

Written Testimony from Shannon Kenyon, Groundwater Management District #4

Submitted to Ronda Hutton, Kansas Department of Agriculture, on January 30th, 2023

In the Matter of the Designation of The Four-County Local Enhanced Management Area (LEMA) In Wallace, Greeley, Scott, and Lane Counties in Kansas

My name is Shannon Kenyon and I am the manager for the Groundwater Management District #4 (GMD 4) in Colby, Kansas and would like to provide testimony on behalf of the GMD 4 Board of Directors in support of the request by Groundwater Management District #1 (GMD 1) to initiate the proposed Four County LEMA. GMD 4 has utilized the LEMA tool to initiate five LEMAs within GMD 4 and have experienced the positive progress in extending the usable life of the Ogallala Aquifer.

GMD 4 has two current LEMAs, the Sheridan 6 LEMA (SD 6) and the GMD 4 LEMA. The SD 6 LEMA is beginning its third five-year period. The initial goal of that LEMA was an overall 20% reduction in historical pumping. Approximately 35% was actually reduced, exceeding the goal tremendously. An economic study conducted by KSU showed that the producers within the SD 6 boundaries were more profitable than those within three miles outside of the SD 6 boundary. Analysis conducted by the Kansas Geological Survey (KGS) has shown that the area has doubled the life of their portion of the aquifer. The area continues to grow and conserve water.

The GMD 4 LEMA encompasses all areas of GMD 4 that have a 0.5% average annual decline or greater. This LEMA is beginning its second five-year term. This plan does not have the intensive water conservation measure as SD 6 but it has been very successful in developing a water conservation minded community. Producers are paying very close attention to their water usage and managing their water more conservatively. There is even local talks about the need to create a more conservation intensive LEMA inside the GMD 4 LEMA. Change is happening and it is extremely positive.

LEMAs are an extraordinary tool for GMDs to extend the useable life of their portion of the aquifer. This has been proven through the success of both the SD 6 and GMD 4 LEMAs. Not one GMD is similar to another. We are all different in our water needs, communities, and culture. As a result, LEMAs are going to look different but we all have the ability and responsibility to use them for the purpose of not only extending the life of the aquifer for future agricultural use, but for our local communities and commercial entities that depend on it as well.

We support GMD 1 and their request to initiate the proposed Four County LEMA. This is the first step in being a part of the solution and the willingness to change and grow for future generations.