

**To: House Committee on Water, Representative Ron Highland, Chairman**

**From: Shannon Kenyon, Northwest Kansas Groundwater Management District #4**

**Date: March 17, 2021**

**Re: Summary of Northwest Kansas Groundwater Management District #4**

The Northwest Kansas Groundwater Management District #4 (GMD 4) was created in 1977 by a steering committee to address the declining Ogallala Aquifer in Northwest Kansas. GMD 4 spans approximately 3.11 million acres covering all, or parts, of Cheyenne, Rawlins, Decatur, Sherman, Thomas, Sheridan, Graham, Wallace, Logan, and Gove counties. A locally elected board of 11 members, each representing a geographical region within the district and one at large position, make decisions regarding the management of our local water resource.

Since its inception, GMD 4 is funded through land and water right assessments. An annual budget determines how much is annually assessed for water. With these funds GMD 4 is able to continually fulfill its mission statement. One component of the mission statement is the "proper conservation and management of the groundwater resources". GMD 4 has historically addressed the aquifer decline in the district through numerous local programs.

As those programs have evolved since 1977, high priority areas became a focus for the GMD 4 Board of Directors. High priority areas are regions within the district with the most significant water table declines. One of those areas decided action needed to be taken. Through local stakeholder meetings, GMD 4 Board of Directors meetings, and the creation of the K.S.A. 82a-1040, the Sheridan 6 Local Enhanced Management Area (LEMA) became effective in 2013.

The Sheridan 6 LEMA restricts irrigation and stockwater pumping during a five-year period. One of the goals of the Sheridan 6 LEMA was a 20% reduction in pumping. After the five-year period ending in 2017 producers in the region actually reduced their water usage by 32%. Water level declines in the region have drastically improved and an economic study concluded producers inside the LEMA were more profitable than producers outside the LEMA. Due to the success of the Sheridan 6 LEMA it was renewed for another five-year period beginning in 2018.

In 2015, the GMD 4 Board of Directors started looking at data to create a LEMA beyond the Sheridan 6 region. After several years of development, the GMD 4 LEMA started in 2018 for a five-year period. The GMD 4 LEMA restricts irrigators to a five-year allocation in varying amounts depending upon regional rainfall, net irrigation requirements for corn, and the severity of decline by township. It is not nearly as restrictive as the Sheridan 6 LEMA but so far has been successful and upheld in court after it was challenged.

Currently, GMD 4 is beginning to look at renewing both the Sheridan 6 LEMA and the GMD 4 LEMA beginning in 2023 and working to provide tools to producers to help them manage with less water than historically used. We provide a cost-share program for water-saving technology. We have made available a phone app where producers can take a picture of their meter and it will track their water use, water right data, and LEMA quantities. We are also developing a Certified Irrigator program with online videos about water-saving technology and management for producers to educate themselves in their own time.

Thank you for your time and allowing me to provide background on GMD 4.