

Testimony before the Senate Ag & Natural Resources Committee
In Support of SB 194 – GMD Assessments
Sean Miller on behalf of Western Kansas GMD #1 and NW Kansas GMD #4
Wednesday, January 31, 2018

Chairman Kerschen and members of the committee, my name is Sean Miller and I thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of Western Kansas GMD #1 and Northwest Kansas GMD #4 as a proponent on SB 194.

After the hearing on SB 194 last Spring stakeholders, notably the City of Wichita and Equus Beds GMD#2, worked through the summer to achieve a reasonable compromise on this issue. The original language of this bill contained three moving parts, increasing assessment caps for water used in-district, increased caps for water transported for use out-of-district, and an increase in the per acre assessment on land within the district. The amended language being provided to the committee today eliminates the differential between in-district and out-of-district use, increases the assessment cap on all water from \$1 to \$2 per acre foot, and makes no changes to the current statutory land assessment cap of \$0.05 per acre.

It is important to note that each groundwater management district in the state is faced with unique challenges and opportunities in the long term management of their water resources. Because of their varying geographic size, water quantity, water quality, depth to water, surface water interaction, and a myriad of other factors each GMD management plan allows for locally elected boards to develop water management plans to protect and extend this valuable resource in ways best suited to their specific area.

The Kansas Water Vision has re-energized the water community in many ways, encouraging them to look critically at technology and management plans that can allow for continued economic development while helping to preserve and protect our groundwater supplies. Improved crop and irrigation technologies are allowing Kansas farmers to produce more crops with less water but the implementation and ongoing research on these technologies can be costly. Western Kansas GMD #1 has implemented a cost share program (see attached “GMD1 Water Conservation Fund” signup form) to assist district members that seek to adopt water efficiency measures including installation of soil moisture probes, retrofitting their irrigation equipment to mobile drip irrigation, bubblers, or sub-surface drip irrigation measures, and other emerging technologies. They also have the first county-wide water conservation area (WCA) in Wichita County to help address depleting water conditions across a larger segment of the community. Northwest Kansas GMD #4 currently has the only active local enhanced management area (LEMA), commonly referred to as “Sheridan-6” (SD-6). With the demonstrated success of this local program, GMD#4 is currently pursuing a district-wide LEMA. While none of the western Kansas GMDs are at the assessment cap today it is possible increases will be required to help take full advantage of innovative technology through expansion of cost-share programs, or new staff required to implement and monitor WCA and LEMA programs. Keep in mind these assessment levels are set annually at meetings open to the public.

Once again, I thank the committee for the opportunity to provide written testimony and we ask that you support SB 194.

