

## MINUTES OF THE HOUSE WATER COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Ron Highland at 9:00 am on Thursday, January 21, 2021, in room 152-S of the Capitol.

All members were present

Committee staff present:

Chris Waggoner, Office of Revisor of Statutes  
Damien Gilbert, Committee Assistant  
Meredith Fry, Legislative Research Department  
Victoria Potts, Legislative Research Department  
Zach Fridell, Office of Revisor of Statutes

Conferees appearing before the Committee:

Connie Owen, Acting Director - Kansas Water Office

Others in attendance:

No list available

### **Request for bill introductions**

Chairperson Highland called for bill introductions. Hearing none, he moved to the next order of business.

### **Presentation on:**

Connie Owen, Acting Director of the Kansas Water Office, thanked the committee for giving water a high profile platform and for the work they do ([Attachment 1](#)). She then gave a presentation on state water resource management and planning ([Attachment 2](#)). She gave an overview of the Kansas Water Office's structure, as well as its duties, which include water planning, running public water supply programs, and drought management. She then explored water issues that need to be addressed, including the draining of the Ogallala Aquifer, reservoir sedimentation, and the degradation of water quality by chemicals and harmful algal blooms. She ended by explaining the importance of water to the state economy and population, and the need to address issues with solutions described in the Water Office's annual report to the Governor and Legislature ([Attachment 3](#)). She then stood for questions.

Rep. Rhiley asked how the 14 watershed districts were delineated. Chairperson Highland answered that the Army Corps of Engineers identified the watershed areas and drew the boundaries. Rep. Rhiley then asked how to get in contact with the Water Office's Regional Advisory Committee for his area, and Chairperson Highland answered that the conferee would be able to provide that information. Rep. Rhiley asked for an explanation of the duties of the Reclamation Office, and the conferee could not answer as she has only occupied her position for three weeks and promised to get back to the representative. Rep. Rhiley then asked about the amount of recreation income created by reservoirs,

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Unless specifically noted, the individual remarks recorded herein have not been transcribed verbatim. Individual remarks as reported herein have not been submitted to the individuals appearing before the committee for editing or corrections.

CONTINUATION SHEET

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and Chairperson Highland said the state department of Parks and Recreation would be exploring that in their presentation.

Rep. Smith asked if there was a map of the remaining water left in the Ogallala Aquifer, instead of just the amount decline. The conferee advised that Dr. Jim Butler, who will be presenting on state water geology to the committee next week, would be able to provide that information and visual.

**Review of document access and Webex**

Chairperson Highland gave a brief review of how to access committee documents and testimony, which are sent to members via email and are also posted on the committee's webpage on the Legislature's website. He advised that physical copies of testimony and resources would not be handed out, and that representatives must print and bring those themselves if they wished to have them in committee.

Chairperson Highland also gave a brief review of how to access the committee meetings virtually via Webex, and how to find the proper link which will be sent to committee members via email.

Rep. Smith was recognized and underscored the importance of using the "Raise Hand" feature in Webex so that the chair knows who to call on without members having to try to get their attention.