

Connie's Confluence



Connie Owen

Welcome to this issue of the Water-Front, and my first column as Director of the Kansas Water Office. Before I mention anything else, I wish to acknowledge that I have big shoes to fill. Earl Lewis, Tracy Streeter and others before them set a high bar for this job. I am humbled and excited by the opportunity to help address the seemingly unending water issues in Kansas. With the help of the exceedingly capable staff of the KWO, I will give it my very best.

This past year, we've all had to adjust to new ways of doing things. One of the most profound challenges, in my view, has been the inability to be together in the same space, at the same time. I am a firm believer in working things out person-to-person. There is a role for written communication and even for zoom meetings, but nothing beats an actual face-to-face conversation for gaining another's perspective and earning his or her trust.

Having said this, I appreciate even more the progress I've seen toward meeting our water challenges. The pandemic does not care if our reservoirs are losing capacity. The pandemic does not care if the Ogallala Aquifer is in

jeopardy. The pandemic does not care if contaminants of all kinds threaten our rivers, lakes and groundwater. But people do care. At a time when it has been difficult, if not impossible, to get together to find solutions, people from all over the state used what methods there were to communicate, share ideas and move projects forward. The pandemic did not stop good work from getting done.

We finally will be returning to face-to-face meetings. At long last! The KWO is gearing up for a Governor's Conference on Water to take place in Manhattan in November. My fingers are crossed that we are headed in the right direction. I say this not just because it's what I want. I say this because being together increases the odds that we will prevail in figuring out a way to improve groundwater quality in western Kansas, in addressing the seismicity and related issues in the Arbuckle, in preparing for future droughts and floods, and in protecting our rivers and reservoirs, to name a few of our daunting challenges.

As I said earlier, we need to gain each other's perspectives and to earn each other's trust. I hope in my next Water-Front column, I am reporting on how we've been gathering around tables and meeting in the fields again.

Legislative & Budget Update

During the 2021 session, the Kansas Legislature acted to include additional funding for water projects. This year, \$5.7 million was included in the State Water Plan Fund (SWPF) as demand transfers in addition to the fee revenue. The demand transfers include \$4 million from the State General Fund (SGF) and \$1.7 million from the Economic Development Initiatives Fund (EDIF).

The funding, as shown in the table on the following page, follows many of the recommendations put forth by the Kansas Water Authority (KWA) in their FY 2022 SWPF budget recommendations to the Governor and Legislature. The KWA had recommended restoration of the full \$6 million SGF and \$2 million EDIF transfers. The recommendations provided by the KWA reflect the continued importance and urgency for funding to address the state's critical water resource needs. The complete KWA budget recommendations from

this last year can be found on page 3 of the 2021 KWA Annual Report to the Governor and Legislature which is located on the Kansas Water Office website at www.kwo.ks.gov.

For FY 2022, several SWPF programs/initiatives received increased appropriations from the previous year as follows: Aid to Conservation Districts and Irrigation Technology (KDA), Assessment and Evaluation, Vision Education Strategy, Water Technology Farms and Water Injection Dredging (KWO).



Legislative/Budget cont.

The KWA will be working to develop SWPF budget recommendations for the next fiscal year. In developing the FY 2023 SWPF budget recommendations, the KWA will continue to request agency input, as well as valuable local insight from each of the 14 Regional Advisory Committees covering all areas of Kansas in order to ensure funding to address water resource issues impacting their respective regions.

