Report of the Water Program Task Force to the 2026 Kansas Legislature

CO-CHAIRPERSONS: Senator Kenny Titus and Representative Jim Minnix

OTHER MEMBERS: Senators Michael Fagg and Michael Murphy; and Representatives Cyndi Howerton, Ken Rahjes, and Lindsay Vaughn

NON-LEGISLATIVE MEMBERS: William Carr, Gary Janzen, Shannon Kenyon, Earl Lewis, Karma Mason, Dr. Heidi Mehl, Jared Morrison, Connie Owen, and Joshua Svaty

CHARGE

Provisions in enacted 2025 Senate Sub. for HB 2172 direct the Task Force to:

- Evaluate major risks to the quality and quantity of the state's water supply, including any impact on current and future economic growth and population stability;
- Identify steps that the State must take to define and achieve a future supply of water for Kansans;
- Evaluate current funding for water in the state and determine whether such funding is sufficient to address the water issues included in the State Water Plan, including the state's current and future water infrastructure needs; and
- Make recommendations on the water program's long-term structure to address the state's current and future water needs and funding for the water program.

The bill also requires the Task Force to prepare and submit a preliminary report to the Legislature on or before January 31, 2026, and a final report on or before January 11, 2027, to the House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources, House Committee on Water, Senate Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources, and the Governor.

February 2026

Water Program Task Force

Report

Introduction by the Co-chairpersons

During the 2025 Interim, the Water Program Task Force (Task Force) met online twice and in person four times. Meetings were held in Dodge City, Topeka, and Manhattan. In this short time, the Task Force heard multiple presentations regarding risks to our current and future water supply, including potential economic costs, supply, and health hazards. The Task Force's scope was expansive as the Legislature directed the Task Force to examine all risks to the state's water supply, determine what steps should be taken to address those risks, and study long-term sources of funding for any proposed actions.

In planning the work of the Task Force, it was determined that the initial task should be to focus on risks to the state's water supply. Only after identifying the primary risks could the Task Force then engage in serious conversations about how to approach these challenges. Much work has already been done on this topic by the various state agencies involved in water, previous committees, and the Kansas Water Authority. Therefore, the Task Force completed a high-level review of the risks, and that is the information you will mostly find in this preliminary report. The list of risks should not be considered exhaustive but does provide an overview of the many areas where attention is needed. As the Legislature may wish to direct funds to certain priorities in the 2026 Legislative Session, the Task Force recommends that this report serve as a guide to highlight the areas that pose the greatest risk to our state's water supply.

The Task Force has moved on to studying our state's water planning process and how we prioritize funding for projects as well as conducting a comparison to other states' planning and funding processes. This will allow the Task Force to determine how we might modernize the current Kansas process. During the 2026 Legislative Session, our appointed Water Planning Work Group (Work Group) will conduct additional studies at the direction of the Task Force and, on their own, of the various states. Following the 2026 Legislative Session, the Task Force will meet with the Work Group to work through those findings regarding best practices for water planning and funding and develop a draft bill that will modernize Kansas' planning process.

The Task Force will use the remainder of the 2026 Interim to study funding sources, agency reorganization, and any other issues deemed pertinent by the Task Force. It is the Task Force's goal to submit a comprehensive final report in 2027 that will provide a roadmap for the protection and development of water resources in Kansas that accurately reflects the challenges we face in the 21st century.

Senator Kenny Titus and Representative Jim Minnix

Proposed Legislation: None

Background

In 2025, Senate Sub. for HB 2172 created the 16-member Water Program Task Force (Task Force) and the 5-member Water Planning Work Group (Work Group) to study and make recommendations to the Legislature on water policy and funding.

The Task Force met six times during the 2025 Interim:

- July 21, 2025, via Webex;
- July 28, 2025, via Webex;
- August 11-12, 2025, in Dodge City;
- November 3, 2025, in Topeka; and
- November 19, 2025, in Manhattan.

The Work Group met one time during the 2025 Interim, on October 31, 2025, in Manhattan. The Work Group is scheduled to meet monthly beginning in January 2026.

Task Force Activity

July 21, 2025, Meeting

Overview of Water Management, Planning, and Funding in Kansas

The Director of the Kansas Water Office (KWO) provided an overview of water management, funding, and planning in Kansas. She explained that water comes from different sources in the state, including the High Plains Aquifer that includes the Ogallala, Great Bend Prairie, and Equus Beds aquifers, precipitation, numerous public water supply reservoirs, and their connecting streams and rivers.

The water management statutes consist of the Kansas Water Appropriation Act, Obstructions in Streams Act, federal Clean Water Drinking Act, Safe Drinking Water Act, State Water Resource Planning Act, and State Water Plan Storage Act.

The primary state agencies involved in water management are the:

- Division of Conservation, Kansas Department of Agriculture (KDA), for conservation program implementation, including:
  - Conservation district coordination;
  - Landowner programs; and
  - Watershed dam construction;
- Division of Water Resources (DWR), KDA, for water quantity management, including:
  - Water appropriations;
  - Water structures; and
  - Interstate compact coordination;
- Division of Environment, Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE), for water quality management, including:
  - Public water supply;
  - Contamination remediation; and
  - Watershed health initiatives; and
- KWO for water policy and planning, including:
  - State Water Plan development;
  - Reservoir operations; and
  - Education and outreach.

Other agency partners include the Kansas Biological Survey and Center for Ecological Research, Kansas Corporation Commission, Kansas Department of Commerce, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, Kansas Geological Survey, and Kansas State University.

The Director described the current state funding for water, which totals $57.0 million. The funding includes:

- $40.0 million for the State Water Plan Fund (SWPF); and
- $17.0 million for the 2023 Senate Sub. for HB 2302 (HB 2302) Infrastructure Grant Funds, which consists of:
  - $5.0 million for the Water Technical Assistance Fund; and
  - $12.0 million for the Water Projects Grant Fund.

The Director described the SWPF and its funding sources, which include statutory transfers from the State General Fund (SGF) and Economic Development Initiatives Fund (EDIF) and various user fees, fines, and royalties. She provided details showing that, since FY 1991, the State has shorted the SWPF by approximately $84.0 million in reduced transfers from the SGF and EDIF to the SWPF.

State Water Plan and Process

The Director outlined the five guiding principles of the State Water Plan (SWP):

- Conserve and extend the High Plains Aquifer;
- Secure, protect, and restore the Kansas reservoirs;
- Improve the state's water quality;
- Reduce Kansans' vulnerability to extreme events; and
- Increase awareness of state water resources.

The Director explained the SWP process:

- An issue is identified by the public, Regional Advisory Committee (RAC), agencies, or other partners;
- KWO works on draft development of the SWP;
- Public input and hearing process;
- Kansas Water Authority (KWA) approves the SWP; and
- Advise Governor, Legislature, and other decision makers on SWP issues and priorities.

The last SWP was completed in 2022, and in 2024, the Strategic Implementation Framework was completed. This effort had the goal of crafting a long-term framework around the five guiding principles to ensure the availability and quality of water for future generations of Kansans. The effort included participation of more than 1,500 Kansans, more than 50 meetings held with key stakeholders, 43 defined outcomes to achieve in the next 2 years, and 8 recommendations on how to fully implement the vision of the SWP.

The KWO, in partnership with DWR of KDA and KDHE, conducted a Strategic Implementation Framework; its key takeaways were:

- Kansans are supportive of increased funding given the demonstrated need and historic underfunding; and
- The urgency of Kansas water crisis demands action now.

Kansas Water Authority and Regional Advisory Committees

The Director stated the KWA was established in 1981 and has 13 voting members who are appointed by the Governor or legislative leadership. State agency directors serve as ex-officio members.

The KWA is responsible for advising the Governor, Legislature, and KWO Director on water policy issues; approving the SWP; developing recommendations for SWPF expenditures; approving federal contracts, and proposing legislation; and preparing and issuing the Annual Report to the Governor and Legislature.

