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## **Water Vision Implementation Featured at Governor's Water Conference** *"Water Legacy Award" presented*

Manhattan, Kan. –Approximately 600 attendees with diverse water interests were encouraged at the Governor's Conference on the Future of Water in Kansas to keep pushing forward with implementation efforts for accomplishing regional priorities within the Long Term *Vision for the Future of Water Supply in Kansas* to ensure our state's water future.

"On this stage three years ago Governor Brownback issued a call to develop a 50 year vision for the future of water management in Kansas. This call has resulted in more effort the past three years than would seem possible by local, state and federal government, stakeholders and the private sector," said Director of the Kansas Water Office Tracy Streeter. "Our team was able to share with attendees that 100 percent of the Phase I Actions Items identified in the Vision have been initiated, a great accomplishment no doubt but we must continue to push forward as this Vision is integrated into our existing Water Plan."

The morning featured the "Water Legacy Award" which was presented to Joe Harkins, former Kansas Water Office Director who served in several leadership roles for agencies, including the Kansas Water Office. Among many honorable accomplishments, he was recognized for establishing the original Kansas Water Plan and securing the reservoir water supplies that set the stage for Kansas' efforts contained in the Water Vision of protecting and sustaining our reservoirs.

The morning also showed the work of 14 regional advisory committees, comprised of 160 volunteers who created action plans for their region's priority goals, resulting in 64 action plans in total to address critical water issues across the state. Attendees heard from the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Water Management Funding and Education and Community Outreach Working Group for better ways to connect all Kansans to their water and our state's water issues.

"Engagement at the local level is essential for the success of the Vision and the statewide commitment to address our water issues," said Secretary of Agriculture Jackie McClaskey. "It is critical that all Kansans understand the water challenges facing our state and that they feel a connection to the role they play in the future of water in Kansas."

This year's 'Be the Vision' award recipients were also honored for taking extraordinary measures to conserve, reuse or adopt better practices to help ensure the future of our state's water resources. This year's recipients

were David Royer with Delaware WRAPS Streambank Stabilization, city of Garden City represented by Fred Jones, Tom Willis, T&O Farms and Spirit AeroSystems.

The rest of the day continued with Tyler Powell, Oklahoma Energy & Environment; David B. LaFrance, American Water Works Association, CEO; Denise Hickey, North TX Municipal Water District, Water Resource Program & Public Education Manager; and an Ogallala Economic Panel, Eli Fenichel, Assistant Professor, Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies; Bill Golden Research Assistant Professor, K-State University, Department of Agricultural Economics; Tim James Senior Sustainability Scientist, Arizona State University, Julie Ann Wrigley Global Institute of Sustainability.

Today will build on the Vision implementation and water policy discussions from the previous day with technical presentation posters and talks. Graduate and undergraduate students will present their research. Rob Manes, The Nature Conservancy-Kansas Director will wrap up the conference.

A fun addition to the conference this year was the Water Photo Contest. More than 150 photos were submitted to be voted on as the ‘people’s choice’ at the conference. The winner will be featured on the 2017 brochure, website and other locations throughout the coming year.

The Governor’s Conference on the Future of Water in Kansas is hosted by the KWO, K-State /Kansas Water Resource Institute and the Kansas Geological Survey/KU. Major sponsors for the event include Black & Veatch, Burns & McDonnell and Great Lakes Dredge & Dock.

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*As the state’s water office, KWO conducts water planning, policy coordination and water marketing as well as facilitates public input throughout the state.*

*The agency prepares the KANSAS WATER PLAN, a plan for water resources development, management and conservation. KWO also reviews all water laws and makes recommendations to the Governor and Legislature for needed legislation.*