

What is the future of the Ogallala Aquifer?

Category: Education, communication, cooperation*

How long will aquifer last?
Matter of overuse, not over appropriation, but still consider private property rights, may need to go to different crops
I've pumped a lot of water for \$2 corn, now we have \$6, why cut back now? Varieties are changing – maybe we can use the water now and sustain it to the new technologies and still produce 200 bushels per acre. I'm in a high priority area, and we have been talking about the self-imposed IGUCA, self-regulated, flexibility. We were ready to go, but there's no guarantee we can keep it self-regulated. We are afraid we'd get backed into a corner. If we could get the statutes changed to where there's more local control, still be under an IGUCA, but allow local control.
The future is how we work together to make sure is sustainable.
Other uses of groundwater.
My wells have dropped water levels by 30-40 ft. Control has to involve everybody. We may be late getting started; my land now is out of water, can't let it get in the way of good judgement. Now down only to drinking water. We need to protect the future. Dry land ag can be the answer for the future.
We will see a shift from crop use to move consumption uses. Livestock and ethanol have higher economy yields than crops.
See how to make it last.
Scared people do not have the will to do it.
Want boys to be 6 th generation farmers. This could be a day to start.
People need to do something about it.
SDI, talking money and what people want to do.
Conservation is the key word here;
More efficiency leads to more use;
Waste and squandering are a serious problem.
Question about the value of water as presented by Bill Golden (value of water used is greater for industry/ethanol compared to ag). Value in dollars doesn't necessarily reflect value of agriculture production. Use can't be determined strictly by monetary value. Also, doing limited irrigation (as presented by Golden) is very hard, "almost impossible."
Use of water should be determined by the market, though the government has a lot of impact. Ethanol plant at Campus uses all milo (almost entirely dryland). Like to see more involvement by seed companies on research on milo.
A changing economic resource.
It is what we make of it.
Conserve it for the future.
A viable future with conservation.
Did 11 yrs of no pumping but lost 16 ft anyway.
GMD 1
Depends on where you are, because no recharge.
Area near the river=some recharge
Like real estate: location, location, location
Communication (Salt water) can limit the USASCC like hydraulic enacting and horizontal drilling, disciplines, brine disposal wells

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Now a better awareness of the community pool/common resource, not representing non-renewables
Question: Why not use more Dakota Water to offset water use?
Less prolific, poor quality, too deep, end up pumping sand

Category: Enforcement of laws, regulations, or enforcement activities and needs *

Would have to be non-voluntary. I'm going to do the 2-year deal and if next year's dry, then I'll sign up for the 5-year program.
State government needs to play the role of referee, making sure everybody plays fair. Some state laws are antiquated and need to be addressed. Irrigators would be willing to shut down anything under 300 gpm. First in time, first in right isn't really fair.
Get the Government to move faster than we have in the past.
First in time = first in right but the law is ignored.
We already have a system in place to prevent things like this, the "first in time, first in right" water law. Suggested the state enforce it.

Category: Intensive Groundwater Control Act comments*

Can we really hold onto the water? Are we truly doing any good with an IGUCA in a limited area?

Category: Law, legal needs, review of current law, etc *

Possibility of having water law, senior vs. junior water rights interfere with economic use of aquifer
This group wanted to go to 11 inches or 55 inches in 5 years, with flexibility, with the option to trade water among themselves as well. Also, after 5 years, we wanted the flexibility to review it and determine whether to continue or scrap it, and we don't want to do it if we can't make that decision.
We can't get the Chief Engineer to guarantee us we're going to get what we want. This group didn't feel confident they would get what they want. The CE was going to make us either bail out or make it permanent after 5 years and we didn't want to do that. We have a bunch of people who are willing to cut and go the extra mile, but we don't want to do it without a guarantee. We are working on some alternative language to the IGUCA statute to limit the CE how he could limit the plan.
Greeley County: I built my house in 1966, well water level is 5", and in the last month my neighbors have agreed to sell to Seaboard two miles away. That's his private water right. So I would support conserve and extend district wide. Most of the wells are shut off; we're on the fringe of irrigation.
We need a 5-year allocation; need to conserve and if we are, we need more time and flexibility.
I'd like to conserve, but when I go back and look at what I've used, I say why would I do a flex account with the 90% conservation factor. More people will get involved in the 5-year flex if they go off 18 or your appropriation right, whichever is less. As long as I can plan, I can choose years to go to dryland wheat.
Maybe there's a greater conservation factor needed in some areas.
Need the flex period so we can plan ahead.
Somebody has to be the captain of the ship when it comes to state government. They have to be the leader of the pack when it comes to the Ogallala.
There were a couple of requests for sustainability, but "the future doesn't look very bright". Get rid of

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use it or lose it. The future is what we make it now. Decisions about equity versus legality of water rights. Will continue to decline unless we do something now. May be headed to a buffalo commons, but changes in cropping might head that off. In a perfect world, we might achieve sustainability, but it will take everyone. We'll eventually have to transition from irrigation to using water mainly for domestic uses.