The geographic boundaries of the 14 regional planning areas are roughly based on surface water boundaries in eastern Kansas, with boundaries in western Kansas more aligned with groundwater management areas. Each regional planning area has a regional advisory committee (RAC) comprised of knowledgeable local volunteers and is staffed by a member of KWO. RAC applications are considered by the KWA Operations Committee, which makes recommendations to the full KWA for appointment.

The role of RACs is to serve as a link to the public in the region through interaction with various groups and individuals and communicate

information on concerns and issues to citizens in the region; advise KWO and KWA in identification of water-related problems, issues, and concerns within a RAC region, on issues under consideration for inclusion in the SWP, and formulation of revisions to the SWPF relating to their region along with implementation priorities and actions; and serve as a link to water management entities in the region to facilitate discussion and input on issue development and implementation.

Groundwater Quantity Management and Risks

The Chief Engineer of the DWR, KDA, provided an overview of groundwater quantity management and risks. The Chief Engineer discussed the role of DWR in water quantity, to allocate and regulate the state's water resources, including administration of water rights; protect public safety and private property, including dam safety and regulation of stream and floodplain projects; and ensure Kansas obtains its share of interstate water supplies.

Kansas Water Appropriation Act

The Chief Engineer described the Kansas Water Appropriation Act (KWAA) as based on the Prior Appropriation Doctrine or "first in time, first in right." In Kansas, water is owned by the public; any diversion for beneficial use requires a permit from DWR. The main beneficial uses are irrigation, municipal, industrial, and stockwater. The KWAA also allows the Chief Engineer to oversee allocation of the state's water resources for beneficial use and regulate it in times of shortages.

Management of Water Rights

Every permit issued by DWR defines the point of diversion, place and type of use, quantity, and priority date. New permits follow a public notice and review process. Groundwater rights are subject to a safe yield analysis. Surface water is subject to minimum desirable streamflow in some areas. Changes must not cause impairment to existing rights. This process is guided by the KWAA.

Addressing Water Declines

The Chief Engineer discussed groundwater management districts (GMDs) and implementation of Local Enhanced Management Areas (LEMAs) at the GMD and county level, where producers decide to implement a reduction in irrigation to allow for flexibility year-to-year. Additionally, each GMD is required to submit an action plan to address identified high-priority areas of concern to the Chief Engineer by July 1, 2026.

Water Resources and Use

The Director of the Kansas Geological Survey (KGS), who also is the State Geologist, discussed the KGS and its mission and role in the state's water supply, including developing authoritative, impactful, and accessible scientific datasets related to Kansas' geological resources—particularly those of economic impact—and translating observations into objective, actionable, insights and decision support systems in partnership with communities, farmers, ranchers, and industrial producers.

The Director discussed the geologic formations of the state and described the major and minor aquifers in Kansas, including information about the Ogallala Formation. He also provided information on water use around the state and explained the Water Level Measurement Program, a joint venture between KGS and DWR that ensures the measurement of approximately 1,400 wells each year. He also explained the Airborne Electromagnetic Survey, which is mapping the Ogallala Aquifer by utilizing a low-flying helicopter equipped with sensors to map subterrain geology. GMD No. 4 was mapped in 2024, GMD No. 5 was scheduled to be mapped in 2025, and GMD No. 3 is scheduled to be mapped in 2026.

Future Risks and Uncertainties

In western Kansas, there is only one main source of water, the Ogallala Aquifer, which is a finite resource that is facing depletion because the rate of withdrawal far outpaces recharge.

In eastern Kansas, while there is more precipitation, drought impacts the sources of supply and there are concentrated sources of water. Additionally, reservoirs—by their nature—fill up with sediment.

The uncertainties going forward include rainfall, temperature, evapotranspiration,

population, and the industrial load that will be required. In addition, a "stable" water source requires high-precision quantification that allows for area-specific planning. Irrigators and businesses can take action that is in their interest and the region's.

Agriculture Industry and Economy in Kansas

The Deputy Secretary of Agriculture discussed the agriculture industry and the agriculture economy in Kansas and stated that Kansas ranks seventh in total value of agricultural production by state. She stated that economic growth and industry are subject to water interdependencies, especially in water-short areas such as western Kansas.

Surface Water Quality Management and Risks

The Manager of Public Water Supply Programs, KWO, explained the various laws that govern surface water sources, including federal laws (Flood Control Acts of 1944 and 1954 and Water Supply Act of 1958), the *Kansas Constitution* (Article 11, Section 9), concurrent resolutions approved by the Legislature to fulfill obligations for water supply storage interests in certain reservoirs with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), and state laws (State Water Resources Planning Act, State Water Plan Storage Act, and three state programs: the Water Assurance Program, Water Marketing Program, and Lower Smoky Hill Water Supply Access Program).

The Manager explained that reservoirs support water use for many rural and urban communities in Kansas. Energy generation at four power plants and large metro areas and their industries are supported by reservoir water supplies.

The State of Kansas, through the KWO, contracts with the federal government for water storage in the federal reservoirs in Kansas. A cost of operations and maintenance is defined per contract for each federal reservoir. Assurance districts, access districts, and water marketing programs pay proportional shares of the State's portion for their committed storage.

The Manager described recent federal maintenance projects in the federal reservoirs, various federal rules and manual updates, reservoir debt, and various river basin assurance districts and water marketing contracts.

Not all reservoirs are equal for water supply, meaning some reservoirs have significantly more median inflow than storage available, which has refill potential but higher inflows could mean more sediment potential. Some reservoirs receive more inflow during drought than others, but each reservoir has different operational constraints and design.

The following risks were identified:

- Declining reservoir capacity:
    - Each reservoir faces some sort of sedimentation issue; however, Kanopolis, Perry, and Tuttle Creek reservoirs face the biggest declines in storage capacity over time;
    - Current policy assumes a drought similar to the 1950s historical drought were to occur with today's reservoir conditions and demands; the "drought reserve" is the ability to persist through more severe events or greater demands;
    - Some reservoirs accumulate sediment around outlet gates and water supply intakes, which impacts water supply release operations and impacts water quality in some reservoirs, which leads to increased operational treatment costs and rates; and
    - Two major sources of reservoir sediment are land and streambanks that erode upstream of the reservoir, as rivers naturally transport sediment from upstream sources to downstream waters;
- Sudden demand increases:
    - Increased population increases demands and accumulation of sediment drops the drought reserve;
    - Demand disrupters for large industry needs exceed capacity;
    - Without investment, water demands that economic opportunities require in some areas of the state will not be met; and

- Harmful algal blooms.

The following solutions and investments were identified:

- In-lake sediment management:
    - Work with USACE to collect sediment data, assess reservoir sediment issues, and determine solutions, including the Tuttle Creek Reservoir water injection dredging demonstration and the John Redmond Reservoir hydrosuction demonstration;
- Upstream sediment reduction:
    - Watershed initiatives that reduce the sediment load to reservoirs by stabilizing streambanks and promoting land use best management practices (BMPs) that lessen soil erosion, including the Kansas Reservoir Protection Initiative and streambank stabilization projects;
- Ongoing sediment fingerprinting project with the KGS:
    - Kansas Reservoir Protection Initiative that promotes land use BMPs that benefit soil health and conservation, improve water quality, and reduce sediment loading to streams and rivers upstream of reservoirs; and
    - Recent investment in the Kansas Reservoir Sediment Monitoring Network with the U.S. Geological Survey in several reservoirs;
- Improve downstream infrastructure:
    - Operational efficiencies with downstream infrastructure upgrades;
    - Dam and water intake modifications; and
    - Reduction of low flow needs and sending water out of the state during drought; and
- Additional storage acquisition, including:
    - Additional reservoir storage contracts within federal projects; and
    - Reallocating flood storage to conservation/water supply storage in reservoirs where possible.

