



October 15, 2021

Kansas Water Office
900 SW Jackson St., Suite 404
Topeka, KS 66611-1249

RE: Kansas Water Plan Public Comment

Dear Kansas Water Office,

The Kansas Alliance for Wetlands and Streams (KAWS) is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) founded in 1996. Our mission is to connect the waters, lands and people of Kansas: and as a non-profit, we depend on partnerships and collaboration with local, state and federal government agencies and other NGOs to serve the communities and people we work with to improve all waters in Kansas.

On behalf of KAWS, thank you for your efforts in updating and developing the draft 2021 Kansas Water Plan and for the opportunity to provide comments.

After reviewing the draft plan and concentrating on the **5 guiding principles**, we offer the following general comments for your consideration.

1) Conserve and Extend the High Plains Aquifer.

While the KWP acknowledges the potential promise of the positive impact playa lakes can have on aquifer recharge and the current study exploring the effects farming has on their ability to recharge the aquifer, playa lakes were not addressed in the Recommended Actions and Strategies. Properly functioning playa lakes offer many benefits including wildlife habitat, flooding and erosion control during high rain events to name a few. We encourage further exploration into their conservation and use as aquifer recharge tools.

KAWS has also been a key partner in landowner outreach efforts through the annual Playa Lakes Workshop and Tour which brings together landowners, state and federal agencies, and numerous NGOs to highlight the importance of playa lakes. We encourage the KWP to include additional outreach and educational opportunities targeting the benefits of playa lakes.

2) Secure, Protect and Restore Kansas Reservoirs

KAWS currently sponsors 6 WRAPS above 5 of the state's federal reservoirs; Toronto, Fall River, John Redmond, Clinton, and Milford. KAWS Watershed Coordinators regularly meet with private landowners, public property managers, state and federal agencies, and numerous other

stakeholders with a common goal to protect and restore the streams and reservoirs. In addition, KAWS is also partnering in the John Redmond watershed with Evergy, the KS Department of Wildlife and Parks, and other NGOs to place boots-on-the-ground for the direct installation of soil health practices to reduce sedimentation into John Redmond while also improving wildlife habitat.

Page 36, states that soil health initiatives have not remediated reservoir sedimentation issues. While this is true, they are a support tool and should be continued to be promoted as such. This effort is all hands on deck and all beneficial practices should be supported. We are encouraged and in agreement to see continued support for the KDHE water quality management.

Page 40, Data, Research, and Studies. Recently, Low-tech Process-based Restoration of Riverscapes has shown promise as a suite of new in-stream tools that could reduce downstream reservoir sedimentation and improve water quality. Also known as Beaver Dam Analogs (BDAs) and Post Assisted Log Structures (PALS), these new practices could provide additional relief for KS reservoirs and should be researched further.

- 3) Improve the State's Water Quality**
- 4) Reduce our Vulnerability to Extreme Events**
- 5) Increase Awareness of Kansas Water Resources**

Wetlands are a key component of improving water quality and reducing vulnerability to extreme events. In addition, wetlands in key urban areas serve as great water awareness sites such as the KAWS initiated Newton Wetland currently in progress. When correctly designed and paired with proper native vegetation they are beneficial in trapping excess nutrients and sediment. Wetlands in both upland and floodplain locations serve as sponges to soak up runoff while slowing flow. Floodplain wetlands help reduce downstream peaks by storing floodwaters and then slowly releasing as the river recedes.

KAWS would like to see the KWP place a greater emphasis on the value of wetlands. We see great wetland restoration opportunities in the eastern KS river floodplains that could help address water quality and flood events.

We appreciate the KWO and other partnering state agencies who have devoted so much time and effort to this KWP. Thank you for the opportunity to comment and for considering our general comments.

Sincerely,



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