonpoint Source Program-1804	\$ 357,889	\$ 8,019	\$ 294,131	\$ 302,150	\$ 294,131	\$ 294,131
Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy-1808	\$ 619,214	\$ -	\$ 555,884	\$ 555,884	\$ 555,884	\$ 555,884
Total--Department of Health and Environment	\$ 1,959,524	\$ 135,667	\$ 1,690,860	\$ 1,826,527	\$ 1,690,860	\$ 1,690,860
University of Kansas--Geological Survey	\$ 26,841	\$ -	\$ 26,841	\$ 26,841	\$ 26,841	\$ 26,841
Department of Agriculture						
Interstate Water Issues-0070	\$ 455,121	\$ 94,622	\$ 447,573	\$ 542,195	\$ 447,573	\$ 447,573
Subbasin Water Resources Management-80	\$ 437,485	\$ 402,022	\$ 620,961	\$ 1,022,983	\$ 620,961	\$ 620,961
Water Use-75	\$ 30,000	\$ 61,683	\$ 55,509	\$ 117,192	\$ 55,509	\$ 55,509
Water Resources Cost Share-1205	\$ 1,991,221	\$ 393,539	\$ 1,948,289	\$ 2,341,828	\$ 1,948,289	\$ 1,948,289
Nonpoint Source Pollution Asst.-1210	\$ 1,844,331	\$ 369,588	\$ 1,858,350	\$ 2,227,938	\$ 1,858,350	\$ 1,858,350
Aid to Conservation Districts-1220	\$ 2,322,691	\$ 3,456	\$ 2,092,637	\$ 2,096,093	\$ 2,092,637	\$ 2,092,637
Watershed Dam Construction-1240	\$ 633,733	\$ 6,811	\$ 576,434	\$ 583,245	\$ 576,434	\$ 576,434
Water Quality Buffer Initiative-1250	\$ 254,494	\$ 40,900	\$ 249,792	\$ 290,692	\$ 249,792	\$ 249,792
Riparian and Wetland Program-1260	\$ 170,512	\$ 989	\$ 152,651	\$ 153,640	\$ 152,651	\$ 152,651
Water Supply Restoration Program-1275	\$ 286,868	\$ -	\$ 258,156	\$ 258,156	\$ 258,156	\$ 258,156
Water Transition Assistance Program/CREP-1225	\$ 393,913	\$ 105,665	\$ 449,577	\$ 555,242	\$ 449,577	\$ 449,577
Streambank Stabilization			\$ 750,000	\$ 750,000		
Wheat Genetics Research			\$ 50,000	\$ 50,000		
Total--Department of Agriculture	\$ 8,820,369	\$ 1,479,275	\$ 9,509,929	\$ 10,989,204	\$ 8,709,929	\$ 8,709,929
Kansas Water Office						
Assessment and Evaluation	\$ 427,223	\$ 93,656	\$ 448,725	\$ 542,381	\$ 448,725	\$ 448,725
GIS Database Development	\$ 124,792	\$ -	\$ 112,306	\$ 112,306	\$ 112,306	\$ 112,306
MOU - Storage Operations & Maintenance	\$ 301,736	\$ 52,383	\$ 289,889	\$ 342,272	\$ 289,889	\$ 289,889
Stream Gaging	\$ 479,230	\$ -	\$ 431,282	\$ 431,282	\$ 431,282	\$ 431,282
Technical Assistance to Water Users	\$ 404,409	\$ 156,503	\$ 364,238	\$ 520,741	\$ 364,238	\$ 364,238
Weather Modification	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Wichita Aquifer Recharge Project	\$ 499,166	\$ -	\$ 449,225	\$ 449,225	\$ -	\$ -
Suspended Sediment Monitoring	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Neosho River Basin Issues	\$ 71,901	\$ 184,157	\$ -	\$ 184,157	\$ -	\$ -
John Redmond Reservoir Bonds			\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,619,835	\$ 1,316,150
Total--Kansas Water Office	\$ 2,308,457	\$ 486,700	\$ 2,095,665	\$ 2,582,365	\$ 3,266,275	\$ 2,962,590
State Finance Council - State Employee Pay			\$ 4,542			
Total State Water Plan Expenditures	\$ 13,115,191	\$ 2,101,642	\$ 13,327,837	\$ 15,424,937	\$ 13,693,905	\$ 13,390,220

