

October 24, 2022

Subject: Western Kansas Groundwater Management District No. 1 Four County LEMA Plan

This written comment is from the Kansas Water Office regarding the Four County Local Enhanced Management Area (LEMA) Plan submitted by the Western Kansas Groundwater Management District No. 1 (GMD No.1) to the Chief Engineer of the Division of Water Resources on July 1, 2022.

The Kansas Water Office is charged by statute with extensive responsibilities regarding the management, conservation and development of the state's water resources. The most prominent of these responsibilities is the development of the Kansas Water Plan, the comprehensive document identifying water needs throughout the state and recommending actions to address those needs. A new update of the Kansas Water Plan received final approval from the Kansas Water Authority in August 2022, after a thorough process of input from state agencies, local and regional entities, non-profit organizations and individuals.

Among the Kansas Water Plan's Guiding Principles is the goal of conserving and extending the High Plains Aquifer, based largely on the critical need to address the severe depletion of the Ogallala Aquifer, a section of the High Plains Aquifer. Accordingly, the Kansas Water Plan recommends the establishment of Local Enhanced Management Areas such as the proposed Four County LEMA. Specifically, the KWP recommends the implementation of groundwater use reduction measures for all uses, and recommends greater financial and political support for the promotion, development, and management of LEMAs and Water Conservation Areas.

In addition, the Upper Smoky Hill Regional Advisory Committee (RAC) supports the establishment of LEMAs. This committee represents the voice of local stakeholders, as part of a statutory structure to inform and advise the Kansas Water Office and Kansas Water Authority. This committee's Regional Goals & Action Plans (July 2020) include the following:

- Work with agencies to identify areas within the region that have similar aquifer characteristics and establish long-term use levels that will extend the useful life of the aquifer in those areas until 2070.
- Provide recommendations to GMD1 for additional LEMAs based upon the information developed by Kansas Geological Survey (KGS) for the proposed revision of Goal #1.
- Support Kansas Department of Agriculture (KDA) and other agencies in exploring options on ways to help citizen groups submit conservation proposals for LEMAs and other tools to the Chief Engineer.



Therefore, the Kansas Water Office encourages the approval of the proposed Four County Local Enhanced Management Area (LEMA) plan, submitted on July 1, 2022, to the extent that it is consistent with the goals and objectives identified above. The Kansas Water Office supports the local efforts of the Western Kansas Groundwater Management District Number 1, and others, to conserve and extend the life of the Ogallala Aquifer.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Kansas Water Office