

MANAGER'S OFFICE

Jason A. Gage
City Manager
300 West Ash - P.O. Box 736
Salina, Kansas 67402-0736



TELEPHONE · (785) 309-5700

FAX · (785) 309-5711

TDD · (785) 309-5747

E-MAIL · jason.gage@salina.org

WEBSITE · www.salina-ks.gov

March 8, 2011

Representative Larry Powell, Chairman
House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources
Testimony on Senate Bill 124
Creation of the Lower Smoky Hill River Access District

RE: Written Testimony for Senate Bill 124

Dear Representative Powell and members of the House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources:

The City of Salina would like to provide support for Senate Bill 124, which relates to water supply storage access and creates the Lower Smoky Hill Water Supply Access Program.

The proposed legislation is the culmination of many years of cooperation between the Kansas Water Office (KWO) and the stakeholders in the Lower Smoky Hill River Basin. The stakeholders include the cities of Salina and Lindsborg, Post Rock Water District and the irrigators. Discussions between the KWO and the stakeholders began in March of 2007.

During the winter of 2006, a drought ensued, and the water level at Kanopolis Lake continued to drop and was not replenishing. Post Rock Water District requested a reduction in the minimum lake release to aid in maintaining the lake water level. Post Rock Water District was concerned that their intake screens would be exposed and therefore, would be unable to easily supply water to the water treatment plant.

The US Army Corp of Engineers (USACE) operates Kanopolis Lake and makes minimum releases in accordance with the Lake Regulation Manual. On March 5, 2007, the KWO requested a Deviation from Minimum Release Schedule from the USACE, with an effective date of reduction in releases for May 1, 2007. On March 13, 2007, the KWO conducted a Public Meeting to receive comments from stakeholders. Written comments were accepted through March 30, 2007. Stakeholders noted concerns associated with the proposed reduced releases. Users downstream of the Kanopolis Lake have relied on the Lake Regulation Manual minimum releases as natural flow for over 60 years. Providing less than two months for implementation was not sufficient for stakeholders to modify their water usage needs. Experience has proven that the Smoky Hill River can go dry, (no water flowing) as it did in July of 2006. A March 2007 thunderstorm filled Kanopolis Lake, and April 6, 2007 the KWO announced that the Deviation from Minimum Release Schedule was withdrawn.

The stakeholders requested that the KWO complete a yield analysis for Kanopolis Lake and modeling of the Lower Smoky Hill River to better understand the operation of Kanopolis Lake and hydrologic conditions of the Lower Smoky Hill River System to meet in lake and downstream needs. This modeling was completed in 2009.

The KWO and stakeholders have worked cooperatively over the last four years to develop concepts to improve the management of the Lower Smoky Hill River Basin.

This legislation is an important component in improving the management of the Lower Smoky Hill River System, which will aid the City of Salina in meeting water demands during drought conditions in years to come.

The City of Salina would like to thank the Kansas Water Office, the Kansas Water Authority, and this legislative body for working to develop a plan to address this important resource concern.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Jason A. Gage in black ink.
Jason A. Gage
City Manager

Handwritten signature of Martha A. Tasker in black ink.
Martha A. Tasker
Director of Utilities

House Ag & Natural Resources
March 9, 2011
Attachment 6