State Water Plan Resource Estimate	FY2014 Actuals	FY2014 Carry Forward	FY 2015 Appropriated	FY 2015 w/ Carry Forward	FY 2016 Draft	FY 2017 Draft
Beginning Balance	\$ 4,403,144			\$ 3,881,765	\$ 1,819,386	\$ 868,290
Adjustments						
Release of Prior Year Encumbrance	\$ 95,219					
Recovery of Prior Year Expenditure	\$ 1,030					
Other Service Charges						
Transfer to Kansas Corporation Commission			\$ (400,000)	\$ (400,000)	\$ (400,000)	\$ (400,000)
Subtotal--Adjustments	\$ 96,249		\$ (400,000)	\$ (400,000)	\$ (400,000)	\$ (400,000)
Revenues						
State General Fund Transfer						
Economic Development Fund Transfer	\$ -		\$ 800,000	\$ 800,000		
Municipal Water Fees	\$ 3,212,299		\$ 3,485,674	\$ 3,485,674	\$ 3,276,255	\$ 3,309,018
Clean Drinking Water Fee Fund	\$ 2,897,102		\$ 3,229,289	\$ 3,229,289	\$ 3,100,716	\$ 3,131,723
Industrial Water Fees	\$ 1,177,336		\$ 1,077,151	\$ 1,077,151	\$ 1,200,934	\$ 1,212,943
Stock Water Fees	\$ 413,395		\$ 341,444	\$ 341,444	\$ 421,704	\$ 425,921
Pesticide Registration Fees	\$ 1,226,000		\$ 1,165,000	\$ 1,165,000	\$ 1,230,000	\$ 1,230,000
Fertilizer Registration Fees	\$ 3,320,482		\$ 3,276,000	\$ 3,276,000	\$ 3,525,200	\$ 3,525,200
Pollution Fines and Penalties	\$ 156,118		\$ 250,000	\$ 250,000	\$ 250,000	\$ 250,000
Sand Royalties	\$ 94,831		\$ 138,000	\$ 138,000	\$ 138,000	\$ 138,000
Total Receipts	\$ 12,497,563		\$ 13,762,558	\$ 13,762,558	\$ 13,142,809	\$ 13,222,805
Total Available	\$ 16,996,956		\$ 13,362,558	\$ 17,244,323	\$ 14,562,195	\$ 13,691,095
Less: Expenditures	\$ (13,115,191)		\$ (13,327,837)	\$ (15,424,937)	\$ (13,693,905)	\$ (13,390,220)
Ending Balance	\$ 3,881,765	\$ -	\$ 34,721	\$ 1,819,386	\$ 868,290	\$ 300,875



SCC Meeting – September 11, 2014

Hutchinson, Kansas

Kansas Water Quality Buffer Initiative Update

- There are currently 2197 buffer contracts being serviced. FY 2011 – 23, FY 2012 – 46, FY 2013 - 17
- It takes a great amount of staff time locally and at the DOC to keep the landowner information current so that the annual payment goes to the correct landowner.
- Areas eligible for the buffer initiative are all TMDL watersheds and the watersheds above the 20 federal reservoirs utilized for public water supply.

Fiscal Year	Expired Contracts	Acres Expiring	Payments
2015	174	1189	\$31,387
2016	216	1428	\$33,182
2017	224	1491	\$33,785
2018	248	1567	\$38,463
2019	169	1002	\$25,930
Total	1031	6677	\$162,747

- WR and NPS TMDL funds are now being targeted to three HUC12 watersheds and in doing so the hope is to be able to show a water quality improvement by concentrating practices in a small watershed.
- Should we also target the Kansas Water Quality Buffer Initiative in selected HUC 12 watersheds? In doing so we hopefully would get a high concentration of buffers in those watersheds.
- DOC staff recommendation would be to target the funds to targeted HUC12 watersheds starting in FY 2016.
- DOC staff recommendation would also include changing from a rental payment system to making a one-time signing incentive payment (SIP) to landowners in the selected watersheds as an additional incentive. This would also ease the administrative work load over the long run.
- If approved, this would require a change to the rules and regulations for the buffer initiative.
 - There would be flexibility in the rules and regulations to change the SIP amount.
- CSIMS would have to be reprogrammed for a one-time signing incentive payment.



