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Connie Owen, Chair

Laura Kelly, Governor

June 4, 2020

Kansas Regional Advisory Committee
Dawn Buehler, Chairperson
978 E. 2100 Road
Eudora, KS 66025

Dear Ms. Beuhler,

Thank you for your message to the Kansas Water Authority. Effective and on-going communication between the Regional Advisory Committees and the Authority is essential for advancing the water-related projects our state needs, as reflected in the State Water Plan and Vision. Messages from the RACs help the Authority to guide and support the vital work of the RACs, including the work being accomplished by the Kansas River Regional Advisory Committee.

In your message, you emphasize the critical importance of sufficient funding for the protection of water quality and quantity. Specifically, you request the KWA clarify its commitment to ensuring the State Water Plan is fully funded and that the KWA provide guidance to RACS regarding KWA recommendations for appropriate funding mechanisms for future water projects. You also request clarification from the KWA on whether the KWA continues to support the recommendations of the January 2017 report of the Blue Ribbon Task Force (BRTF) regarding funding mechanisms.

The KWA discussed your message during the May 20, 2020 conference call. At the outset, the KWA unequivocally reiterates its commitment to full restoration of the statutory demand transfers to the State Water Plan Fund (SWPF). The KWA has sought full funding of the SWPF (from both State General Fund and Economic Development Initiative Fund transfers) from the Legislature and has obtained incremental increases following significant underfunding from years past, culminating in the Legislature's intention this session to appropriate \$6.9 of the full \$8 million required by statute. Clearly, even with full funding of the SWPF, combined with fee revenues, far more funding is needed.

The KWA is committed to effectively seeking the additional funding necessary. However, we are now faced with additional challenges. As we all know, the State's revenue situation has changed dramatically due to the COVID-19 epidemic, the impacts of which will likely affect the availability of funding for water projects, either through the SWPF or otherwise.

Despite the current pandemic-related uncertainties, it is important to continue to implement our projects and plan for the future. The KWA commends the RACs for their work identifying needed projects and associated costs, which helped shape the Blue Ribbon Task Force's 2017 recommendations. This same type of information will be essential to justify on-going and future KWA funding requests. To that end, we encourage the RACs to review and identify, where possible, the levels of funding necessary to implement their goals and action plans. We do not wish to impose on the RACs the job of restarting the valuable work they contributed during the development of the Vision; that work will be considered, but budgetary constraints require us all to

prioritize and specify our requests. In addition, this work goes hand-in-hand with the input we are seeking for updating the Kansas Water Plan.

One of the Blue Ribbon Task Force report's recommendations was to dedicate one-tenth of one percent of the existing sales tax to funding Water Vision implementation. In light of the pandemic-induced revenue shortfall and related uncertainties, the KWA does not believe it prudent to seek adoption of this sales tax at this time.

The KWA will work with all appropriate partners to determine how to move forward in securing necessary funding, including consideration of alternative measures to meet funding needs.

In summary, we thank you, and all the RACs, for your past and on-going contributions; we will continue to seek full funding of the SWPF; we look forward to utilizing your input, and that of all the RACs, as to the funding needed for your goals and action plans; we will not seek a sales tax-based funding mechanism at this time; we are open to consideration of all alternative means to secure funding necessary to protect water quality and quantity including dedicated sales tax once the state's revenue situation has improved.

Again, thank you for reaching out. I look forward to continuing communication as we work together during these uncertain times and into the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Connie Owen". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Connie Owen
Chair