



**Southwest Kansas
Groundwater Management District No. 3**
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To: Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee, Chairman Kerschen

From: Mark Rude, executive director of Southwest Kansas GMD3

Date: March 14, 2023

Re: Neutral Testimony on HB 2279 with requests

Chairman Kerschen and members of the Committee, my name is Mark Rude, and I am executive director of the Southwest Kansas Groundwater Management District No. 3 (GMD3). Thank you for the opportunity to provide neutral testimony on [HB 2279](#) with requests to improve the bill.

According to KDA, agriculture and the drought resilience that groundwater irrigation provides is the big driver of the southwestern Kansas economy, adding \$15 billion in total annual impact and 50% of the gross regional product. With the addition of our asks, this bill can refocus state government to help GMD3 and our member land owners and agriculture related business communities manage and conserve groundwater supply for a growing future Kansas economy.

We ask that HB 2279 be amended by requiring a single annual report be made to the legislature. The current bill contemplates three different reports and different deadlines. We welcome the opportunity to provide information on our Management Program and the district financial statements, but preparation of three separate reports, containing virtually the same information is taxing on a small staff. A detailed, fully audited report on March 1 of each year would provide the most complete data. Our annual audited financials are currently posted on the Secretary of State's website, and you can also find our Western Water Conservation Projects Fund 2023 [report](#) online as well.

We ask that the deadlines in this bill be extended by 6 months because of a 6-month delay in the KGS update of the GMD 3 groundwater model, as well as syncing the remainder of the bill to our fiscal year. In this same section of the bill, **we ask** for clarity that a board isn't required to identify priority areas in other districts.

We ask that the basis for priority area action plans remain locally reasoned. Terms like “usable lifetime” or “unreasonable deterioration” invite controversy in the differing water settings across the state and should be struck. Usable Stateline flow under the Ark River Compact with Colorado is an example.

Finally, at the top of page 4, **we ask** for the addition of the phrase “and consider the requests of the board of each district” after “*districts*” on line 5. The GMDs are completely left out of the agencies whose efforts must be considered by the Kansas Water Authority when recommending appropriations of the water plan fund. The legislative post audit [*Evaluating Groundwater Management Districts’ Efforts to Conserve Water*](#) highlights the success GMD 3 has had in the past 10 years to leverage local funds with federal funds to multiply member water conservation investment dollars. During that time, my board provided requests to the Kansas Water Office and Water Plan Fund budgeting process, but with no reply back. The Kansas Water Office and Authority struggled with these asks that they consider “outside requests”. Our Management Program includes regular requests. We believe the purpose of HB2279 will be improved if GMD board standing and funding requests are not left outside state agency consideration.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to HB 2279 and I will stand for questions as needed.