

**CONSERVATION MEASURES UNDER THE CONSERVATION
DISTRICTS LAW
K.S.A. 2-1915, 2-1919 and 2-1930**

2-1915. Conservation structures and practices, grants; riparian and wetland protection programs; return of water right, cost-share grants; water quality buffers, grants, valuation of land. (a) Appropriations may be made for grants out of funds in the treasury of this state for terraces, terrace outlets, check dams, dikes, ponds, ditches, critical area planting, grassed waterways, tailwater recovery irrigation systems, precision land forming, range seeding, detention and grade stabilization structures and other enduring water conservation practices installed on public lands and on privately owned lands and, the control and eradication of sericea lespedeza as provided in subsection (n) of K.S.A. 2-1908, and amendments thereto, on public lands and on privately owned lands. Except as provided by the multipurpose small lakes program act, any such grant shall not exceed 80% of the total cost of any such practice.

(b) A program for protection of riparian and wetland areas shall be developed by the state conservation commission and implemented by the conservation districts. The conservation districts shall prepare district programs to address resource management concerns of water quality, erosion and sediment control and wildlife habitat as part of the conservation district long-range and annual work plans. Preparation and implementation of conservation district programs shall be accomplished with assistance from appropriate state and federal agencies involved in resource management.

(c) Subject to the provisions of K.S.A. 2-1919, and amendments thereto, any holder of a water right, as defined by subsection (g) of K.S.A. 82a-701, and amendments thereto, who is willing to voluntarily return all or a part of the water right to the state shall be eligible for a grant not to exceed 80% of the total cost of the purchase price for such water right. The state conservation commission shall administer this cost-share program with funds appropriated by the legislature for such purpose. The chief engineer shall certify to the state conservation commission that any water right for which application for cost-share is received under this section is eligible in accordance with the criteria established in K.S.A. 2-1919, and amendments thereto.

(d) (1) Subject to appropriation acts therefor, the state conservation commission shall develop the Kansas water quality buffer initiative for the purpose of restoring riparian areas using best management practices. The executive director of the state conservation commission shall ensure that the initiative is complementary to the federal conservation reserve program.

(2) There is hereby created in the state treasury the Kansas water quality buffer initiative fund. All expenditures from such fund shall be made in accordance with appropriation acts upon warrants of the director of accounts and reports issued pursuant to vouchers approved by the executive director of the state conservation commission or the executive director's designee. Money credited to the fund shall be used for the purpose of making grants to install water quality best management practices pursuant to the initiative.

(3) The county or district appraiser shall identify and map riparian buffers consisting of at least one contiguous acre per parcel of real property located in the appraiser's county. Notwithstanding any other provisions of law, riparian buffers shall be valued by the county or district appraiser as tame grass land, native grass land or waste land, as appropriate. As used in this subsection (3), "riparian buffer" means an area of stream-side vegetation that: (A) Consists of tame or native grass and may include forbs and woody plants; (B) is located along a perennial or intermittent stream, including the stream bank and adjoining floodplain; and (C) is a minimum of 66 feet wide and a maximum of 180 feet wide.

(e) The state conservation commission shall adopt rules and regulations to administer such grant and protection programs.

(f) Any district is authorized to make use of any assistance whatsoever given by the United States, or any agency thereof, or derived from any other source, for the planning and installation of

such practices. The state conservation commission may enter into agreements with other state and federal agencies to implement the Kansas water quality buffer initiative. (**History:** L. 1937, ch. 5, § 15; L. 1976, ch. 7, § 5; L. 1979, ch. 9, § 1; L. 1985, ch. 342, § 9; L. 1986, ch. 7, § 1; L. 1987, ch. 10, § 1; L. 1988, ch. 396, § 2; L. 1989, ch. 308, § 1; L. 1998, ch. 143, § 46; L. 2001, ch. 64, § 1; L. 2002, ch. 37, § 3; L. 2004, ch. 96, § 4; July 1.)

2-1919. Cost-share limitations; purchase of surface water right outside the state. (a)

Except as provided by subsection (b), any application for cost-share for the purchase of the water right under the provisions of K.S.A. 2-1915, and amendments thereto, shall be subject to the following limitations:

(1) The water right is an active vested or certified water appropriation right that has not been abandoned under the provisions of K.S.A. 82a-718, and amendments thereto;

(2) (A) in the case of a water right for diverting groundwater, such water right is in an area where the rate of withdrawal of groundwater equals or exceeds the rate of recharge and the chief engineer has closed the area to further appropriations and designated the area as being in need of aquifer restoration; (B) in the case of a water right for diverting groundwater or surface water, such water right is within a stream reach where the chief engineer has closed the stream reach to further appropriations and designated the stream reach as being in need of stream recovery;

(3) a local entity has provided an assurance that it will pay at least 20% of the purchase price negotiated by the entity and the holder of the water right; and

(4) the holder of the water right agrees to return the water right to the custodial care of the state.

(b) In the case of a purchase of a surface water right from outside the state, such purchase shall be considered and evaluated by the chief engineer on the basis of the potential of the water right to provide stream recovery within a designated stream reach. (**History:** L. 1988, ch. 396, § 4; July 1.)

2-1930. Program established; administration; funding; contracts with landowners; grants, availability, priority; annual report to legislative committees; public meetings prior to program commencement. (a)

There is hereby established the water right transition assistance pilot project program. The program shall be administered by the state conservation commission. The Kansas department of agriculture, division of water resources and recognized local governing agencies, including groundwater management districts, shall cooperate in program implementation. The program shall be administered for the purpose of reducing consumptive use in the target or high priority areas of the state by issuing water right transition grants for privately held water rights.

