

STATE POLICY ON CONSERVING GROUND WATER IN KANSAS

SUSAN STOVER, L.G.
MANAGER, HIGH PLAINS UNIT
KANSAS WATER OFFICE
TOPEKA, KS 66614
PHONE: 785-296-0876 FAX: 785-296-0878
SUSAN.STOVER@KWO.KS.GOV

The policy to conserve and extend the life of the Ogallala – High Plains aquifer was first adopted into the Kansas Water Plan in 2001. The Kansas Water Plan also has the objective to reduce the water level decline rate within the Ogallala and implement enhanced water management in targeted areas by 2010. Management of ground water outside the low-recharging Ogallala is to be guided by the Kansas Water Plan objective to achieve sustainable yield management of Kansas surface and ground water sources by 2015.

There are a number of efforts on-going to implement the guidance, particularly in the High Plains aquifer. One aspect is improving the knowledge about the aquifers. Hydrologic computer modeling of the High Plains and interconnected alluvial aquifers and streams helps define the water budget and project future conditions. Models are done or under development in Northwest Kansas GMD4, Southwest Kansas GMD3, Big Bend GMD5, and the North and South Fork of the Solomon River. Practical saturated thickness is also being defined in many areas of the High Plains aquifer. There are the on-going annual water level measurements, which indicate the decline trends. Complimenting that information are three index wells in the High Plains aquifer which provide hourly, year round data on aquifer levels. Under development is a Master Well Inventory to link all state databases for any individual fresh water well.

Voluntary, incentive based programs are available to help conserve ground water. These include the Upper Arkansas River Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), a federal-state program; the state funded Water Right Transition Assistance Program (WTAP); a USDA program to convert irrigated lands to dryland agriculture through Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP). In the new Farm Bill, EQIP also has an Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP), that can be used for water quantity or quality concerns, with the Ogallala cited as a priority area. Efforts are also underway, led by Kansas State University, to develop crop response yield curves that could be used by USDA Risk Management Agency, to allow them to offer crop insurance for limited irrigated fields.