July 28, 2025, Meeting

Water Quality Management and Risks

The Deputy Secretary of Environment, KDHE, stated KDHE's Division of Environment monitors water quality through the following initiatives:

- Surface water quality, by administration of the federal Clean Water Act, including permitting via National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System program and setting water quality standards for Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs);
- Public water supply and drinking water standards, by administration of the Safe Drinking Water Act, including resiliency and infrastructure; 856 drinking water systems across the state that serve Kansans; and health-based standards of pollutants that reflect maximum contaminant levels (MCLs); and
- Groundwater quality and contamination and remediation on sites with spills, leaks, and other discharges; 144 orphan contaminated sites; and hundreds of other sites such as aboveground and underground tanks, drycleaning sites, Superfund sites, and other clean-up programs.

How the Division of Environment Manages Water Quality

The agency establishes TMDLs based on the federal Clean Water Act standards, upon analysis of how much the pollutant load in the water needs to be reduced to achieve any given water quality standard.

Then, KDHE oversees permitting of point source discharges, including cities and industries discharging to state waters through a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit.

Finally, the agency encourages curtailing the impacts of non-point source pollution in streams by implementing BMPs with willing landowners to reduce nutrient runoff.

Impairment

The Deputy Secretary of Environment explained that, every two years, KDHE is required to compile a list of impaired waters, pursuant to Section 303(d) of the federal Clean Water Act. The report dating April 1, 2024, stated the following:

- Of 358 Kansas reservoirs, 256 were impaired by one of more pollutants, typically nutrients leading to eutrophication or being overly enriched with nutrients;

- Of 2,049 Kansas streams segments, 1,766 were impaired by 1 or more pollutants, typically bacteria, sediment, or nutrients, but also minerals and metals; and

- In total, 84.0 percent of water bodies in Kansas are impaired.

Not all impairments are equal. During KDHE's Strategic Planning process through 2024, the Department found that "impairment of surface water is more critical when actual use is curtailed by water quality, rather than when ambient levels exceed a number."

Non-point Source Pollution

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) states that non-point source pollution (NPS) generally results from land runoff, precipitation, atmospheric deposition, drainage, seepage, or hydrologic modification and comes from many different sources. According to the EPA, states report NPS as the leading remaining cause of water quality problems.

NPS pollution management relies on the willing participation of landowners and producers because NPS is not regulated under state or federal law. Three agencies collaborate on NPS solutions:

- The KDHE Watershed Management Program supports watershed restoration and protection strategy groups to support producers and small towns through federal Clean Water Act Section 319 and SWPF grants;

- The Division of Conservation, KDA, supports conservation districts to distribute SWPF to producers; and

- The U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and Farm Service Agency support conservation districts to distribute federal Farm Bill funds to producers.

The Deputy Secretary of Environment stated NPS pollution management and control should be emphasized above all reservoirs to prevent pollutants from depositing in surface waters. BMPs for NPS are either structural or behavioral; structural practices have costs that cannot be recovered in the market, making a cost-share situation ideal, and behavioral practices alter habits, making incentive payments an inducement for producers to try something different.

Groundwater Quality

The KDHE's Bureau of Environmental Remediation tests and remediates contaminated sites that can include nitrates, chlorides, volatile organic chemicals, and metals. If a responsible party cannot be found for these contaminated sites, then cleanup is funded through the SWPF for these "orphan" sites. There are currently 140 orphan sites, with an average cost of $1.0 million per site.

Emerging Issues

PFAS

The Deputy Secretary for Environment stated the EPA has promulgated MCLs for six PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) compounds. PFAS is found in Kansas surface waters and in wastewater. There are treatment options for high concentrations, but it is expensive. Two wastewater projects, in Salina and Olathe, are using State Revolving Fund loans. Biosolids from wastewater plants and their land application will be a key concern for Kansas, because it has the potential to impact agriculture. KDHE will continue to test and monitor PFAS "hot spots" around the state.

Private domestic drinking wells are not regulated by KDHE. Approximately 100,000 Kansans are self-supplied by private wells. PFAS-related issues might emerge, and there is limited funding available for covering the costs of sampling well water.

Septic Tanks

Failing septic systems may present localized environmental impacts that can become significant contributors of nutrients to groundwater. Some funding is available for low-income households to repair or replace septic systems.

Non-potable and Indirect Reuse

KDHE allows wastewater to be reused for non-potable purposes, such as field application. Indirect potable reuse happens when water is released into the river and a downstream user utilizes it.

Direct Potable Reuse

Direct potable reuse increases the amount of cost and treatment level. The Deputy Secretary reported this is being studied by the City of Wichita.

Federal Funding

Federal funding provides more than 75.0 percent of Bureau of Water, KDHE, funding. The proposed federal budget cuts would require raising fees, drawing on the SWPF or SGF, or returning clean water and drinking water programs to the EPA.

State Funding

The Deputy Secretary suggested the Legislature could authorize a state-funded revolving loan program.

Infrastructure Management and Risks and Incorporating Resiliency

Extreme Weather

The Assistant Director, KWO, stated there will be extremes in the weather and precipitation levels in the state and it is important to continue to collect data and integrate planning with all levels of government—local, state, regional, and federal—to ensure coordination at multiple levels.

Public Water Supply Infrastructure

The Deputy Secretary of Environment, KDHE, stated that 96.5 percent of Kansans get their drinking water from a public water supply (PWS), of which there are 856 in the state. The majority, 91.5 percent, of PWSs do not have health-based violations, but of the 73 PWSs that do have violations, 71.0 percent serve 500 or fewer people.

Small-town compliance is a national issue because of a lack of resources to solve issues and an inability to attract workforce to manage a PWS.

The most common unfunded need for Kansas utilities is replacement of existing pipes for PWSs due to age and condition. Federal law requires old lead and galvanized service lines to be replaced in 10 years. Additional needs include treatment facility rehabilitation and replacement to restore or enhance treatment capabilities and rehabilitate, replace, or add water storage facilities due to deteriorated structures.

New water supply sources are needed due to the shrinking capacity of existing sources. New treatment facilities are needed to treat emerging pollutants. Regionalization efforts could help resolve compliance issues, affordability, and economic development solutions.

There are two State Revolving Loan Funds, one for drinking water and one for wastewater. KDHE has seen accelerated lending over the past four years and no longer has the capacity to meet the increased demands. Congressional earmarks have reduced capitalization grants to state revolving funds by as much as 50.0 percent. There has been discussion of increasing state funds for similar state-controlled loan funds.

Dam Rehabilitation

The Chief Engineer stated Kansas has 6,490 dams on the National Inventory of Dams, of which 2,615 are state-regulated, including 327 with high-hazard potential and 191 with significant-hazard potential.

He stated all dams are potentially dangerous and pose a risk to public safety and property. As dams age and populations increase, the potential for deadly dam failure grows. As downstream rural

land is developed, dams that were designed and constructed as low-hazard dams become high-hazard dams, which means a breach of that dam could result in the loss of multiple lives. As a result, as many as 75.0 percent of the state's regulated dams may be hydrologically inadequate, meaning they do not meet the requirements for high-hazard dams.

Other Needs for Addressing Water Issues

Management of Water

The Assistant Director, KWO, provided information on the primary water agencies and functions, including other partner agencies that have supportive roles. He also described the local water management entities, which include conservation districts, state conservation regions, GMDs, water assurance districts, watershed districts, access districts, rural water districts, and municipalities.

He stated Kansas is able to make informed decisions because the State has invested in research. With the potential of cuts to the federal budget, the State should be prepared for less funding for water research. Coordination among the state's research institutions will be key moving forward.

Education and Research Needs

The Chief Engineer, KDA, discussed that water education has been consistently highlighted or included in water planning for years. For 2025, 11 RACs listed water education as a primary funding priority for the SWPF. Increased awareness of the state's water resources is important for everyone: students in the classroom, producers and water users, municipal users, and the general public. There are efforts to increase water education and career opportunities by the KDA and KWO.

