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October 15, 2021

Kansas Water Office
900 SW Jackson Street Suite 404
Topeka, Kansas 66612

RE: Comments regarding the update of the Kansas Water Plan

To Whom It May Concern:

Playa Lake Joint Venture (PLJV) appreciates the increased focus the Kansas Water Office is placing on playa wetland conservation in Kansas and we offer the following comments on the Kansas Water Plan.

Playas are a primary source of groundwater recharge and can be an important part of a sustainable approach to securing water for communities in western Kansas. Throughout the region, aquifer levels are decreasing, and many communities that depend on the High Plains (Ogallala) Aquifer are experiencing declining availability of groundwater. In Kansas, there are a number of small towns that are at risk for continuing groundwater loss, which means their future water supply may be limited. Many of these towns are searching for solutions to continue providing abundant and clean water for residents including drilling more and deeper wells — just to provide the same amount of water. Efforts are ramping up to help communities prepare for a sustainable water future by cooperatively working together with partners to restore playas as part of a municipal water plan.

The Kansas Water Plan can help support these efforts by elevating the role playas have in water sustainability and by dedicating funding for scaling up conservation of playas regionwide.

We note that playas are described several times within the Water Plan document, we offer an alternative definition which includes a description of what a healthy playa is and how it functions. We feel it is useful when describing playas, we convey the vision we hope to achieve with playa conservation efforts. Our suggested definition is:

MANAGEMENT BOARD

Audubon ♦ Bird Conservancy of the Rockies ♦ Bureau of Land Management ♦ Colorado Parks & Wildlife ♦ ConocoPhillips ♦ Ducks Unlimited
Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks & Tourism ♦ National Wild Turkey Federation ♦ Nebraska Game & Parks Commission ♦ New Mexico Department of Game & Fish
Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation ♦ Pheasants Forever/Quail Forever ♦ Texas Parks & Wildlife Department ♦ The Nature Conservancy
USDA Farm Service Agency ♦ USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service ♦ US Fish & Wildlife Service, Regions 2 & 6 ♦ US Forest Service



“Playas are round shallow depressions at the lowest point in the watershed. They fill with water from rainstorms and run-off which then moves towards the Ogallala aquifer or evaporates. These ephemeral wetlands recharge the aquifer and support many kinds of wildlife. A healthy playa has an intact clay basin - without excavated pits or ditches - that is not buried by sediments entering the playa from runoff. Water from the surrounding watershed freely enters the basin without being diverted from the playa by roads, terraces or other impediments, and passes through a native vegetative buffer which serves to remove contaminants and sediments from the water”

Thank you for considering these comments and we look forward to working with the Kansas Water Office in the future.

Sincerely,

Matt Smith
Conservation Delivery Manager
Wilson, KS.