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**Testimony before the House Water Committee  
Neutral with Concerns on HB 2697  
By  
Orrin Feril  
On Behalf of Big Bend Groundwater Management District No. 5  
February 13, 2024**

Chairman Minnix and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide neutral with concerns testimony to HB 2697. I am Orrin Feril, providing this testimony on behalf of Big Bend Groundwater Management District No. 5 (Big Bend).

Big Bend is unclear regarding the purpose for the proposed revision to K.S.A. 82a-1028 (m). From Big Bend's perspective, the existing language, "providing advice and assistance," encourages professional coordination between Big Bend and state and federal agencies regarding technical hydrologic issues. Historically, this coordination has been beneficial for the common understanding of the water resource concerns of Central Kansas. Big Bend has had differing perspectives from those agencies, but this is not a bad thing. It would be unprecedented to have a technical issue arise, and all entities (state, federal, local, non-governmental) agree on the proper course of action. This is especially true for complex hydrologic issues involving both surface and groundwater resources present in Central Kansas. The checks and balances between local, state, and federal entities in the review of these complex issues provides the foundation for good water policy and management of the precious water resources.

Big Bend has a long history of coordination with all levels of government and non-governmental organizations to address complex issues in Central Kansas. As such, Big Bend is not sure of the need for the proposed revisions to K.S.A. 82a-1028 (m).

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 2697. 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.