

August 6, 2020

WHC LEMA  
c/o Ronda Hutton  
1320 Research Park Drive  
Manhattan, KS 66502

Subject: Submission of Testimony Pertaining to the Public Hearing for the Wichita County LEMA Plan

The Upper Smoky Hill Regional Advisory Committee represents all or portions of seven counties in west central Kansas, including Wichita County. Our mission is to represent water users in the region and address a variety of water resource issues. The focus of our efforts is to conserve and extend the life of the High Plains / Ogallala aquifer within our region. This aquifer provides the vast majority of our water supply and is the sole source of supply in most of the region.

The Upper Smoky Hill Regional Advisory Committee developed goals and specific actions to conserve and extend the life of our groundwater resources. Our highest priority is irrigation use, since it represents 96% of all water use within our region. Our first action under this goal is to support the implementation of the Wichita County Local Enhanced Management Area (LEMA).

We believe that the Wichita County LEMA is compatible with all the requirements for implementation of a LEMA. The depletion of the High Plains / Ogallala aquifer within Wichita County is a matter of fact. This is clearly stated in the previously-approved Wichita County Water Conservation Area Management Plan: "The Kansas Geological Survey estimates that approximately 65 percent of the original water in storage within this portion of the High Plains aquifer has been depleted." It is subsequently stated in this Plan that "The rate of withdrawal of groundwater within Wichita County substantially exceeds the rate of recharge within this area." There can be no doubt that this level of depletion poses a serious problem relating to a sufficient water supply within Wichita County.

It is certainly within the public interest to act and take measures that will mitigate the depletion of this vital water resource. Agriculture is the economic driver of Wichita County and the region. A substantial reduction in agricultural production will diminish the economy and adversely impact the communities that depend upon agriculture. Excessive depletion threatens the ability to supply feed and water for livestock production, which is the largest value-added sector of the local economy. In the extreme, communities and individual users may not have sufficient quantity and quality of water to meet domestic needs.

The geographic area encompassed by the Wichita County LEMA is appropriate because all portions of the county have experienced substantial to extreme depletion. The entire county will benefit from the conservation that the Wichita County LEMA will likely achieve.

Please accept this statement of support for approval of the Wichita County LEMA on behalf of the Upper Smoky Hill Regional Advisory Committee.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Frank C. Mercurio".

Frank Mercurio  
Chair, Upper Smoky Hill Regional Advisory Committee