

## Earl's Corner



Earl Lewis

Overall, to be successful in making changes in water is to play the long game. I have come to realize that water is unique to other functions of state government. Water, as you all are keenly aware, is critically important to every citizen for our way of life and our very survival.

The issues we face, however, are for the most part not critical today but will be catastrophic in the future, if we don't work to address them now. Most issues that get attention in government are because there is a critical need or problem right now. Your efforts both in the statehouse and at home to educate the public and our decision makers is essential to our long-term success. From a legislative standpoint there is no more important thing you can do, so thank you for all of your efforts so far to increase the knowledge of our elected officials.

As we begin a new administration at the state level, I've been asked many times what changes we will see when it comes to water. Time will tell as many in key positions are still working to get acclimated to their new role. We can expect some new players, new opinions, and some new issues as things develop. However, I don't think the overall direction will change dramatically. Governor Kelly identified the value in our collective work as a key issue during her campaign saying "the 2015 Long Term Vision for the Future of the Water Supply in Kansas laid out a comprehensive and thoughtful approach to managing our state's most precious and vital natural resource." So while there will be changes, it is good to know the goals remains the same.

We have a ways to go, but I look forward to working with you.

## State Legislative Update

The Kansas Legislature is approaching two months of being in session. In late January, members of the Kansas Water Authority (KWA) and Regional Advisory Committees (RACs) met with more than 80 legislators to discuss priorities for the \$8 million State General Fund/Economic Development Initiatives Fund (SGF/EDIF) transfer. Dennis Schwartz testified before two committees, highlighting the 2019 Annual Report to the Governor and Legislature.

The Lt. Governor, Lynn Rogers, spoke to the KWA at the January meeting. He shared the new administration understands the importance and need for water stewardship. Not only is it important to continue moving forward with the Kansas Water Vision but ensuring key priorities are implemented. He also went on to say water is a vital component of the rural economic development initiative they are working on

as well.

Policy wise it has been a fairly light session for water. There are a few pieces of water-related legislation we are following but haven't provided testimony specifically. Follow our legislative page to see the bills we are following as well as any KWO testimony.

The appropriations process will continue, as the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Budget Committee passed out the State Water Plan Fund (SWPF) budget February 19, made a recommendation to the full House Appropriations Committee on February 25. The Senate Ways and Means Ag and Natural Resources Subcommittee will meet on March to discuss the SWPF. We continue to hear from numerous legislators that water is a key issue they want to address.

# 2018 Farm Bill Federal Update

The Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018, better known as the Farm Bill, passed the Senate on December 11, U.S. House on December 12, and was signed by the President on December 20, 2018. Like Farm Bills of the past, this legislation is valid for five years and allocates funding and establishes federal programs for many agricultural commodities, nutrition assistance and conservation expenditures on privately owned lands. The Conservation Title of the Farm Bill provides funding for substantial technical and financial assistance to implement practices which benefit water. Key components of the 2018 Farm Bill include the following:

- Conservation Title baseline funding maintained at approximately \$6 billion/year
- Require that at least 10% of conservation funding will be targeted for source water protection, equaling \$4 billion over the next 10 years
- Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP), and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) were reauthorized for the next five years
- Increases EQIP’s annual funding level to over \$2 billion annually and allows for certain new entities to be eligible for implementing water conservation or irrigation practices under a watershed-wide project.
- Raised CRP acreage cap from 24 million in FY19 to 27 million by FY23
- Provisions included which would allow for dryland farming to take place in conjunction with Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) projects which retire water rights if still to be written rules and regulations allow
- The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) was reauthorized at \$300 million/year
- PL-566 (watershed structures) guaranteed to received at least \$500 million over 10 years

# Water Technology Farm Data Report & 2019 Farms Announced

Since the beginning of the Water Technology Farm (Tech Farm) program in 2016, we have seen more and more interest from farmers who want to participate in the public/private partnerships and demonstrate new technologies and management.

Three Tech Farms were established in 2016, three more in 2017, and four in 2018. The first year tech farms have completed the initial agreement of their three-year commitment and all three producers would like to continue as a Tech Farm to help collect data over a longer, climatic period.

