

Aug 12 2019

Big Bend GMD #5



**Kansas Grain and Feed Association
Kansas Agribusiness Retailers Association
National Grain and Feed Association**

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August 12, 2019

Kansas Department of Agriculture
1320 Research Park Drive
Manhattan, Kansas 66502

RE: *Quivira National Wildlife Refuge Remedy Development*

Dear Secretary Beam and Chief Engineer Barfield:

The Kansas Grain and Feed Association (KGFA), Kansas Agribusiness Retailers Association (KARA), and our national organization, the National Grain and Feed Association (NGFA), on behalf of our members, submit this statement in response to the Kansas Department of Agriculture's proposed remedy development for the water right of the Quivira National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge).

Since 1896, KGFA has served to advance and protect the grain receiving, storage, processing and shipping industry in Kansas. KGFA's membership includes over 950 Kansas business locations and represents 99% of the commercially licensed grain storage capacity in the state. KARA is the state trade association of the Kansas agribusiness industry. KARA's membership includes over 700 members across Kansas. KARA is dedicated to promoting and protecting the professional development and business viability of the plant nutrient and crop protection industry.

NGFA, established in 1896, comprises more than 1,050-member companies that operate more than 7,000 facilities and handle more than 70 percent of the U.S. grain and oilseed crop. NGFA's membership encompasses all sectors of the industry, including country, terminal and export grain elevators; commercial feed and feed ingredient manufacturers; biofuels producers; cash grain and feed merchants; end-users of grain and grain products, including processors, flour millers, and livestock and poultry integrators; commodity futures brokers and commission merchants; and allied industries. The NGFA also has strategic alliances with North American Export Grain Association and the Pet Food Institute. In addition, affiliated with the NGFA are 33 state and regional agribusiness associations, including the Kansas Grain and Feed Association.

We commend the Kansas Department of Agriculture for actively working with basin stakeholders to arrive at a solution to provide the Refuge with access to sufficient quantities of water and to ensure irrigation in the basin can continue to generate economic activity essential to not only the local economy, but also to the national economy and U.S. agriculture's ability to provide an abundant, affordable and sustainable human and animal food supply. We also commend the Big Bend Groundwater Management District No. 5 (GMD5) for the foresight in the 1990s to impose a limit on

water right appropriations to achieve a balance between economic advancement and groundwater conservation stewardship.

We fully support the prudent decision to ensure that the water needs of the Refuge are met through the development of a well-field to augment flows of the intermittent Rattlesnake Creek. It is very fortunate, and perhaps providential, to have surplus groundwater surrounding the Refuge that can be accessed during the periods when the Rattlesnake Creek does not provide the Refuge with an adequate quantity of water. To ensure the Refuge's impairment is not prolonged, we urge rapid development of the well-field.

Given that a well-field is able to remedy the Refuge's water-right impairment, we believe it is unnecessary and would be counterproductive to limit water-right holders' use of available water supplies. Doing so would inflict unnecessary economic damage on farmers, rural businesses and the communities that depend on the economic activity generated by production agriculture.

Further, we do not believe reductions in water use are necessary, as data indicate groundwater usage and recharge in GMD5 already are in balance. The maps in the attached Appendix display very high-water levels in GMD5 – levels that mostly increased between 2018 and 2019. We also emphasize the long-term sustainability of the current groundwater usage in GMD5. Most of GMD5 has a balance of water usage and recharge that is projected to last more than 250 years, which is the longest time in the legend of the table produced through the Kansas Geological Survey.

In conclusion, we commend the Kansas Department of Agriculture and GMD5 for finding a solution through augmentation to supply the intermittent Rattlesnake Creek with water to adequately address the Refuge's impairment. We are thankful a resolution to supply the Refuge with well-field water is available and that direct water administration is unnecessary. We respectfully believe a successful outcome can be achieved for the Refuge without harming the region's farmers and agribusinesses, or depriving their communities of the economic lifeblood generated by sustainable agricultural production.

For these reasons, we urge the Kansas Department of Agriculture to exercise caution in its decision to remedy the impairment. A thoughtful decision would be stair-stepped, and performance based. We believe the first and hopefully only step should be the implementation of the well-field to supplement the intermittent streamflow of the Rattlesnake Creek. If after implementation of the well-field it is determined that augmentation does not sufficiently remedy the Refuge's impairment, direct water administration could be imposed at a later agreed upon date.

Please contact Ron Seeber if you have any questions or if we can assist further.

Sincerely,



Ronald C. Seeber
President and Chief Executive Officer
Kansas Grain and Feed Association
Kansas Agribusiness Retailers Association



Randall C. Gordon
President and Chief Executive Officer
National Grain and Feed Association

Appendix