FY 2022 State Water Plan Appropriations

Department of Health and Environment		Department of Agriculture	
Contamination Remediation	\$ 1,088,301	Interstate Water Issues	\$ 473,184
Nonpoint Source Program	\$ 303,208	Subbasin Water Resources Management	\$ 584,023
TMDL Initiatives	\$ 280,738	Water Use	\$ 72,600
Harmful Algae Bloom Pilot	\$ 450,000	Water Resources Cost Share	\$ 2,248,289
Watershed Restoration/Protection (WRAPS)	\$ 730,884	Nonpoint Source Pollution Asst.	\$ 1,853,185
Drinking Water Protection Program	\$ 350,000	Aid to Conservation Districts	\$ 2,223,373
TOTAL--KDHE	\$ 3,203,131	Watershed Dam Construction	\$ 550,000
Kansas Water Office		Water Quality Buffer Initiative	\$ 100,000
Assessment and Evaluation	\$ 858,919	Riparian and Wetland Program	\$ 54,024
MOU - Storage Operations & Maintenance	\$ 526,081	Water Transition Assistance Program/CREP	\$ 446,593
Stream Gaging	\$ 423,130	Irrigation Technology	\$ 250,000
Technical Assistance to Water Users	\$ 325,000	Crop and Livestock Research	\$ 250,000
Vision Education Strategy	\$ 125,000	Streambank Stabilization	\$ 794,264
Reservoir and Water Quality Research	\$ 350,000	TOTAL--KDA	\$ 9,899,535
Water Tech Farms	\$ 100,000		
Watershed Conservation Practice Imp	\$ 550,000		
Milford Lake Watershed RCPP	\$ 200,000		
Water Injection Dredging (WID)	\$ 975,000		
Arbuckle Study	\$ 60,000		
TOTAL--KWO	\$ 4,493,130		

Meet Kansas Water Authority Chair Dawn Buehler

Dawn Buehler was appointed by Governor Kelly and recently confirmed by the Legislative to serve as the KWA Chair.



Dawn is the Kansas Riverkeeper and Executive Director of Friends of the Kaw. In this role, she works with communities, landowners, and the public to educate about the Kansas River, manages school and recreational programs, and leads efforts towards large scale trash cleanups that forever improve the landscape of our river. Prior to this

position, Dawn worked for both Douglas County Conservation District and K-State Extension. At the Douglas County Conservation District, Dawn learned the value of conservation programs that provide invaluable benefits to both the landowner and the landscape.

Dawn recently served as Chair of the Kansas Regional Advisory Committee for the Governor's Water Vision, a 13-person committee charged with writing goal and actions plans for the Kansas Basin. Dawn is also a member of the Stakeholder Leadership Team for the Lower Kansas WRAPS (Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy) Program, is a member of the Topeka Riverfront Advisory Council, is Governor Kelly's Appointee to the Oil and Gas

Advisory Committee, and serves on the Board of Directors for the Kansas Land Trust and the Kansas Alliance for Wetlands and Streams.

Dawn was raised on a 2,000-acre vegetable farm in the De Soto river bottoms along the Kansas River in the Kaw River Valley. Dawn continued to help on the farm while attending college after high school, earning both a Bachelor of Science in Natural Resources, Fish and Wildlife Conservation from Oregon State University and a Bachelor's in Business Administration from Baker University. Dawn has spent her career working as a conservationist, accountant and farmer.

As a 6th generation Kansan, Dawn's passion is watershed management and finding ways we can all work together to improve our watersheds. Dawn and her husband, Dennis, live south of Eudora and have a son, daughter-in-law, and two chocolate Labrador retrievers.

"My lifelong experiences have shaped and informed much of what I know today, which is that water is the most valuable resources that we have and must be a priority," Dawn said. "As Chair of the Kansas Water Authority, I look forward to this opportunity to apply the expertise of our state agencies, the experience of our communities, and the leadership of our board members to work on problems and collaborative solutions that protect our water resources."

RAC Membership Drive

For more than 30 years, citizen advisors have been a vital voice for water resource issues in Kansas. The Kansas Water Office is currently accepting applications from those who would like to participate as a member of one of the 14 Regional Advisory Committees (RACs) which are established by the Kansas Water Authority (KWA).

