



Since 1894

To: Senate Ways & Means Committee  
Sen. Carolyn McGinn, Chairperson

From: Mike Beam, Sr. Vice President  
Kansas Livestock Association

Re: **Legislation creating a "Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program" in Kansas.**

Date: February 21, 2012

*The Kansas Livestock Association (KLA), formed in 1894, is a trade association representing over 5,300 members on legislative and regulatory issues. KLA members are involved in many aspects of the livestock industry... including seed stock, cow-calf and stocker cattle production, cattle feeding, grazing land management and diversified farming operations.*

The Kansas Livestock Association (KLA) was an original proponent of legislation (SB 123) in 2007 to establish a Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) in Kansas. We are supporting this bill today, so the program has statutory approval in lieu of authorization by budget provisos.

KLA remains supportive of the use of a CREP to address a critical issue facing many water right holders and business interests who benefit from a long-term supply of ground water. Our primary interest is for the purpose noted at the beginning of subsection (b) of Section 1. We view this program as beneficial in reducing the withdrawal demands on the high plains aquifer.

More specifically, a targeted CREP can provide significant resources for water right holders facing a reduction and/or constraint of their water use by state regulatory actions in the future.

When we look at the future of irrigation in the high plains, we cannot ignore or dismiss the challenges in the High Plains aquifer. Many areas are over appropriated and ground water is being pumped at rate faster than it is recharged.

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In some instances, irrigators, water right holders, and Groundwater Management Districts are developing and advancing initiatives to reduce consumptive use in hopes of avoiding the designation of an Intensive Groundwater Use Control Area.

One tool to address the over appropriated issue is the purchase of water rights, on a voluntary and targeted basis. The Kansas legislature has considered and approved water right purchase tools [Water Transition Assistance Program (WTAP) in 2006] previously. KLA supports WTAP, but we believe the state is unlikely to appropriate the level of funds for this program that is available from leveraging limited state resources with the USDA program (CREP).

KLA appreciates the Committee Chair's past support of CREP and encourages this Committee to advance the bill before you today.

Thank you!