

NORTHWEST KANSAS GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT NO. 4

Shannon Kenyon, Executive Director/Manager

TESTIMONY SUPPORTING HB 2279

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ISSUE: HB 2279

Groundwater Management Districts were locally formed by the public to address areas within a distinct boundary with a groundwater decline problem. The state of the Ogallala Aquifer in Western Kansas is declining in many areas and Groundwater Management Districts have the responsibility to manage the water within their district. The Northwest Kansas Groundwater Management District #4 Board of Directors (GMD 4) is in support of HB 2279. GMD 4 strongly supports local efforts to extend the life of the High Plains Ogallala Aquifer for current and future generations in Northwest Kansas. This bill supports that need for local control and involvement.

GMD 4 took action to extend the life of the aquifer through two Local Enhanced Management Areas (LEMAs). LEMAs were developed by legislative action in 2012 to provide GMDs local control in addressing the declines they are responsible to manage. They have proven to be successful in reducing declines to extend the life of the aquifer and to be more profitable for producers. Implementation of LEMAs allow for that local control in managing water level declines and the destiny of the communities that depend on the High Plains Ogallala Aquifer. HB 2279 mirrors the way in which we developed and implemented these LEMAs locally by defining high priority areas followed by public outreach in those areas with the eventual development of our LEMAs.

This bill requires GMDs to submit annual financial reports. This is extremely positive in that the programs within GMD 4 will be reviewed by legislators annually and for them to be informed on our importance to our local community. Currently, GMD 4 generates an annual financial report and submits this to an auditor. This bill requires them to be submitted to legislative committees for review and provides GMDs the opportunity to highlight the conservation efforts in our respective districts.

The requirement of GMDs to identify areas of concern, conduct public education, and create an action plan is exactly how GMD 4 has conducted the development of all past and present LEMAs within our district. This plan has become a part of our management program as well. Through this process, the LEMAs have proven to be a successful tool in extending the usable life of the aquifer and increasing the economic viability at the local level. I am excited to share that process with current and future committees.