(b) (1) The state conservation commission may receive and expend funds from the federal or state government, or private source for the purpose of carrying out the provisions of this section. The state conservation commission and the participating groundwater management districts shall carry over unexpended funds from one fiscal year to the next.

(2) Federal and state funds shall not exceed \$1,500,000 per year.

(3) State conservation commission expenditures for permanent partial water right retirements shall not exceed 30% of the total amount of funds for the water right transition assistance pilot project program.

(c) The state conservation commission may enter into water right transition assistance pilot project program contracts with landowners that will result in the permanent retirement of part or all of landowner historic consumptive use water rights by action of the chief engineer as provided for in subsection (f) of this section.

(d) All applications for permanent water right retirements shall be considered for funding.

(e) Permanent retirement of partial water rights shall only be approved by the Kansas department of agriculture division of water resources when the groundwater management district has the metering and monitoring capabilities necessary to ensure compliance with the program. When prioritizing among water right applications for acceptance under the water right transition assistance pilot project,

where rights with similar hydrologic impacts are considered, priority should be given to the senior right as determined under the Kansas water appropriation act.

(f) Water rights enrolled in the water right transition assistance pilot project program for permanent retirement shall require the written consent of all landowners and authorized agents to voluntarily request dismissal and forfeiture of priority of the enrolled water right. Upon enrollment of the water right into the water right transition assistance pilot project program, the chief engineer of the Kansas department of agriculture division of water resources shall concurrently dismiss and terminate the water right in accordance with the terms of the contract.

(g) (1) The state conservation commission shall make water right transition grants available only in areas that have been designated as target or high priority areas by the groundwater management districts and the chief engineer of the Kansas department of agriculture division of water resources or priority areas outside the groundwater management districts as designated by the chief engineer of the Kansas department of agriculture division of water resources.

(2) Two of the target or high priority areas shall be the prairie dog creek area located in hydrologic unit code 10250015 and the rattlesnake creek subbasin located in hydrologic unit code 11030009.

(h) Contracts accepted under the water right transition assistance program shall result in a net reduction in consumptive use equivalent to the amount of historic consumptive use of the water right or rights enrolled in the program based on the average historic consumptive water use. Except as provided for in subsections (i) and (j), once a water right transition assistance pilot project program grant has been provided, the land authorized to be irrigated by the water right or water rights associated with that grant shall not be irrigated permanently. Water right transition assistance pilot project program contracts shall be subject to such terms, conditions and limitations as may be necessary to ensure that such reduction in consumptive use occurs and can be adequately monitored and enforced.

"Historic consumptive water use" means the average amount of water consumed by crops as a result of the lawful beneficial use of water for irrigation during four of the six preceding calendar years, with the highest and lowest years removed from the analysis. For purposes of this program, historic consumptive water use will be determined by multiplying the average reported water use for the four selected years by a factor of 0.85 for center pivot sprinkler irrigation systems, 0.75 for flood or gravity irrigation systems and 0.95 for subsurface drip irrigation systems, but not to exceed the net irrigation requirements for the 50% chance rainfall for the appropriate county as shown in K.A.R. 5-5-12. The applicant may also submit an engineering study that determines the average historic consumptive water use as an alternative method if it is demonstrated to be more accurate for the water right or water rights involved.

(i) Enrollment in the water right transition assistance pilot project program shall not subsequently prohibit irrigation of the land that, prior to enrollment, was authorized by the water right or water rights if irrigation can be lawfully allowed by another water right or permit pursuant to the rules and regulations and consideration of any future changes to other water rights that may be proposed to be transferred to such land.

(j) If more than one water right overlaps the place of use authorized by the water right proposed to be enrolled in the water right transition assistance pilot project program, then all overlapping water rights shall be enrolled in water right transition assistance pilot project program or the landowners shall take the necessary lawful steps to eliminate the overlap with the water right to be enrolled. The burden shall be on the landowner to provide sufficient information to substantiate that the proposed use of water by the resulting exercise of all water rights involved will result in the net reduction amount of historic consumptive water use by the water right or water rights to be enrolled. The state conservation commission may require such documentation to be provided by someone with special knowledge or experience related to water rights and such operations.

(k) The state conservation commission shall adopt rules and regulations as necessary for the administration of this section. When adopting such rules and regulations the state conservation

commission shall consider cropping, system design, metered water use and all other pertinent information that will permit a verifiable reduction in annual water consumptive use and permit alternative crop or other use of the land so that the landowner's economic opportunities are taken into account.

(l) The state conservation commission shall report annually to the senate standing committee on natural resources and the house standing committee on environment on the economic impact studies being conducted on the reduction of water consumption and the financial impact on the communities within the program areas. Such studies shall include comparative data for areas and communities outside the program areas.

(m) The water right transition assistance pilot project program shall expire five years from the effective date of the fiscal year for which state moneys are appropriated thereof and approval of program rules and regulations.

(n) Water right transition assistance grants for water rights to remain unused for the contract period shall constitute due and sufficient cause for nonuse pursuant to K.S.A. 82a-718 and amendments thereto pursuant to the determination of the chief engineer for the duration of the water right transition assistance pilot project program contract.

(o) The state conservation commission shall hold at least two meetings in each water right transition assistance pilot project program area prior to entering into any water right transition assistance pilot project program contract for the permanent retirement of part or all of landowner historic consumptive use water rights. Such meetings shall inform the public of the possible economic and hydrologic impacts of the program. The state conservation commission shall provide notice of such meetings through publication in local newspapers of record and in the Kansas register. (**History:** L. 2006, ch. 174, § 1; July 1.)