



Southwest Kansas
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Testimony about Kansas Groundwater Management Districts
Provided To The House Water Committee
From the Southwest Kansas Groundwater Management District No. 3 (GMD3)
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Chairman Highland, Members of the House Water Committee, My name is Mark Rude and I am Executive Director of the Southwest Kansas Groundwater Management District No. 3 (GMD3). I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony and be a resource for you today.

The legislature worked in 1968 and again in 1972 to establish policy where, in the public interest, it is necessary and advisable allow groundwater management districts to form and adopt the groundwater management program for their area. I have included the early KSU Cooperative Extension Service 1973 circular promoting development of local regulation and management of water in Kansas as a reference for you and note that there have been a couple of changes by the legislature since that publication regarding GMD powers. Namely, the removal of the right to independently adopt enforceable policy and the right to be aggrieved and have a hearing when state administrative decisions are made mysteriously and contrary to local thinking.

GMD3 is the largest of the Kansas GMD areas in the driest part of the state with the most water in storage and consuming nearly half of all Kansas groundwater that is consumed annually to sustain a large portion of the Kansas agriculture gross state product. Our 15-member elected Board is comprised of water users and land owners living in each of the 12 southwest Kansas counties having area in the District, and three at large positions for members engaged in municipal, industrial, and surface water projects, respectively. Confined feeding operations are a major economic driver, and they are represented by the industrial position. GMD3 professional staff have a combined experience working for the board of more than 84 years. The main Ogallala Aquifer water supply is not uniform in its properties and can vary greatly over short distances, making general water supply rules and the assumptions they rely on even more challenging to apply to meet goals in Kansas water law.

GMD3 is an independent, special-purpose, local governmental unit that exists separately from other local governments such as county, municipal, township or school districts, with substantial administrative and fiscal independence to perform a set of governmental functions identified by the legislature. In conducting those functions in more than 530 monthly public meetings since its formation in 1976, GMD3 continues to do its part to help keep Kansas strong – not because it can always find immediate solutions to the unmet water demands and supply challenges, but because it allows room for those discussions to occur with a locally elected board and adopted management program. In that space, with good intention and honest dialogue, it is possible to find workable solutions that better meet our collective needs and better serve Kansas. GMD3 has nine focus activities: 1) Economic Development; 2) Water Rights Assistance; 3) Water Conservation; 4) Ark River Management; 5) Outreach; 6) State Water Planning Coordination; 7) Interstate Supply; 8) Models and research; and 9) Water Quality Protection. In those activities, GMD3 represents the collective interests of their members and the changing water supply in planning and administrative proceedings or before political bodies. Under the declarations of the GMD Act (82a-1020 et seq.), these activities are considered the local expression of public interest relative to groundwater management issues and associated endeavors.

This management program and board governance provide an ideal space to move dedicated public water project funds to meet legislative goals, provide for productive partnerships, and ensure efficient expenditures. For example, the action of the legislature to move damage funds from Colorado's Arkansas River Compact violations to local care underwrites a trust in local legendary leadership for the vital goal of wise water management for Kansas. The annual report to the legislature of damage fund activities, known as the Western Water Conservation Projects Fund, are attached for your reference with this testimony. We have also included our two-page Interstate Water Transfer Proof-of-Concept brief for your reference.

All GMD3 funds are audited and reviewed publicly at our annual meeting along with a draft budget and the level of assessments needed to fund the management program activities. This year our annual meeting occurred last week in person in Ulysses with several contested races for board positions, a list of sponsoring technology vendors and several excellent speakers that included Chief Engineer Earl Lewis and Kent Askren, whom you know as the Policy Director for Kansas Farm Bureau.

Thank you again for allowing me to provide testimony.