

Western Kansas Groundwater Management District No. 1
Katie Durham, District Manager
Testimony Supporting HB 2279
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Regarding HB 2279:

Groundwater Management Districts were formed locally in order to address groundwater decline and to promote local management of groundwater within a District boundary. The Western Kansas Groundwater Management District No. 1 (GMD1) is in support of HB 2279.

GMD1 has long supported developing and implementing policies that promote local education, outreach and most importantly local control in addressing concerns of groundwater decline within the District boundary. Since 2013, the District has engaged with community members across all five counties encompassing the District and have worked to establish Water Conservation Areas (WCA) and Locally Enhanced Management Areas (LEMA). This bill's requirement for the District to identify areas of concern, conduct public education and outreach, and to develop an action plan on how the District intends to address these concerns aligns with how the District has conducted the development of its WCA's and LEMA's. Going forward it is important that due consideration for previous work in developing these existing programs and policies be a part of this proposed future review process.

GMD1 currently has the Wichita County LEMA which is in it's third year, and the District has recently received notification from the Chief Engineer that the State intends to accept the Four County LEMA, which would encompass the remaining four counties of GMD1. Therefore, all of GMD1 will now be in a LEMA. Recent data shows that the Wichita County WCA & Wichita County LEMA is working, prior to 2017 the average decline rate was approximately half a foot a year, and that has now decreased to an average of a tenth of a foot per year. The data shows that these locally developed solutions are successful in enhancing the management of water resources and protecting the viability of local communities. The Bill also requires the Groundwater Management Districts to submit annual financial reports. The District currently generates an annual financial report which is submitted to an auditor. Submitting this report annually to be reviewed by legislators is a positive opportunity for them to review the programs and polices currently taking place within the District, as well as the District's importance to the economic viability of the local communities within the District. GMD1 looks forward to sharing the progress of these efforts with current and future committees.