

Butler County Conservation District
2503 Enterprise, Suite B
El Dorado, Kansas 67042
316-320-3549
butlercountyconservationdistrictks.com

October 6, 2021

Kansas Water Office
Attn: Connie Owen, Director
Attn: Matt Unruh, Assistant Director
900 SW Jackson Street, Suite 404
Topeka KS 66611-1249

RE: Comments regarding the Kansas Water Plan update

Dear Ms. Owen and Mr. Unruh:

Butler County Conservation District is the primary local unit of government responsible for the conservation of soil, water and related natural resources within Butler County. We are a political subdivision of state government. We have no enforcement authority and landowners work with us on a voluntary basis. We work closely with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to provide technical, financial and cost share assistance to Butler County citizens. Butler County Commissioners provide us with the majority of funds for operating expenses to carry out our programs. We do receive matching funds from the Kansas Department of Agriculture/Division of Conservation (KDA-DOC) (State Aid to Conservation Districts); up to \$25,000 a year; however, due to budget issues at the state, we have not received the full amount for several years.

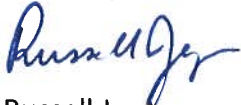
Through the KDA-DOC, we receive cost share funds which are provided to landowners to help them implement conservation practices that protect water quality, reduce soil erosion and improve soil health; these funds continue to be reduced each year, making it harder to provide incentives to landowners to get conservation on the ground.

At our last budget meeting with our County Commissioners, we explained that in 2020, for every dollar they provided us there was a \$7.16 economic return to Butler County as a direct result of Conservation District activities. We are able to stretch our funds because of our partnership with NRCS – they share their building, pay our utilities, allow us to use their computers, phone, copiers and other office equipment in exchange for us providing administrative assistance to carry out their programs which complement the programs we offer. This amount varies each year based on funds we receive for various cost share programs but consider the impact conservation districts have on our environment (and the economy) statewide!

Every conservation district in Kansas is locally led and citizen directed. Supervisors, who do not get paid, establish local priorities, set policy and administer programs in their counties. Their leadership is vital to the success we see at the local level. This system works, Butler County Conservation District just celebrated 75 years; some Districts in Kansas have been around longer than that! The State Aid to Conservation Districts helps us carry out our programs locally. We do not take that financial support lightly.

We urge you to consider the impact Conservation Districts have statewide in carrying out programs that help accomplish the goals set forth in the Kansas Water Plan. As partners, we can continue to provide water quality and natural resource education and information, cost share funding, assist public water suppliers with programs to reduce sedimentation and nutrients in our water supplies through programs such as the Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy (WRAPS) and so much more.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Russell Janzen".

Russell Janzen
Chairman

Justin Grunder, Vice Chair
Walter Burress – Secretary
Richard Scott – Treasurer
Linda Klaassen - Member

|

|

|

|