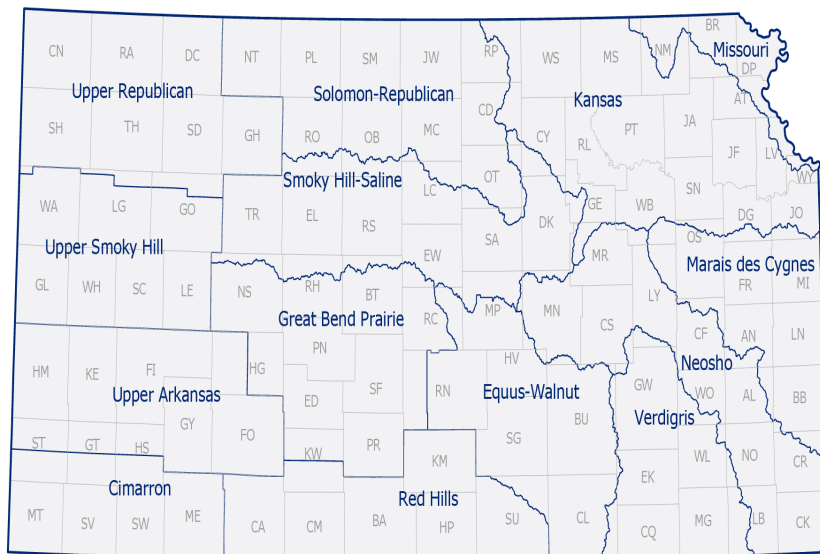
These committees play a key role in advising the KWA on implementation of each region's water supply priorities as part of the state water planning process in Kansas. In conjunction with this process, RAC members provide input and advice to the KWA on identified regional and statewide water resource-related goals and action plans developed in support of state water plan implementation.

In addition, members help identify and provide input on other emerging water resource related issues and concerns. They serve as important local links to the public in their regions through interactions with various groups and individuals as well as communicate information on concerns and issues to citizens in their respective regions.

The KWA, through the committee selection process, works to establish RACs that represent diverse groups of water users and interests within regions represented. to ensure our state's most vital resource is a top priority.

Kansans can have a definite lasting impact on the future of Kansas water resources through active participation on a Regional Advisory Committee.

Interested persons can find the short application form [here](#) or on the KWO website RAC page. The application deadline is June 15, 2021. For more information or questions contact email kwo-info@kwo.ks.gov.



2021 Governor's Water Conference

This is the 10th year for this exciting conference which will highlight the latest policy and research developments of water issues in Kansas as well as Kansas Water Vision/Plan implementation. It will attract hundreds of attendees, including state and Congressional legislators, state and federal officials, organizations and citizens who share an avid interest in our state's water resources.

Current 2021 planning involves an in-person conference back in Manhattan, KS at the Hilton Garden Inn. (Keep in mind there may be restrictions this fall that could affect the conference and we will keep you updated as we know more information.)



Sponsors are extremely valued and how this conference can be affordable for all attendees. The [sponsorship form](#) deadline is July 19, 2021

KWO invites professionals and researchers to submit abstracts for presentation. The focus will be on four themes: Water Conservation, Water Management, Technology and Crop Varieties, and Additional Sources of Supply. These themes include, but are not limited to: reservoirs; municipal and industrial water; watersheds; High Plains and other aquifers; irrigation and water conservation; droughts, floods, and climate change; water transfers; water reuse; water and energy; water and health.

Acceptance will be based on content, available space, and overall program balance. Oral presentations will take place on Thursday, November 18, 2021.

The [abstract submission form](#) is due Friday, July 2, 2021.



THE WATERFRONT CALENDAR

For comments or questions on
The WaterFront please contact
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June

23 - Kansas Water Authority Meeting, Virtual

August

17 - Kansas Water Authority Meeting, Garden City, KS

November

17-18 - Governor's Water Conference, Manhattan, KS

SAVE — THE — DATE

GOVERNOR'S CONFERENCE ON THE FUTURE OF WATER IN KANSAS | 2021



HILTON GARDEN INN, 410 S. 3RD ST., MANHATTAN, KS



NOVEMBER 17 & 18, 2021