United States Department of Agriculture

NRCS HIGHLIGHTS OF ACTIVITIES
for the
STATE CONSERVATION COMMISSION
HUTCHINSON, KANSAS
September 11, 2014

PERSONNEL

Reassignments

and/or Promotions: Derek H. Husmoen, Soil Conservation Technician, to Soil Conservationist, Lewiston, Minnesota
Jarred C. Kneisel, Supervisory District Conservationist, Medicine Lodge, to Resource Conservationist, Hutchinson Area Office
James L. Ungerer, Soil Conservationist, Scott City, to District Conservationist, Russell

Retirements:

George E. Carter, District Conservationist, Norton
D. Michael Mortimer, Cartographic Technician, Salina State Office

OPERATIONS

The Kansas Operational Structure Team (KOST) presented a streamlining proposal to the state conservationist (STC) at the Management team Meeting held in early August. The team had previously given the STC a recommendation on handling short-term reductions to address the reduced budget for 2014. This recommendation looked at reductions in vehicle purchases and fleet costs, equipment purchases, and travel. The team recommended an overall seven percent cut to all other support costs (e.g., training, supplies).

The proposal presented in August looked at long-term reductions. The KOST's recommendations encompassed all levels of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) based on staff and structure (field, area, state). Recommendations for the state office included reducing staff and reorganizing structure with multiple options provided to the STC for state office reorganization. Restructuring of areas was discussed, and would be designed to fit with potential changes of field and state levels.

The field level recommendations provided three plans, dependent on the amount of budget cuts expected. Plan 1 would keep the same structure, but reduce staff by 4.5 full-time equivalents (FTEs). Plan 2 looked at restructuring areas and management units, and reducing employees by 11 FTEs. These plans would have minimal impact on partners and producers. Plan 3 was not quantified, but in order to handle a budget cut larger than 10 percent, there would need to be a reduction in offices. It was noted that this plan would have a significant impact on partners, producers, employees, communities, and business operations.

At this time, the STC is moving forward with reviewing the recommendations for the state office and determining their feasibility. Changes to the field will only be made if there is a significant decrease in the budget. If it becomes apparent that these changes need to be made, partners and employees will be informed of the process.

PROGRAMS

Conservation Stewardship Program (CStP)

- 164 contracts have been obligated for \$3,775,682.
- CSP contracts may be renewed for another 5-year term in 2014
 - Renewals are only for contracts that will expire this year and are still in good contracting status.
 - Contracts that were obligated in 2010 will expire at the end of September and December of this year.
 - Interested parties must apply to renew their CSP contract. The deadline is September 12, 2014.

Easement Programs

- **Agricultural Conservation Easement Program-Agricultural Land Easements (ACEP-ALE) and Agricultural Conservation Easement Program-Wetland Reserve Easements (ACEP-WRE)**
 - Kansas received \$4.7 million in ACEP funds.
 - There were 18 eligible applications for ACEP-WRE. With the dollars available, 15 ACEP-WRE offers were sent to landowners with 14 accepting the offer.
 - Three eligible entities were approved for funding through ACEP-ALE Grasslands of Special Environmental Significance (GSS). Total acres: 3,896.
- **Farm and Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP)**

Assistance and reviews are being provided to Cooperating Entities as they work on various steps toward closing on conservation easements—19 parcels still to close on

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

- Kansas has obligated a total of 626 EQIP General contracts for approximately \$13.8 million, covering 103,937 acres.
- **EQIP—Initiatives**
 - Organic—1 contract for \$31,315 on 122 acres
 - On-Farm Energy—7 contracts for \$18,487 on 5,723 acres
 - Seasonal High Tunnel—29 contracts for \$195,850 on 129 acres
 - Lesser Prairie-Chicken—4 contracts for \$1,954,344 on 3,709 acres
 - National Water Quality Initiative—20 contracts for \$450,602 on 1,839 acres
 - Edge-Of-Field Water Quality Monitoring—No applications receive, no contracts
 - Ogallala Aquifer Initiative—23 contracts for \$2,492,622 on 4,613 acres
 - Drought Recovery Funds—6 contracts for \$231,613 on 3,803 acres

Watershed Rehabilitation Program Activities

- Kansas NRCS recently received an additional \$250,000 for a total of \$1,751,000 for FY2014. Funds have been authorized for technical assistance associated with prior year watershed rehabilitation activities and five new rehabilitation-planning projects. Funds are now obligated through Project Agreements with the Watershed Districts.
- The Spring Creek Watershed District in Sedgwick County initiated rehabilitation construction of their R-1 Dam near Garden Plain, Kansas, in mid-July. Construction is expected to be completed fall 2014.
- Watershed districts and local NRCS field offices continue working to conduct annual inspections on all NRCS-assisted flood control structures. To date, 237 of the 751 dam inspections have been completed and submitted to Salina State Office during calendar year 2014.