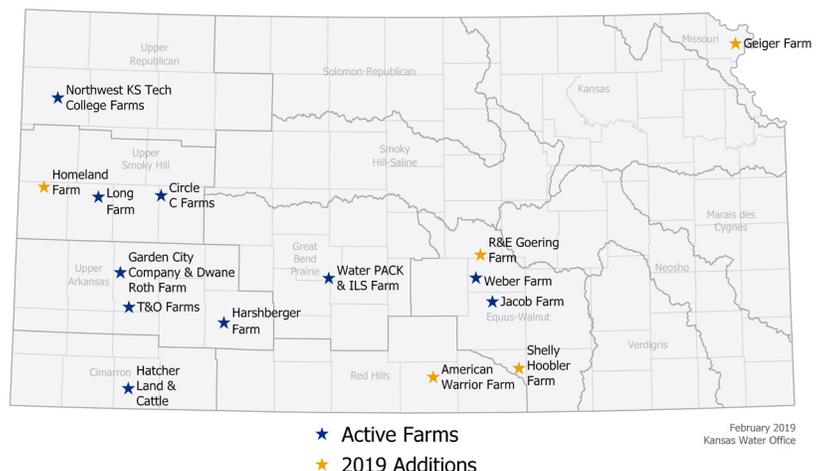
For the 2019 growing season, 11 different farms applied to be a Water Tech Farm. Due to funding and management we could only afford

to move forward with five new tech farms starting in 2019.

For the coming growing season there will be one new farm in western Kansas, three in central, and one in northeast Kansas. By establishing more Tech Farms, we hope to make the locations more accessible to other farmers across the state, allowing for more

education and testimonials of these technologies.

To learn more about these farms and the recently released 2018 Water Technology Farm Data Report visit: <https://www.kwo.ks.gov/projects/water-technology-farms>



# Regional Advisory Committee Membership Drive

For more than 30 years, citizen advisors have been a vital voice for water resource issues in Kansas. The Kansas Water Office is currently accepting applications from those who would like to participate as a member of one of the 14 Regional Advisory Committees (RACs) which are established by the Kansas Water Authority (KWA).

These committees play a key role in advising the KWA on implementation of each region's water supply priorities as part of the Vision for the Future of the Water Supply in Kansas as well as provide advice on the identification of water-related problems, issues and concerns. The committee selection process will ensure all of the water users and interests within the region are represented.

Interested persons can find this short application form at <https://www.kwo.ks.gov/about-the-kwo/regional-advisory-committees>. The deadline is May 31, 2019.



*Neosho RAC members Wes Flemming and Angela Anderson working locally to address and find solutions to water issues in their region*

Kansans can have a definite lasting impact on the future of water resources through RAC membership. For further information please visit [www.kwo.ks.gov](http://www.kwo.ks.gov) or call: (785) 296-3185 or 1-888-526-9283.

## Research on TAP

The Long-Term Vision for the Future of Water Supply in Kansas and regional advisory committee action plans identify several research areas necessary to implement Vision action items.

In an effort to promote state-wide collaboration and support of the research needs identified, a workgroup comprised of members throughout the state involved with ongoing research activities tied to water supply and water quality issues in Kansas was convened. They promote communication; support university research studies that, when possible, also benefit Kansas water issue knowledge; and provide opportunities for university researchers and participating agencies to collaborate in research efforts.

In conjunction with the Water

Research Coordination Group, the Kansas Water Office has created a Water Research Email Newsletter called Research on Tap. This will be a quarterly, email newsletter intended to keep water research entities aware of on-going water related research projects within Kansas.

To sign up to receive these emails directly, please fill out the form found here: <https://www.kwo.ks.gov/projects/water-research-coordination-workgroup>.

Have a research project that you would like added to the above list? Please email Katie Goff at [Katie.goff@kwo.ks.gov](mailto:Katie.goff@kwo.ks.gov).

Please include: first and last name, email address, phone number, organization affiliated with, funding source and year funded, along with the title and synopsis of your research project, and a website or link to additional information if available. Note: When submitting synopsis, please keep it to 125 words or less.

Research

On Tap



# THE WATERFRONT CALENDAR

For comments or questions on The WaterFront please contact Katie Patterson-Ingels at [Katie.Ingels@kwo.ks.gov](mailto:Katie.Ingels@kwo.ks.gov)

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## March

- 7 - Neosho Regional Advisory Committee Meeting, Pittsburg, KS
- 13 - Great Bend Prairie Regional Advisory Committee Meeting, Stafford, KS

## April

- 18 - Kansas Water Authority Meeting, Abilene, KS

## May

- 31 - RAC Membership Applications due

## July

- 30-31 - Kansas Water Authority Meeting, Goodland, KS

*Save The Date*

**GOVERNOR'S  
CONFERENCE  
ON THE FUTURE OF  
WATER IN KANSAS**

*November 7-8, 2019*

**KANSAS WATER DAY AT  
THE STATE CAPITAL  
MARCH 21, 2019**



**THERE ARE A NUMBER OF WAYS TO  
SAVE WATER, AND THEY ALL  
START WITH YOU**