Category: Limits or limiting use*

Original thought that would be dictated by the economy of previous resource.
Consider higher water use value. It is over-appropriated but need to work on manning economy leg by using technology other approaches concern with regulation approaches.
Approaches to management: including requirement to cut back by little.
It will continue to be used; management will change the value.
Mine it out or dry it up.
Sustainability is a feasible goal. I don't want my kids to be without water in 50 years. I'm concerned about using water to produce ethanol instead of producing food. The question is, what is the best use of the water? Ethanol from the plant in Garden City (160,000 gallons per day) goes to California.
Suggestion that limiting pumping to 300 gpm wouldn't be fair either.
Not very bright. Manageable if we (wvp)
Restricted and contentious
A manageable resource
Long term planned depletion
Up-gradient people are using water which is not reaching down-gradient users.
Unless technology reduces water use to point where it can keep up
Animate use of water, how can we over deplete, cannot use less water
We want to be able to sustain the demand.

Category: Local control and influence*

Sustainability would take an 80% reduction, we are just looking to extend and conserve the life of the aquifer. We want to be pro-active, rather than have something imposed on us.
We've scrapped the idea for a year, hoping we can get something changed. We're also afraid of use it or lose it.
Other areas: Heck of an idea, they got so much further than we can.
There's certainly opposition, but there are those who want to maintain it for future generations.
Haven't been able to document conservation being there for a future date when we reach in there to grab it? Is Sheridan 6 sacrificial lambs to a bigger picture?
Ideal if whole district would do it. If we're going to do it, let's do it district wide. We missed it as a board. We have areas of HPA that have levels that will last 200 years and wells will pump 3000 gpm. With the criteria for HPAs, those areas are in. Constituents say: There are too many government layers in water, I don't know who's in charge. Who's driving what and who should we talk to? There are 1000 acronyms. The biggest water user is agriculture, and we need more representation for agriculture. I live in the city. We need to reduce the level of layers and end up with someone who makes the decision and go on.

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GMD 3 is taking a different approach. GMD 3 is looking at what can be done district-wide.
If you don't do it district-wide, I'm going to lose gallons if I'm on it and someone else isn't.
Stakeholders should have local control for regulation.
The answers differ according to local definitions and local governance is important. Preserving the resources is important.
Work in GMD4. Helped develop understanding between economic efficiency at irrigation balancing economic uses of groundwater.
We need to change our ways. Need to make changes that will be hard. Need leadership from the state, but with local control.
The responsibility of each GMD: We need KS Government role, but not complete control. Local control is critical.
Different for different people. Some people are already out of water; some have supplies that will last for years. How do we manage control? Are the GMDs too big? Maybe make them smaller and more local governance?
On a local control, I got locked up in IGUCA- it leads to hard feelings. At the time it did not seem like a good thing. Animal agriculture has the most beneficial use economically.
The future lies in the users being in control.
Locally important
GMDs have different issues.
Example: 58 ft. '48-75 water level decline, changed management practices because of water level decline. 46 ft
Pig farms in Greeley County causing wells to drop significantly and short amount of time even though he was conserving.
In GMD 1, a man lost 16 feet in his well without using any water for a year. Some wells are unable to get any water now.

Category: Programs, current Programs or Program needs*

At the tail-end of the Ogallala. There is a genuine problem. Buy out water rights?
Need to have a financial incentive for whatever you want people to do.
Make it work but work together with better judgment. Farmers/users won't give up anything unless they get paid.

Category: Other comments*

Concern about declining aquifer and economy issues of government stay out of business but then in business when needed.
Let economics dictate failure.
Questioning whether economics is an approach or should be charged to conservation.
Diversity between it's my property right and I'm going to use it versus saving it for the future of grandchildren.
Should we save it; sustain it; or deplete it? Not everyone's in the same boat. Let economics take place and it will fix itself – that's the deplete mode.
Back in the late 1990's there was a plan to deplete it to a certain level (two pools) and then stop. I remember reading about it. What happened with that?

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It was the governor talking. It lacked details. Governor Graves announced it in his state of the union and that's where it came from.
Two pools failed because it was top down. It was a good idea but failed because it was top down. Governor Brownback is empowering local control. Should there be conserve and extend? With new technologies and crop genetics, we're trying to gather ideas. The priority subunit designation is local. The GMDs are to be in the lead and recommend where the priority areas are.
Economic future of western KS depends on the Ogallala.
Water= money
Some people have already lost drinking water. For sure; economies is accelerating depletion. Conflicts in agricultural models are important.
Ride this out.
Servicetech-100 employees-depends on the aquifer.
Future is declining
Irrigation= will be pumped down and people will suffer.
Want water to last
Kansas is a good place. Run out of money, believe water because of fuel. Slow to decline.
Ignored the problem
Can get things done.
Farm bureau.
State: State rep, have to have water
How much is owned by absentee landowners?
Vermont firm: \$21 million. Ag cannot compete.
Time is of the essence.
Varies by location
Don't panic, the sky is not falling;
Should be used for economic benefit
Hold for municipal use
Lower the water table, the lower the water quality
It will be what we make of it

*** Comments may fit into more than one category. However, they are categorized in only one place in this summary.**