

Kansas Water Congress, Inc.

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The Waterway

Newsletter #2

March 31, 2004

Winter Annual Meeting

Over 50 persons attended and participated in the Kansas Water Congress' 1st Winter Annual Meeting held March 11, 2004 at Lawrence, Kansas. Virtually every Geographic Basin Division, several Watershed Districts, along with most of the other statewide divisions of the Congress including, Commerce and Industry, Engineering, Legal, Wildlife, Government, Agriculture, Banking/Financial, and Municipal East of Highway 81 were also represented. It was good to see many of the Basin Advisory Chairpersons and all of the Groundwater Management Districts in attendance and represented. Statewide Associations represented included the Kansas Bankers Association, Kansas Farm Bureau, Kansas Natural Resource Council, Kansas Livestock Association, and Kansas Grain and Feed Association. The current Chairman of the Kansas Water Authority, Mr. Steve Irsik and Immediate Past Chairman Mr. Kent Lamb as well as Senator Janis Lee, Representative Joann Freeborn and Representative Ward Loyd also were in attendance.

The Kansas Geological Survey, State Conservation Commission, Kansas Division of Water Resources, Kansas Department of Health and Environment and Kansas State University Research and Extension were also represented.

Mr. Tom Cech, Executive Director, of the Central Colorado Water Conservancy District, and past Board Member of the Colorado Water Congress, was our speaker and facilitator for the evening. Tom took us through the process and effectiveness of the CWC along with issue specific examples, Q and A and suggestions for The Kansas Water Congress as it develops. The Dinner was provided by the founders of the Kansas Water Congress, followed by summary comments from the Executive Director.

Goals set forth by executive committee:

The Congress will maintain a presence during the balance of this 2004 Legislative session. A presence exercised as a resource on water related issued and legislation along with communication with all members, interested parties including State Agencies and Water Districts.

The Congress will facilitate meetings/teleconferences of groupings of all 29 Divisions of the KWC. To assist in the development, membership expansion, and issue identification of the Divisions of the State. The Congress will work toward being a resource and catalyst for the Basin Advisory Committees of the State and the planning process.

The Congress will offer and facilitate the forum for discussion and possible consensus on water related issues including some of those issues that will go to Interim activity after this Legislative session. This process will be a central part of our Summer Meeting of the Kansas Water Congress, along with the qualified establishment of the KWC State Affairs Committee during the business portion of the conference.

The Congress will hold its Summer annual meeting in August, 2004. The Conference will be hosted and held at Garden City Community College, in Garden City, Kansas. (Details Later)

2004 Legislative Update:

CIRCLE K PURCHASE

In early March, Water Office Director Joe Harkins announced that further consideration would be on hold for this session. The bill designed to allow the state to purchase Circle K, HB 2578, has stalled in the House Appropriations Committee, as well as a similar bill on the Senate side, apparently there was considerable concern on the part of legislators and interested organizations about this legislation. Some of the considerations to delay include, the long awaited appraisal of the property has still not been received or recognized, continued concern and opposition from local businesses and other interests in the Kinsley/Edwards County area; and the basin advisory committees, and the Water Authority have not had the opportunity to fully consider the proposal. Also in mid-March, Groundwater Management District #5, announced their interest in purchase of the ranch. It appears that there will need to be considerable work, dialogue, discussion with and between all interested parties, during the summer and fall. The portion of the Water Plan budget that was earmarked for Circle K was removed and restored to the agency budgets from which it has been acquired.

IRRIGATION TRANSITION

HB2620 that was heard in the House Environment Committee to authorize this program did not pass out of committee, so died in turnaround. Another bill, SB 559 was introduced through Senate Way and Means and was then referred to Senate Agriculture Committee where it was not heard. Instead, language was developed in Ways and Means and added to the Appropriation SB 538 in the form of Proviso. Basically the language removes the State from any obligation to cost share funding, designates the State Conservation Commission as lead agency, and that the SCC develop rules and regulations not later than March 1, 2005. It also refers specifically to "pilot program", and is not specific to aquifer or location of such pilot program. Refer to page 157 of SB 538 for text. Many groups and interested parties support the concept of voluntary, incentive based transition but are concerned on the details and the degree of which rules and regulations will define such programs. This initiative is significantly fueled by the prospect of the State receiving limited Federal Funds through an appropriation. However, that funding is far from certain, as it has to go through the entire Congressional budget process, which puts us out almost 9 months before knowing if the funds will be available.

SAND AND GRAVEL PIT APPROPRIATIONS

A total of four bills were introduced in regards to this issue. The bills were seeking to resolve the difficulty of sand and gravel pits to comply with existing DWR regulations in regards to evaporation and consumptive use. The Industry interests are seeking relief from the regulation while the Division of Water Resources and the Department of Agriculture have great concern on the precedent and the potential effect on other water users, such legislation would have. HB 2919 is the latest version, and was passed out of House Environment.

WATER AUTHORITY MEMBERSHIP

Representative Tom Sloan had requested HB 2480 adding the State Biologist to the Kansas Water Authority as an ex officio member. The bill passed out of House Environment but failed to make the turnaround deadline. However Representative Sloan, offered an amendment to SB 463 adding the State Biologist to Authority as an ex officio member and defining ex officio as advisory, non-voting, unable to make or second motions. This bill passed and is in conference.

Other issues that will be updated after the 2004 session include:

CLEAN DRINKING WATER FEE

HORSETHIEF RESERVOIR

WATER PLAN STATE GENERAL FUND REQUIREMENT

DIRECTORS COMMENTS

Thanks and welcome to our new and renewing individual and sustaining membership. Your interest and support are vital to the furtherance of the Congress. Expanded membership both individual and sustaining are necessary and crucial to empowering the Congress in both the short term and the future. We are focusing our resources on the balance of the 2004 legislative session, Statewide Division coordination and the Summer Conference mentioned earlier in this letter. We need your help in getting the word out and the membership up. Contact me if I can be of help or can facilitate following up with contacts including individual, groups or businesses you can identify. We have come a long way this past year in establishing the Congress. The timing and circumstances are right to move the Kansas Water Congress forward to be a positive forum and recognized vehicle for sound and stable public policy on water issues facing the State of Kansas. With your leadership and participation we will succeed. "Success requires determination, tenacity, perseverance, hard work, and occasionally, a bit of luck." This was taken from Dr. Albert Yates, "MY LIST" ASSERTIONS ON ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP. Thanks, Dave

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