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Public Comment for the Hays/Russell Water Transfer Application, OAH No. 23AG0023 AG

Water Transfer Hearing Panel c/o Chief Engineer – Division of Water Resources
Kansas Department of Agriculture
1320 Research Park Dr.
Manhattan, KS 66502

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This is written public comment to be included in the record of the Public Comment Hearing for the Hays/Russell Water Transfer Application, OAH No. 23AG0023 AG.

This is written in support of the approval of the water transfer application submitted by the cities of Hays and Russell, Kansas nearly 8 years ago.

Almost 30 years ago, Hays had the foresight to seek and secure additional water sources for its community. Subsequently, Russell joined the process. The communities left no stone unturned when searching for additional sources and took into consideration its neighbors and all taxpayers as they conducted and evaluated those sources. Eventually it became clear the R9 Ranch was the most viable solution for their long-term water needs.

The applications were first submitted in 2015, prior to my first term as City Commissioner in Hays. At that time it was clear the R9 was the best opportunity to provide a long term solution enabling the communities to ensure sustainable economic growth and prosperity. This area is a \$3 billion economic driver for the region.

Conservation practices in these communities is second to none. During drought, but moreover during non-drought times, Hays remains the lowest per capita user of water in the state of Kansas and beyond. This does not happen by accident. The educational programs we continue year after year, including programs beginning with elementary school children, has proven successful in preserving our current water sources. That will not last forever.

Approving this transfer is the highest and best use of this resource for all concerned. These communities are quickly approaching the limits of the conservation they have practiced for the past 30+ years, thus limiting the economic growth for its citizens in Hays, Russell and the whole region.

The cities, through this transfer process, agreed to limit their average usage to 4800 acre feet per year – much less than the 6000+ acre feet they are legally entitled to – demonstrating again their extraordinary water management practices. The decision by Hays and Russell to voluntarily limit themselves should have been celebrated and serve as the final piece of evidence that the communities intend to utilize the R9 in the best way possible for the benefit of everyone. Instead, the cities were subjected to years of litigation and increased costs to the project.

Approval of the application means the cities and region can once again grow in population and economic drivers. Surrounding communities can benefit from that growth or even potentially partake of

the R9 water themselves. Approval means more revenue to the state. Approval means the creation of the second largest walk-in hunting area in the state, creating additional economic drivers in the Edwards County region. And all done in a sustainable manner with no negative impacts to surrounding land or communities. Finally, approval means setting a precedent of opportunity and a culture of conservation for future communities who utilize the Water Transfer Act.

In my opinion, there are no better outcomes than are presented by Hays/Russell application.

My best,



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