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)

- Not authorized in the 2014 Farm Bill
- The new farm bill does require 5% of EQIP funds nationally to be obligated to contracts benefiting wildlife.
- Active WHIP contracts from previous Farm Bills will be honored

TECHNOLOGY

- NRCS is continuing to work with Kansas State University western extension researchers on completing research trials that will benefit the producers in the semi-arid west regarding soil health.
- Several soil health studies are ongoing at the Manhattan Plant Materials Center (PMC). Studies are evaluating cowpeas as a species for soil improvement, a rooting depth study of four species of radishes, a cover crop broadcasting study, and a sixteen-specie evaluation of summer cover crops.
- A PMC tour was held in July. Tour featured soil health studies along with plantings associated with pollinators.
- Two, three-day Adult Range Schools were conducted where technical assistance was provided. These were the Kansas Grazing Land Coalition (KGLC) Mid/Shortgrass School held in Scott and Logan Counties and the KGLC Tallgrass School in Chase County.

Lesser Prairie Chicken

- NRCS continues to work with the Farm Service Agency, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism to educate employees and the public about the “Threatened” lesser prairie chicken.
- Four staff members participated in the Five-State Lesser Prairie Chicken Meeting held in Amarillo, Texas, to discuss the Lesser Prairie-Chicken Initiative in the five-state region.
- The NRCS Biological Opinion was approved recently and is now being used within the lesser prairie chicken action area.

Division of Conservation (DOC) Streambank Agreements

Construction of the last project from the DOC agreement has been completed, and we are waiting on the as-built documentation to review. The agreement will then be closed.

Architect and Engineer (A&E) Contracts

- Construction of the last EQIP streambank protection project has been completed. This completes all active A&E task orders.
- The contract with EA Engineering, Service, and Technology, Inc. ends in January 2015, and no additional task orders have been assigned to them at this time.

OUTREACH

Playa Country Radio Series

Another series with Playa Lakes Joint Venture and Playa Country radio series has been wrapped up. These interviews will air on farm and public radio stations throughout the region. To listen to past/current episodes or see which stations carry the program, visit www.pljv.org/news/playa-country.

- **Preventing Another Dust Bowl with Healthy Soil Practices--Airs Sept 7 and 28**
Features Candy Thomas, Neil Dominy, Dallas Johannsen, Scott Gonnerman
No event did more to emphasize the severity of the erosion crisis than the Dust Bowl, affecting High Plains states beginning in the early-1930s. Maintaining healthy soils is one way to prevent a similar disaster. We consider modern practices that build healthy soil.
- **Improving Water Filtration through No-till and Cover Crops--Airs Sept 14**
Features Scott Gonnerman, Neil Dominy, Candy Thomas
Scott Gonnerman started no-till practices in 2005 and began cover-cropping his east Nebraska fields in 2009. He says he used to think of the soil simply as dirt. But he's seen with his own eyes how infiltration has improved in step with a healthier ecosystem immediately below the soil surface.
- **No-till and Cover Cropping Help Retain Moisture in Sandy Soil--Airs Sept 21**
Features Ryan Speer, Candy Thomas
Many producers have converted to no-till, and now progressive farmers are learning to cover crop to keep soil covered after harvesting a cash crop. Ryan Speer is such a producer. He farms in central Kansas along the Arkansas River south of Halstead. He grows corn, soybeans, wheat, and milo, in sandy soil poor at retaining moisture. Ryan started cover cropping in 2007. By improving the biological material in his soil, more moisture is being stored from precipitation events.

News Releases

- First Participants in Conservation Stewardship Program Can Renew for Five More Years
- Plant Materials Center to Host 40th Annual North American Butterfly Association Grant
- Kansas NRCS Provides Assistance to Producers in Drought Areas
- NRCS Announces Funding for Water Quality Program
- NRCS Announces Regional Conservation Partnership Program



SCC Meeting – September 11, 2014

Hutchinson, Kansas

Kansas Technical Assistance Partnership

- NRCS was approved for \$260,000 in technical assistance funds to enhance soil health implementation in WRAPS Watersheds.
- KDHE Watershed Management section will match with \$260,000 of SWP WRAPS funds.
- Funding will be used to hire 3 Conservation Technicians (CT) to be housed in the following counties:
 - Douglas
 - McPherson
 - Phillips
- Funding will fund 3 full time CT positions for 3.5 years.
- DOC and KDHE will execute an MOU to funnel the KDHE funding for the 3 positions thru DOC.
- The three new CT positions will be added to the NRCS – DOC Contribution Agreement for a total of 14 positions.
- NRCS and DOC will execute a new Contribution Agreement by November 30th for the 14 CT positions.
- DOC, KDHE and NRCS staff will be meeting with the Conservation Districts in those three counties in the near future to go over the program.