August 11, 2025, Meeting

The Task Force met at Dodge City Community College in Dodge City for its third meeting.

Groundwater Management Districts – Areas of Concern

The Chief Engineer, KDA, explained the requirements for GMDs in KSA 82a-1044, which requires each GMD to identify areas of concern within its district and set reasonable boundaries for each area of concern. This information was required no later than July 1, 2024.

By July 1, 2026, each GMD is required to conduct public education and outreach in each priority area so that the GMD may develop an action plan to reasonably address the identified concerns based on input from the local water users.

Groundwater Management District No. 3

The Acting General Manager of GMD No. 3 discussed the usable life and the aquifer decline in the GMD and that a conservation initiative has been started. The GMD held multiple producer meetings in March and November 2024, which resulted in a polling of attendees at the March 2025 GMD No. 3 Annual Meeting on how quickly they wanted to stabilize the aquifer through reduction in use; most voted for a 10-to-15-year time frame.

The Acting General Manager stated Finney County Economic Development is conducting a statistical analysis of use, aquifer characteristics, and irrigated acres to help shape a plan that minimizes loss of irrigated acres. The Docking Institute will provide an economic analysis of the impacts of using less water.

The goals of this conservation initiative are:

- Entire district will work toward stability (Q-Stable) within a well-planned time frame;

- Some regions will move to Q-Stable immediately, including:

    - Regions with a short lifespan; and
    - Regions that are already almost Q-Stable; and

- Other regions will take incremental steps to Q-Stable over the course of the next 5 to 25 years.

The GMD will develop plans to meet conservation goals and will hold meetings with the public as plans progress. The GMD will also develop a basin plan under the NRCS National Water Quality Initiative to provide funding to farmers in the Upper Arkansas River watershed to mitigate the effects of declining water supply and poor-quality water. The GMD will seek funding in partnership with certain groups for tamarisk removal, and work with a national program to provide a platform for water users in GMD No. 3 and close data gaps for the GMD.

Big Bend Groundwater Management District No. 5

The Manager of Big Bend GMD No. 5 described the unique hydrology of the Great Bend Prairie Aquifer, its history, conservation projects, and areas of concern development. The areas of concern include the Pawnee Valley Intensive Groundwater Use Control Area (IGUCA), Walnut Creek IGUCA, Rattlesnake Creek region, and mineral intrusion area (chloride). Outreach meetings in each area were scheduled for October 2025.

In addition, other areas of concern under consideration include areas within Edwards and Kiowa counties and nitrate concentration throughout all areas of concern in the GMD.

The GMD Manager also provided an update on the Rattlesnake Creek/Quivira impairment and how to meaningfully address the impairment.

Impacts of HorseThief Reservoir

The General Manager of Pawnee Watershed Joint District No. 81 (Pawnee Watershed District), provided the history of the Pawnee Watershed District and HorseThief Reservoir and provided facts and information on benefits of the reservoir. He stated the reservoir has a water availability risk, including a continued depletion of the aquifer; herbicide and pesticide contamination; pollution, erosion, and sediment issues; and high nitrogen levels due to livestock.

The Pawnee Watershed District is working with agencies and farmers on controlling erosion on the creek and reservoir dam pond area. The district is also incorporating new practices to combat sedimentation and erosion. The district has started the bathymetric survey process to determine how much sediment is settled in the pool area, which will help determine the current life of the structure. The district has also started using drones on dam structures to spray herbicide and aquatic herbicide to help control weeds, promote grass vegetation, and discourage erosion.

The Assistant Water Commissioner, Water Appropriation Program, DWR, KDA, discussed the streamflow downstream of the reservoir and stated that gauges show there is continuous flow to HorseThief Reservoir year-round; however, downstream flows are 95.0 percent of normal. One more gauge is 20 miles downstream and shows 50.0 percent of normal streamflow year-round.

Municipal Planning and Supply

The Director of Water Services for Kansas Municipal Utilities (KMU) discussed what services and assistance the organization provides. She also discussed risks that KMU has identified for water in the state and provided specific examples:

- Source of supply – quality:
    - Contaminants (nitrates, radionuclides) for both surface water and groundwater;
    - Example: City of Pawnee Rock (Barton County), population is 186, uranium, solution is a new well versus centralized treatment;
- Source of supply – quantity:
    - Drought, sedimentation, water use, and agricultural irrigation;
    - Example: Osborne County Rural Water District No. 1, population is 81, well is going dry;
- Project costs:
    - Project capital costs versus lifetime maintenance;

- Unplanned increases to project costs (legacy transmission line breaks);
- Example: City of Anthony (Harper County), population is 2,502;

- Access to funding:
  - Ratepayer desire to pay versus decision-maker desire to charge necessary rates;
  - Federal / State funding – cheapest, hardest to obtain, unpredictable;
  - Non-government funding – more expensive, limiting; and
  - Ratepayer (self) – hardest to implement;
- Unknown regulatory environment:
  - Federal compliance and enforcement;
  - Project planning and budgeting;
  - State staffing stability;
  - Example: City of Beloit (Mitchell County), population 3,400, new plant is cost prohibitive so will build a new pipeline instead;

- Workforce:
  - Recruiting and maintaining workforce;
  - Being appreciated and valued;
  - Competitive wages;
  - Certification; and
  - Succession planning.

Mitigating risks includes prioritizing basic needs for water and wastewater:

- Prioritizing asset management;
- Redundancy; and
- Regionalization.

Dodge City Water Supply and Systems

The City of Dodge City's Director of Engineering Services, City Engineer, and City Manager provided information on Dodge City's water supply and systems.

The presenters discussed Dodge City's long-time wastewater recycling program and how Dodge Citians pride themselves on being good environmental stewards. They provided the statistics of the City's South Recycling Facility and North Reclamation Facility and provided information about the production of raw biogas and sale of biomethane. The presenters also discussed the expansion of the south wastewater treatment plant related to Hilmar Cheese.

The presenters then discussed recycling practices and benefits, including an upcoming 40-year crop irrigation agreement with farmer partners that was up for renewal in 2025. The original contract volume was for 4,357 acre-feet per year, but the City has provided more than 6,000 acre-feet in the recent past. With the expansion of the Hilmar Cheese wastewater treatment plant, more effluent water will be available for use. The question is whether irrigation practice should be expanded with the availability of extra effluent water or could the treated effluent provide a greater benefit to the community as a whole.

The City is exploring underground aquifer recharge, similar to the Wichita Aquifer Storage and Recovery Project, but not based on streamflow and instead based on recharging the Arkansas River beds in the city. Regulatory discussion would need to occur with KDHE on water quality and discharge, DWR for water rights permitting, and state agencies and KWA regarding inclusion of this project in the SWP.

The presenters stated that phase one of design has been completed. Modeling of the treatment process with updated water quality data from recent sampling confirm treatment process and effluent water quality. The City is currently working with KDHE and DWR on permits, and working on a National Environmental Policy Act permit; an Environmental Assessment Report has been submitted to the EPA.

Largest Water Users

The Program Manager of Water Management Services, DWR, KDA, provided information on deadlines for submitting water use reports to DWR and provided a map that shows the largest water users in the state. He stated approximately 20,000 center pivot irrigation systems operate annually in Kansas. Each center pivot irrigation system irrigates an average of 126 acres at 13.6 inches of

depth. This averages 142.8 acre-feet per year of water use. These measurements were provided to compare with amounts used by the largest non-irrigation water users in the state.

Municipal Users

The top four municipal users in the state are WaterOne (Johnson County), City of Wichita, Board of Public Utilities (Kansas City), and City of Topeka. WaterOne's total water use in 2023 was 81,806 acre-feet, equivalent to use by 573 center pivot irrigation systems.

