



The Kansas Groundwater Management Districts

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Testimony before the House Committee on Ag & Natural Resources In Support of HB 2516 Wes Essmiller, Manager – Big Bend GMD#5 Tuesday, January 31, 2012

Good morning Chairman Powell and committee members. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony. As representative for the Big Bend Groundwater Management District and the Central Kansas Water Bank, and also providing this testimony on behalf of all five Groundwater Management Districts, I would like to offer the following comments concerning House Bill 2516.

As many of you are aware, Big Bend Groundwater Management District Number Five is the overseer of the Central Kansas Water Bank and we have worked diligently with the review committee on the five year review that was produced last year. We have come to the conclusion that there were several items which were limiting the overall efficiency of the Water Bank.

One of the primary items noted by the review committee was a general lack of users in the water bank program. In the past, users didn't feel that the water bank was in their best interest, in part due to the high conservation component charged to all water that was processed through the water bank and the lack of a long term option for the movement of water. The latter of these two items is why we are here today.

House Bill 2516 proposes amending statutes 82a-765 and 82a-767 to allow the water bank, after its initial seven year period and successful review, to be extended into perpetuity with follow-up reviews being required every five years and provides for the addition of other banks throughout the state. These amendments would allow the end-user of the water bank to plan for the long term and invest in the capital needed to produce crops utilizing this program. As a reference, the average irrigation water well, in the area, costs between \$30,000-\$50,000 and a center pivot irrigation system, on average, costs \$50,000-75,000. That doesn't include the motor or power to run either item. By allowing the bank to be extended, an individual would feel safe in knowing that if they invest the capital to produce the water, that the water would still be available to them in the future. Under the previous constraints the user had a 7-10 year life span of a project, and that was too short of a short time to recoup the capital investment.

A second benefit to the extension of the bank's life would be to allow water users to utilize the Safe Deposit program more efficiently. This year was a year of record drought through much of the water bank's area and there were several users that had signed up for the Safe Deposit accounts that were able to take the water that they had saved over the last seven years and utilize it this year during the drought. By extending the life of the bank it would allow more individuals more time to accumulate water to be utilized in times of drought like we experienced in 2011. This would ease the stress on the producers and could allow the water bank to eliminate the need for a state program similar to the Drought Term Permits issued this year.

In closing, the Groundwater Management Districts believes that water banking is a viable program and should be extended based upon the proposed amendments. We feel that with these changes the Central Kansas Water Bank will flourish in the future and become a tool that many water users would be interested in participating in.

Again, thank you for your time in allowing me the opportunity to submit these comments on behalf of all five Groundwater Management Districts.