

Governor's 2012 Water Policy FAQ

Why Legislation is Important?

The Ogallala Aquifer is the main source of water for the western third of Kansas.

- Without Ogallala water, significant portions of the region's agriculture and all of its related businesses could not be sustained, manufacturing could not continue, recreational opportunities would diminish and towns in the area would cease to exist
- It is essential to find ways to help protect, extend and conserve the life of the Ogallala Aquifer for future generations of Kansans

What are the Benefits to the Legislation?

Allows conservation and extends the Ogallala's useful life while sustaining and enhancing the economic viability of the region.

- Allows management of the Ogallala Aquifer in a way that both benefits agriculture today and sustains the valuable water resource for future generations
- Allows local producers and communities to collectively decide their own future as it pertains to water
- Encourages a change to a culture of conservation

Proposals Background

On July 21, Governor Brownback hosted an Economic Summit on the Future of the Ogallala Aquifer in Colby.

- More than 400 stakeholders participated and discussed their concerns, ideas and visions for the future

What was the Proposal Development Process?

Following the Summit the Kansas Water Authority (KWA) embarked on a policy planning process that involved examining existing barriers to conserving the Aquifer.

- A 21-member Ogallala Aquifer Advisory Committee (OAAC), comprised of Authority members and Ogallala stakeholders, was appointed to review short and long term solutions
- Following OAAC/stakeholder input the KWA, Kansas Water Office and Kansas Department of Agriculture developed recommendations for the Governor's 2012 water legislation

2012 Proposed Legislation

Amend appropriation act to eliminate "use it or lose it" for groundwater rights in areas closed to new water right development to protect those rights from unintentional forfeiture

- Provides incentive to conserve

Support legislation to provide a process for proactive conservation plans (LEMAs), or that can have mandatory reductions, are developed by the local Groundwater Management District, have corrective measures that address conservation needs, and are approved by the Chief Engineer

- Allows local communities of producers to collectively decide their future and implement conservation plans that meet their goals

Allow development of additional groundwater Water Banks for a market-based program to relocate water use and provide conservation in water short areas

- Water Bank statute requires an overall 10% water conservation

Amend the multi-year flex accounts to give irrigators expanded capabilities to manage their crop water over a five year period

- Will provide more options to producers for multi-year flexibility without increasing long-term water use under the water right