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**Testimony before the House Water Committee**  
**Proponent on HB 2678**  
**By**  
**Orrin Feril**  
**On Behalf of Big Bend Groundwater Management District No. 5**  
**February 08, 2024**

Chairman Minnix and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony to HB 2678. I am Orrin Feril, providing this testimony on behalf of Big Bend Groundwater Management District No. 5 (Big Bend).

Big Bend has a deep understanding of the water banking in Kansas and has been an advocate for adoption across the state for several years. Unfortunately, the water banking concept has not taken hold in other regions, but the concepts in the water banking act have been utilized in other conservation programs from KDA–DWR. In principle, water banking incentivizes water conservation by providing added flexibility for the water user.

Per K.S.A. 82a-767, each water bank is required to be evaluated by an independent review committee organized and facilitated by the Kansas Water Office. It is the understanding of Big Bend that one of the provisions requested in HB 2678 regarding the limitation on water deposited into the water bank is directly related to a recommendation from the latest evaluation committee.

The second provision in HB 2678 requests flexibility for when water is withdrawn from the safe deposit accounts. Historically, the water bank has required the water user to define the amount withdrawn and do so before exceeding the authorized quantity of water for the respective water right. Once withdrawn, the water user is required to obtain a term permit application from KDA–DWR. This paperwork requires staff time to process adequately for both the water bank office and Stafford field office. Because the water bank currently requires pre-withdrawing water, the water user is required to speculate on future weather patterns and water needs. This is an inefficient process. Ultimately this process results in a significant workload increase for both water bank and KDA–DWR staff. The goal for HB 2678 is to allow the water bank to process this paperwork one time within the calendar year to account for the water withdrawn from the safe deposit accounts.

The provisions outlined in HB 2678 will result in an overall benefit to water banking in Kansas. Big Bend would strongly encourage the committee to move forward with this bill to provide water users with much needed flexibility. It is the intent of Big Bend to continue to pursue a sound water policy within Central KS. Providing flexibility to area water users while requiring conservation has been a cornerstone of Big Bend water policy for several decades.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 2678. It is always beneficial to have conversations such as the discussions generated by these hearings. Big Bend Groundwater Management District No. 5 is ready and willing to continue to be a productive partner in those conversations. We look forward to working with your committee to promote a sound water policy in Kansas.