Industrial Users

The top four industrial users in the state are Evergy, CVR Common Assets, National Beef Packing Company, and Wheatland Electric Cooperative. (Results are compiled by all facilities in the state owned by the industrial users.) Evergy's total water use in 2024 was 55,183 acre-feet, equivalent to use by 386 center pivot irrigation systems.

Stockwater Users

The top four stockwater users in the state are Cobalt Cattle Company, Syracuse Dairy, Seaboard Foods, and High Plains Ponderosa Dairy. (Results are compiled by all facilities in the state owned by the stockwater users.) Cobalt Cattle Company's total water use in 2024 was 2,869 acre-feet, equivalent to use by 20 center pivot irrigation systems.

Summary of Water Use

- Annual irrigation center pivot use of 20,000 center pivots averaging 142.8 acre-feet of use each equals about 2.86 million acre-feet statewide; and

- Annual non-irrigation water use includes the combined annual municipal, industrial, stockwater, and other consumptive use across the state in 2024 and is equivalent to 4,413 center pivots or about 22.0 percent of average irrigation use.

August 12, 2025, Meeting

The Task Force met at Dodge City Community College in Dodge City for its fourth meeting.

Public Comments

Public comments were provided by three individuals and two organizations, SDI Kansas and the Southwest Kansas Irrigation Association.

Impact of Irrigation on Water Use and the Economy

A professor and the Director of Sustainable Irrigation, Department of Biological and Agricultural Engineering, Kansas State University, and a professor in the Department of Agricultural Economics, Kansas State University, provided information on the history of irrigation in the United States, highlighting the rapid expansion of irrigation in the 1970s. They also discussed the history of Kansas irrigation that mirrors national trends with a spike in the number of water appropriation permits for irrigation in the 1970s.

The presenters discussed the economic impacts of changing aquifer conditions, in that agricultural land value is 53.0 percent greater for irrigated acreage than non-irrigated acreage. An additional acre-foot of saturated thickness is worth as much as $16 per acre-foot.

The presenters stated there is mitigation for overuse of water that includes retiring irrigated acres, innovation and technology adoption, educating water users, and potentially modifying state rules and regulations. Examples of innovation and technology adoption were provided, including irrigation management solutions (which include soil water sensors, infrared thermometry, dendrometry, the water irrigation scheduler for efficiency [WISE], and canopy sensing).

Impairments

The Program Manager, Water Management Services, DWR, KDA, discussed water appropriation in Kansas, minimum desirable streamflow and interstate water compacts, and provided examples of impairment investigations. Ongoing challenges to water appropriations and impairment investigations include the complexity of managing senior versus junior water rights,

declining aquifer levels, and drought and climate pressure.

Dairy Development and Water Reuse

A Professor and Extension Specialist, Animal Sciences and Industry, Kansas State University, provided information about dairy development and water reuse.

The presenter stated that while the number of milk cows in Kansas has decreased from a historical high in the 1930s and 1940s, there has been a 2.6-fold increase in cow numbers since 1994 and, likewise, a 3.9-fold increase in milk production since 1993. Milk production per cow has seen a 1.7-fold increase since 1995, but there has been a 6.9-fold decrease in total dairy farm numbers since 1996.

More than 90.0 percent of water use on a dairy is for crop production, with the remainder used for drinking water, parlor cleaning, milk cooling, manure management, cow cooling, feed management, and other uses. The presenter provided examples of dairies in western Kansas and how much water is required per cow per day, with average water use per dairy.

The presenter stated the water needed for milk, crops, and on-farm water use has decreased from dairy uses since 1964. This is a result of the changes incorporated to the dairy production system in Kansas, which includes dry lot to freestalls, improved cow cooling, manure management, and changes in forage choices. These changes come from efficiency in milk yields, crop yields, water conservation, water recycling, and improved irrigation.

The presenter stated McCarty Family Farms reported their water savings on their dairy operation; annual water capture occurred in the following ways:

- Processing plant and plate chiller water: 158 million gallons;
- Redesigned manure flushing, washing, and irrigation: 471 million gallons;
- Total of 629.1 million gallons each year.

The presenter provided information on opportunities for water efficiency, the economic impact of the Kansas dairy industry and processing industry, and the future of the Kansas dairy industry. He stated the industry's needs to support growing the dairy industry include:

- Quantification of water use and recycling;
- Identification and testing of water-saving forages;
- Development of irrigation efficiencies;
- Clean water rules and regulations and application;
- Water credit for irrigated lagoon water;
- Quantifying economic impact of water use; and
- Dairy research at Kansas State University.

Federal Reports

Representatives of the USACE from the Kansas City Branch and the Tulsa Branch discussed their various districts, the planning assistance that is available, and the Tuttle Creek Reservoir water injection dredging demonstration and John Redmond Reservoir hydrosuction projects.

November 3, 2025, Meeting

The Task Force met in the Statehouse in Topeka for its fifth meeting.

Tribal Waters Concerns

Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation

The Tribal Council Chairman of the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation (Nation) provided information on the history of Tribal lands in Kansas and the Nation's senior water rights in an area of 30-by-30 square miles that is located roughly southwest from Holton to Wamego. He discussed that water rights were established with treaties between tribes and the United States, affirmed by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Winters v.*

United States, 207 U.S. 564 (1908), and predate any water rights granted by the State.

The Tribal Council Chairman expressed his disappointment on how Kansas approaches water use in and around the Tribal lands and detailed the following points:

- The Task Force should have Tribal representation;
- Tribal water rights include land sold to non-Tribal members within the area granted to the Nation by treaty;
- The State has not been a good steward of Tribal water rights;
- The Nation is pursuing the ability to treat its own water in its own facilities, as the Nation believes the local water districts do not treat the Nation as an equal partner; and
- Streams in the Tribal lands have heavy metal contaminants and require significant treatment.

The Tribal Council Chairman noted the deterioration of the quantity and quality of water are the biggest concerns for the Nation.

The Special Water Counsel for the Nation discussed legal issues regarding tribes being granted sovereignty and discussed how the Nation interacts with state regulatory agencies.

Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska

The Chairwoman of the Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska (Tribe) also stated her support for Tribal representation on the Task Force. The Chairwoman shared concerns about water quality in Tribal lands, highlighting high nitrate levels. The Chairwoman stated the Tribe's willingness to work with all entities as a sovereign nation.

State Water Plan and the Development Process

State Water Plan and State Agency History

The Assistant Director, KWO, stated the first established state water agency was the Kansas Water Resources Board that was established in 1955 in response to the severe drought and flooding in the 1950s.

The Board conducted a study that recommended providing an organizational structure, personnel, and funds to create and maintain a state water plan.

In 1978, the Governor created the Governor's Task Force on Water Resources, which recommended increased attention be given to use of the State Water Plan as the State's basic expression of policy on water-related subjects.

The KWO was established in 1981 as the water planning, policy, coordinating, and marketing agency for the State. The agency's mission and purpose were shared with the Task Force.

Ongoing Policy, Planning, and Implementation

The KWA made the following policy recommendations to the Governor and Legislature:

- The policy of planned depletion of the Ogallala Aquifer is no longer in the best interest of the State;
- Increase funding for the SWPF;
- Encourage consideration of regionalization for public water infrastructure; and
- Appropriate money for leveraging matching funds.

Public Comments

The Task Force received comments from an individual regarding the challenges faced by rural communities in Kansas in attempting to apply for grant funds at the State level.

State Water Plan Fund Budget Development Process and HB 2302 Infrastructure Grant Programs

The Manager of Policy and Governmental Affairs, KWO, detailed the current SWPF budget process, which includes local and agency input, KWA's process, the state budget process and Governor's budget recommendations, and finally, the legislative budget process. The SWPF is used to implement the SWP.

