

TLA Enterprises Inc.  
Travis/Lisa Allen, Owners  
Stafford, Ks  
September 17, 2023

Dear Chief Engineer Lewis:

I will not rehash the grievances that other water right holders have about the legitimacy of Quivira's water rights, which on the surface seem unfair. You know more about the legality of it than I do. What I do know, however, is my anecdotal story of a 38-year old first-generation irrigated farmer who chose to return home after college to start a farming business rather than follow my siblings, one a doctor and the other an engineer, to the cities as so many young people from this area have done. While my wife worked at DWR's Stafford office for over a decade, I learned that the Quivira situation was complex, but I believed that a resolution would be possible through the contribution of all stakeholders and was relieved to see the augmentation plan promoted as a likely means to this resolution by all parties; so much so that we invested 7 figures into land that may only be worth 6 figures if your administrative order takes place. Again, this is not the complaining of an old man who built generational wealth by buying dryland and developing irrigation in the 60s, 70s, or 80s but rather the sad reality of anyone whose land was purchased since. We took that risk and will live with the consequences as all entrepreneurs must. However, I can't help but think it is rash to put young farmers out of business while the resolution is ongoing. Our town of Stafford has already lost over half its population in my Dad's lifetime. If irrigation is widely restricted, there may not be much left by the end of my career. Restricting a thousand irrigation wells with the hopes of putting 40 wells' worth of water in the stream for a man-made refuge that contributes little to the local economy and tax base seems illogical. I have voiced my displeasure with GMD 5 about how slowly the project is moving and was told that the progress is slow due largely to Federal red tape (NRCS grants, environmental impact studies, etc). So it seems we cannot augment quickly due to the Federal government, while the request for water came from the Federal government, and as a result farmers may risk losing their businesses to lienholders, which in some cases is.....the Federal government (FSA loans, beginning farmer loans, etc.). Obviously the frustration level is high for those of us caught in the middle.

I have listened to enough discussions in Lawrence, Topeka, and other population centers on this subject to see that most people think it is a ducks vs wealthy landowners situation. It is much bigger than that. Schools, businesses and residents are all likely to be negatively impacted. Rural Kansas communities are already in an existential fight for survival as they continue to lose their people to the cities. I understand that you are just doing your job and can't solely use an economic cost-benefit analysis to make your decision, but surely the timeframe of your implementation can be such that it doesn't have to crush the next generation's farmers in these five counties while stakeholders are working towards a forthcoming solution.

Sincerely,

Travis Allen