

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Larry Powell at 9:00 a.m. on January 12, 2011, in Room 783 in the Docking State Office Building.

All members were present except:

Representative Michael Peterson - Excused

Committee staff present:

Sean Ostrow, Office of the Revisor of Statutes
Raney Gilliland, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Kay Scarlett, Committee Assistant

Conferees appearing before the Committee:

Greg A. Foley, Executive Director, State Conservation Commission
Steve Frost, Water Project Manager, State Conservation Commission

Others attending:

See attached list.

Chairman Powell asked that members not present at the first meeting introduce themselves. Committee rules and procedures, as well as rules for conferees appearing before the committee, were distributed. Sean Ostrow, Office of the Revisor of Statutes, explained that drafting of bills may be slowed due to problems they are experiencing with the new computer system.

There were no bill introduction requests.

Greg A. Foley, Executive Director, State Conservation Commission, introduced Steve Frost, Water Program Manager, to review the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program Performance Report. The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is a dedicated conservation program focused on water conservation along the Upper Arkansas River corridor from Hamilton County to western Rice County. It has been in place for three years.

CREP is a specialized version of the Conservation Reserve Program in which the State of Kansas and the USDA Farm Service Agency have partnered to address one or more resource concerns. The Upper Arkansas River CREP is a voluntary incentive-based program for producers to enroll irrigated acres in the eligible area for 14-15 years, permanently retire the water rights on the enrolled acres, and put the acres into a conservation cover, typically, a native grass. In return, the producer receives an upfront, per acre payment from the State and an annual rental payment from USDA Farm Service Agency. Water conservation is the main resource management objective.

As of September 30, 2010, a total of 65 CREP contracts on 10,766 acres have been approved by the State of Kansas. These contracts will result in the permanent retirement of 22,162 acre-feet of annual water appropriation from 93 wells. These 65 contracts represent a total of \$649,940 in state sign-up payments to producers over the past three years. These payments are matched by annual producer payments from FSA of about \$1,300,000, based on rates of \$110 to \$140 per irrigated acre, approximately \$19.4 million over the 14-15 year life of the CRP contracts. Reducing irrigation demands on the stream-aquifer system will help slow the aquifer declines.

Copies of the Water Right Transition Assistance Pilot Project Program FY 2011 Legislative Report were also distributed. Copies of both reports are available from the State Conservation Commission.

Representative Williams distributed copies of an article posted by the The Wichita Eagle Tuesday, January 11, stating that Kansas has signed agreements with Oklahoma, Nebraska, and Missouri to permit farmers to operate farm vehicles across state lines without requiring commercial driver's licenses. Kansas is working with Colorado, Iowa, Texas, and Arkansas to arrive at similar agreements. (Attachment 1)

CONTINUATION SHEET

Minutes of the House Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee at 9:00 a.m. January 12, 2011, in Room 783 of the Docking State Office Building.

The meeting adjourned at 10:08 a.m. The next meeting of the House Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee is scheduled for January 13, 2011.