The HB 2302 Infrastructure Grant Programs were described:

- Water Technical Assistance Fund:
    - Eligible applicants include municipalities and special districts related to water;
    - Eligible projects include planning, engineering, managing, and other technical assistance necessary for the development of water infrastructure projects, and processing grant and loan applications for water infrastructure projects; and
    - No single grant may exceed $1.0 million.
- Water Projects Grant Fund:
    - Eligible applicants include municipalities and special districts related to water;
    - Eligible projects include construction, repair, maintenance, or replacement of water-related infrastructure; matching money for grants or loans for water-related infrastructure; and paying any outstanding loan balance for Public Water Supply Loan Fund loans or Kansas Pollution Control Revolving Fund loans; and
    - No single grant may exceed $8.0 million.

The Manager detailed the application materials and evaluation criteria and provided maps showing the locations in the state of all applicants and the locations of the applicants who received grant awards in FY 2024 and FY 2025.

Reporting Requirements for Nitrates in Nebraska Public Water Systems

The Executive Director of the Nebraska Association of Resources Districts stated that Nebraska is divided into 23 natural resource districts (districts). The districts were created in 1972 by the Nebraska Legislature, combining several political subdivisions and considering river boundaries, water quality and quantity, and additional factors. The districts have taxing authority, and each district's officers are elected by the people in the district.

Each district is required to have a management plan for water quality, and each district is also required to have an extensive groundwater monitoring program. The management plan for nitrates is based on "Triggers in Phases," which means the plan applies only in places where problems exist—not the entire district.

There are four phases that can be triggered:

- Phase 1—nitrates below 5 parts per million (ppm): education programs only;
- Phase 2—nitrates between 5 ppm and 10 ppm: mandatory soil testing, nitrogen certification, water testing, annual crop reporting, ban fall/winter fertilizer, and annual reports provided back to producers;
- Phase 3—nitrates exceeding 10 ppm: all requirements of Phase 2 plus management plans on fertilizer application and accounting for all nitrogen sources for the crop; irrigation water with high nitrates can provide most of the nitrogen supply, which saves farmers money and helps remediate the problem; and
- Phase 4—nitrate levels still increasing: all Phase 2 and 3 regulations plus a ban on all fertilizer applications. [*Note:* This has not yet happened in Nebraska.]

Nebraska has also launched two new initiatives: Producer Connect and Producer Incentives.

Producer Connect

Producer Connect is a joint project with the districts and federal, state, and local partners, including the Nebraska Cooperative Council and Nebraska Corn Board. It includes a free mobile app with two-way communication between the districts and producers. This allows producers to work directly with districts on ways to improve nitrogen use efficiency and profitability.

The app allows producers to submit required reports and track fertilizer use, yields, and profitability. Likewise, data can be provided in reports to producers on how they compare with their peers in an area. In addition, the app can be used for water quality management to track allocations, and producers can get daily information on water use.

Use reports for producers are available at all times, rather than through an annual report.

Producer Incentives

Nebraska's Nitrogen Reduction Act, passed in 2024, provides a financial incentive of up to $15 per acre to reduce nitrogen application by 15.0 percent or 40 pounds per acre. Baseline data is required, but producers can use existing Phase 2 or 3 reports. Producers apply with their district, and the local district ranking system allocated the limited funding, as $1.0 million is available statewide per year. The second year of applications opened in November 2025 for the 2026 growing season.

Water Rights and Land Values

The President of Centera Bank, which has locations in Dodge City, Greensburg, Minneola, Satanta, and Sublette, discussed the experience of being an agricultural bank, with the majority of its business directly tied to farming and ranching.

The bank has witnessed the declining water table in the region for decades; however, it has become a more serious concern in the past 10–15 years. The bank has also witnessed the transition from irrigated to dryland farming with a significant portion of the farmland in the area, typically when an irrigation well is no longer functioning.

The declining water table has had and will continue to have a significant impact on land values. Irrigated farmland with a strong well or wells will bring a premium price; irrigated farmland with a marginal well that is gradually becoming weaker will have a price closer to dryland value.

November 19, 2025, Meeting

The Task Force met at the Manhattan Public Library in Manhattan for its sixth and last meeting during the 2025 Interim.

Kansas Livestock Water Efficiency Program Grants

The Vice President of Legal and Government Affairs for the Kansas Livestock Association reviewed the stockwater fees that are paid by the livestock industry that are deposited into the SWPF. It was pointed out that until HB 2302 was passed, historically, the stockwater fees were not used for stockwater conservation projects. Through the Division of Conservation, KDA, and its Kansas Livestock Water Efficiency Program, grant funds (Livestock Grants) were awarded in FY 2025 to 13 projects that included upgraded water monitoring systems, more efficient cattle waterers, water recycling systems, and water storage tanks.

One of the grant recipients was Ford County Feeders, which used its cost-share grant to replace old cattle waterers and pipes, and also replaced water tanks, many of which were believed to be original to the feedyard and designed by the original feedyard owner. In comparing 2024 water use with 2025 water use, gallons per head per day dropped by four gallons across the entire feedyard.

The estimated cost of the project was $150,000, of which a cost-share Livestock Grant covered $45,000. The feedyard estimated it spent an additional $20,000 to $30,000 on extra costs not included in the grant application. Overall the Ford County Feeders believe this was a success.

The Vice President of the Cattle Division, Irsik & Doll Feed Services, Inc., described work done with moneys awarded in two Livestock Grants.

The first grant was used to install Ethos Connected sensors that were installed in the water

wells and used to monitor the aquifer level continuously. This real-time visibility allows for current management of water resources and to prepare during high-demand irrigation season.

Irsik & Doll will use the second grant for a water recycling and reclamation system to capture overflow from the cattle drinking troughs, plus from from the boilers and from the lagoon. Reclaiming this wastewater will allow for its recycling and use for watering cattle rather than applying nutrient-dense water to crops.

The company plans to apply for additional grant funding for capturing and recycling process water from some of the thermal heat pumps. This water will added back into the cattle drinking water system.

Texas Water Planning Process

The Director of Water Supply Planning,Texas Water Development Board, stated there was a lack of state water plan implementation until after a severe drought occurred in the mid-1990s, which prompted legislation enacted in 1997. The legislation provided for orderly development, management, and conservation of water resources, and preparation for and response to drought conditions.

Water planning in Texas is bottom-up, starting with regional water planning group (Group) voting memberships that take input from the public, technical consultants, water user groups, Group sponsors and non-voting members, and the Texas Water Development Board (Board, in this section).

The water planning cycle is continuous:

- Groups select sponsors and consultants, and sponsors apply for funds;
- Groups via consultants develop regional water plans;
- Draft regional water plans are published for agency and public review;
- Groups adopt and submit plans to the Board;
- The Board approves the regional water plans; and
- The Board develops the Texas Water Plan (TWP).

The water use categories in Texas are irrigation, livestock, manufacturing, mining, municipal, and steam electric.

The process of developing the TWP asks various questions and what actions need to be taken in response to the questions:

- How many Texans will there be? Population projections;
- How much water will be required? Water demand projections;
- How much water is there? Quantify water availability and existing supplies: surface water, groundwater, and reuse;
- Is there enough water? Based on existing supplies and demand, identify surpluses and needs, including potential shortages;
- What to do to get more water? Evaluate and recommend water management strategies and projects; and
- How much will it cost? Capital costs of projects.

The TWP is submitted to the Governor, Legislature, and the public, with long-term projections of water supplies, demands, and needs; project costs and funding needs; and policy recommendations.

Texas – Financial Programs

The Outreach Specialist, and the Assistant Director, Program Administration and Reporting, Texas Water Development Board, discussed the State Water Implementation Fund for Texas (SWIFT) program, which was created through a 2013 constitutional amendment that authorized a

one-time $2.0 billion upfront transfer from the State's Rainy Day Fund.

In 2013, the Texas Legislature passed legislation to provide financial assistance to ensure adequate future water supplies for the state. The State Water Implementation Revenue Fund for Texas (SWIRFT) issues revenue bonds for the SWIFT program for TWP projects that are subsidized and provide deferred payment obligations, not grants.

The SWIFT program policy goals are to use the original $2.0 billion to leverage $27.0 billion over 50 years; maintain the highest credit rating; and incentivize water planning, investment infrastructure, and regionalization. The benefits include local participants leveraging state credit worthiness, local cooperation, and significant savings in interest costs.

Eligible applicants for funding are political subdivisions (municipalities, counties, river authorities, special law districts, water improvement districts, water control and improvement districts, irrigation districts, and groundwater conservation districts) and nonprofit water supply corporations.

Eligible projects include recommended water management strategy projects with an associated capital cost in the most recently adopted TWP at the time abridged applications are due, including, but not limited to, conservation and reuse, desalinating groundwater and seawater, building new pipelines, developing reservoirs and well fields, and purchasing water rights.

Starting in 2025, SWIFT program general obligation bonds are also issued through the Texas Water Development Fund. The Fund may fund projects in the TWP and is loan-based. Approved projects are for water supply, including reservoirs and well fields, wastewater, conservation, water quality enhancement, and flood control. Eligible applicants include cities, counties, river authorities, districts, and nonprofit water supply corporations.

California Water Planning Process

The Deputy Director of Statewide Water Resources Planning and Enterprise Project Management and the Supervising Engineer, California Department of Water Resources, stated that the California Water Plan (CaWP) does not authorize action or appropriate funding, but the timing and content of the CaWP are specified in the California Water Code.

The CaWP is the State's only platform for comprehensive, data-informed, collaborative, and water planning policy conversations. It is the State's master plan that guides the orderly and coordinated control, protection, conservation, development, management, and efficient utilization of the water resources of the state. The CaWP influences water policy on multiple fronts:

- Shapes and informs conversations in water management and policy circles;
- Plans alignment with the Division of Water Resources and among other state agencies;
- Raises awareness and provides recommendations;
- Informs consent from diverse stakeholders on the toughest of California's water dilemmas; and
- Establishes an idea lab to explore innovative water planning and policy.

The CaWP has evolved over the years to meet changing needs and opportunities. Since 2020, the focus has turned to addressing climate crisis and social change through integrated water management, watershed resilience and sustainability, and climate adaption and racial justice.

The California State Legislature passed SB 72, which the Governor signed into law in October 2025. The bill is a modernized CaWP that:

- Establishes the first statewide water supply target;
- Moves the CaWP from advisory to an actionable tool;

- Provides clear benchmarks for state, regional, and local agencies;

- Ensures local projects advance statewide priorities;

- Strengthens collaboration by bringing state, federal, regional, and local efforts under a common framework;

- Provides accountability by measurable progress toward resilience and water security; and

- Enables the Legislature, Governor's Office, water agencies, disadvantaged communities, and Indian Tribes to coordinate and work from a shared playbook.

Water Availability

Approximately 60.0 percent, or 115 million acre-feet, of the water that falls on California evaporates or is used by non-agricultural vegetation. Another 20 million acre-feet flows in protected rivers, mostly in the north coast region. The remainder goes toward the state's agricultural, urban, and other environmental needs.

Climate Change Impact

The CaWP states that climate change impacts are affecting all water sectors across the state, including forest and wildlife management, hydropower, ecosystems, groundwater, water supply, flood management, water quality, and recreation. The issues involved include:

- Increasing extreme precipitation;
- Changing hydrological variability;
- Shifting streamflow timing;
- Increasing drought severity;
- Increasing water temperature;
- Increasing evaporative demand;
- Increasing average and extreme air temperatures;
- Reducing amount of available snowpack;
- Increasing wildfires;
- Increasing extreme heat;
- Increasing inland flooding;
- Changing groundwater recharge;
- Increasing coastal flooding; and
- Rising sea levels.

Watershed Resilience and State Initiatives

The effort to focus on watershed resilience must complement state initiatives. The roadmap to resilience includes the following objectives:

- Support watershed resilience planning and implementation;

- Improve the resiliency of "backbone" state-, federal-, and regional-built water infrastructure;

- Improve the resiliency of natural "backbone" infrastructure;

- Advance equitable outcomes in water management;

- Support and learn from Tribal water and resource management practices;

- Support and increase flexibility of regulatory systems; and

- Provide stable funding for implementing actions toward water resilience.

The state entities that will work toward water resilience are the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation, Department of Conservation, Department of Water Resources, State Water Resources Control Board, California Natural Resources Agency, and Department of Fish and Wildlife.

The other entities that will work with the state entities include:

- Groundwater sustainability agencies;
- Regional management groups;
- Forest and fire groups;
- Vulnerable communities;
- Native American tribes;
- Water supply agencies;
- Environmental groups;
- Water quality collaboratives;

- Land use managers; and
- Flood managers.

California Water Funding

California State Water Board

The Deputy Director of the Division of Financial Assistance, California State Water Board (Water Board), provided information on the Water Board's mission to preserve, enhance, and restore the quality of California's water resources and drinking water for the protection of the environment, public health, and all beneficial uses, and to ensure proper resource allocation and efficient use for present and future generations.

Funding for Drinking Water

Funding is available for planning and construction projects to implement drinking water infrastructure projects needed to achieve or maintain compliance with Safe Drinking Water Act requirements. Eligible recipients include:

- Public water systems, including community and non-transient non-community systems;
- State small water systems;
- Nonprofit organizations; and
- Tribal organizations.

State funding sources include the Safe Affordable Drinking Water Fund (2025: up to $130.0 million); Cleanup and Abatement Account Urgent Drinking Water Needs Projects and Recipients (annual amount: on average, $370,000); and State General Fund (currently appropriated, $151.0 million; previously appropriated, $452.0 million).

California voters can put propositions on the ballot. Three propositions for drinking water initiatives have passed:

- 2014 Proposition 1—$241.8 million appropriated, $25.4 million remaining;
- 2018 Proposition 68—$203.5 million appropriated, $19.9 million remaining; and
- 2024 Proposition 4—$101.0 million appropriated.

Federal funding sources include the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (2025-26 amounts: grants and principal forgiveness—$832.6 million; loan proposed commitments—$370.0 million); and Emerging Contaminants in Small Disadvantaged Communities (2025-26 amount: $196.0 million).

Funding for Clean Water

Funding is available for planning and construction projects to restore and maintain compliance with water discharge requirements and National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permits. Eligible recipients include:

- Public agencies;
- Tribal organizations; and
- Federal Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations.

State funding sources include $372.0 million for small-community wastewater projects and $1.3 billion for the Clean Water State Supply Revolving Fund (CWSRF) projects, including water recycling and stormwater projects, and the State General Fund (currently appropriated is $62.7 million for wastewater and $21.3 million for water recycling; previously appropriated amounts were $495.0 million for wastewater and $88.0 million for water recycling). State funding sources also include the general obligation bonds passed by the statewide propositions previously mentioned.

Federal funding sources include the CWSRF for grant and principal forgiveness including small-community grants ($307.1 million; annual loan capacity is $600.0 million).

Funding for Stormwater

State funding is available for stormwater projects through general obligation bonds through 2014 Proposition 1 ($200.0 million) and 2024 Proposition 4 ($110.0 million).

Federal funding is available through the CWSRF, for loans and principal forgiveness, and the Sewer Overflow and Stormwater Reuse Municipal Grants Program ($4.5 million annually).

Funding for Groundwater

State funding sources consist of general obligation bonds for grants (2014 Proposition 1—$670.0 million; 2018 Proposition 68—$74.0 million); and $19.8 million from the State General Fund for groundwater site cleanup.

Funding for United States–Mexico Border Water Quality Projects

State funding is available for projects that address water quality problems arising from the California-Mexico cross-border rivers. The Budget Act of 2021 and 2022 appropriated $35.0 million for 6 projects (1 in Mexico, 5 in California); and 2024 Proposition 4 appropriated funding of $50.0 million.

Funding for Technical Assistance

State funding is available for eligible projects for drinking water and wastewater systems. For drinking water projects, $142.6 million State General Fund has been appropriated. For wastewater projects, $6.3 million State General Fund has been appropriated. General obligation bonds from 2024 Proposition 4 are available for drinking water ($9.0 million) and wastewater projects ($9.0 million).

Colorado Water Planning Process

The Section Chief, Water Supply Planning, Colorado Water Conservation Board (Board, in this section), Colorado Department of Natural Resources (DNR), explained the structure of the Board, which has 5 non-voting members and 10 voting members.

The agency is headed by a director and deputy director, and agency staff are in seven sections: Administration and Operations; Finance; Grants; Interstate, Federal, and Water Information; Stream and Lake Protection; Watershed and Flood Protection; and Water Supply Planning.

Colorado Water Plan Cycle

The Colorado Water Plan (CoWP) cycle consists of three phases:

- Phase 1—analysis and technical update, using foundational data sets that describe the current and future water supplies and needs;
- Phase 2—basin plan update, using local planning conducted by basin roundtables that provide grassroots input to the CoWP; and
- Phase 3—a comprehensive CoWP update, updating the visions and actions in the CoWP.

The CoWP planning process uses a scenario planning approach, using scenario drivers that include social and environmental values, population and economic growth, urban land use, availability of water efficiency technologies, climate change and water supply availability, level of regulatory oversight and constraint, agricultural economics and water demand, energy economics and water demand, and municipal and industrial water demands.

Water Values

Colorado recognizes four water values:

- A productive economy that supports vibrant and sustainable cities, agriculture, recreation, and tourism;
- An efficient and effective water infrastructure system;
- A strong environment with healthy watersheds, rivers, streams, and wildlife; and
- An informed public with creative, forward-thinking solutions, who are resilient to changing conditions and come together to form strong, equitable communities that can adapt and thrive.

Values and Actions

Colorado recognizes four interconnected action areas:

- Vibrant communities—counties, municipalities, utilities, cities, towns, businesses, large industries, and large and small urban and rural communities;

- Robust agriculture—established crops and farms, local food, orchards, ranching, ditch companies, acequias (historic, community-managed irrigation ditches), urban agriculture, livestock, and dairy;

- Thriving watersheds—environment and recreation, river health, watershed health, forest health, wildfire mitigation, and wildlife and aquatic species protection; and

- Resilient planning—climate adaption; planning for climate extremes; embracing equity, diversity, and inclusivity; education, outreach, and engagement; and supportive government.

Financing

Board funding includes the following:

- Federal mineral lease revenue:
    - Construction Fund Revolving Loan Program:
        - Board programs, grants, and operations;
- Severance tax – 25.0 percent:
    - Severance Tax Perpetual Base Fund Revolving Loan Program:
        - Grant programs and roundtable funding;
- DNR-allocated severance tax – approximately 4.0 percent:
    - Severance Tax Operational Fund:
        - Special studies, projects, and programs; and
- Sports betting revenues:
    - Water Plan Implementation Cash Fund:
        - Water Plan Grant Program.

A statewide gap analysis shows increasing population and potentially hotter and drier future climate conditions will increase the risk of gaps between needed and available water and create a need for additional supply.

Progress and Milestones

Since 2017, more than $127.0 million has been awarded in water plan grants, with 531 projects funded in 57 of 64 Colorado counties.

Approximately 1,800 water projects have been identified through basin implementation planning. A total of 43 agency actions are currently underway and partially completed

Colorado has invested $2.1 million in the Colorado Water Loss Initiative. The State has trained and retrained personnel from more than 90 water utilities with 50 utilities identifying more than 20,000 acre-feet in preventable losses so far. In addition, there has been a 5.0 percent reduction in per capita water use since 2015.

Approximately $20.7 trillion in project costs are currently identified in the eight river basin implementation plans. Continuing progress to identify and fund projects is important.

Lessons from the Past 20 Years

The past 20 years of lessons from water basin roundtables have found:

- Challenges strengthen coalitions;
- Trust is crucial;
- Funding follows form; and
- Responsibility breeds vision.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Task Force Discussion and Recommendations

At the end of the November 19, 2025, meeting, Task Force members acknowledged that many identified risks for water quality and water quantity for both surface water and groundwater need to be addressed to ensure the future water supply in Kansas.

However, the focus should not be on immediate risks. Currently, there is no agreement on the structure, process, and funding for providing for the future water supply in Kansas. These topics are multi-year and multi-generational issues.

The Task Force made numerous observations on several topics:

Funding and Accountability

- Requests for funding and technical assistance far exceed available funding, especially for small municipal projects, and funding for these grants should be prioritized;

- Accountability, including tracking dollars and ensuring the funded projects have been completed, must be included with any future funding, to increase the likelihood of continued funding and support for water projects; and

- Legislation and an appropriation ("seed money") should be considered that would establish low-interest loans for water projects that would incentivize communities to repay the funds to the State.

Water Project Impact

- Decision-makers must understand the impact of funding for water projects on the State's economy; and

- Industry associations are having water-related discussions, especially about the water supply in Kansas as it relates to business and economic growth.

Federal Reservoirs

- The State cannot take any actions on the federal reservoirs with state-owned water supply storage without the involvement of the USACE; however, if the State pays off the debt at the federal reservoirs early, the State will save on interest and will not have to pay operation and maintenance costs until the purchased storage in the reservoirs is called into service.

Water Planning Process

- Discussion is needed on whether the statutes should prescribe the frequency of developing a state water plan and include a process for checking the progress of projects and initiatives included in the SWP; and

- Discussion is needed on how to make the water planning process more encompassing from initial discussion through law-making: among local people who know what projects and actions are needed; to the KWA, which provides advisory recommendations to the state agencies; and to the Legislature, which passes legislation for funding and parameters for grant and loan programs and water policy.

Local Involvement

- Local input is necessary to help identify and develop projects; however, local governments have not been asked if they would like to be part of the solution;

- What information local governments receive and can access that helps them assess the water issues they have and their options to address those issues should be determined and evaluated;

- Regional involvement could become a component with regard to applying for a grant or loan-funded project that would benefit a defined region, rather than only addressing projects on a community-by-community basis; and

- Regional advisory committees under the KWA are uniquely positioned to identify local projects; however, their recommendations have been more long-term rather than project-specific.

Coordination Between Stakeholders and State

- There is consensus that there is not enough coordination between all levels of government and stakeholders. The Task Force should engage with all interested parties to consider how coordination for projects, funding, oversight, and accountability should occur.

Groundwater Management Districts

- GMDs have the structure, regulatory authority, and access to the local population to address water issues and they can encourage buy-in from their members, but the GMDs lack guidance from the State; and

- With more guidance from the State, the GMDs are confident they could further identify issues and request the needed resources to address these issues.

Erosion and Sedimentation Control

- Soil and vegetation management for purposes of erosion control that hinders sedimentation loss in Kansas streams is important; best management practices should be encouraged.

Advocacy

- Changes to water policy and funding for water projects will require advocacy from Task Force members, especially legislators, with regard to water-related appropriations and project bills before the Legislature during the 2026 Session; and

- It was suggested that a delegation from the Task Force visit with the Kansas Congressional delegation in Washington, D.C.

Lessons Learned From Other States

- The amount of funding available must be sufficient to address priorities (Texas, Colorado) and have a sustainable source (Texas);

- Project selection and development is needed at the local level; loan and repayment programs work through local programs (Texas);

- Plans built on supply and demand models work when based on basins and local input (Texas);

- Water plans should focus on resilience (California and Colorado);

- Nitrates can be successfully managed by basin (Nebraska); and

- Buy-in from commerce and industry is needed to address water needs that are significant and important to economic development (Texas).