

MEMO



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DATE: August 16, 2024
TO: Kansas Water Authority
FROM: Angela Anderson
RE: Strategic Implementation RAC Input

The fourteen Regional Advisory Committees met from July 18 to August 6, 2024. The main agenda item for each Regional Advisory Committee (RAC) was to discuss and provide input following the Kansas Water Authority Strategic Implementation Planning phase one local consult meetings.

Every RAC was asked to provide input on the following questions:

- For those that attended a local consult meeting, what stood out to you?
 - Did anything surprise you?
- What advice or suggestions does your RAC (as one voice) have for the implementation team going forward?
- What do you see as the best ways to get the word out in your communities so we can make sure everyone who wants to participate in September local consult is aware of those meetings?

Based upon feedback provided from the six regional local consult meetings, regional questions were then posed to RAC members as items for conversation.

The format to which each RAC decided to provide their official Strategic Implementation Planning input was on a RAC by RAC basis. Some RACs utilized the opportunity to craft a condensed message while some decided to send their answers to the questions as feedback. The RACs were made aware that any format carries equal weight.

The Kansas Water Office has compiled the RAC Input in three formats. The first format is an identification table of the main points made by each RAC. The second is a bulleted format of summaries from each RAC and the condensed messages provided. Finally, as an appendix, are the long notes of every aspect of RAC conversations.

RAC Input Meetings – Major Themes

The following chart summarizes some of the themes in conversations during the RAC Strategic Planning Implementation Input Meetings, hosted in July and August.

| | Cimarron | Equus-Walnut | Great Bend Prairie | Kansas | Marais des Cygnes | Missouri | Neosho | Red Hills | Smoky Hill-Saline | Solomon-Republican | Upper Arkansas | Upper Republican | Upper Smoky Hill | Verdigris |
|--|----------|--------------|--------------------|--------|-------------------|----------|--------|-----------|-------------------|--------------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|-----------|
| Education and Collaboration | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Increase Program Opportunities and Engagement | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Regional Considerations | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Streamline Programs and Funding | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Regionalization/Improved Infrastructure | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Act Now | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Statewide, Big Picture Planning | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Transparency and Consistency to Public | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Addressing Sedimentation/ Nature-Based Solutions | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Regulatory action AND Voluntary Approaches | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Data-Driven Investments for Stability | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

A summary of each RAC meeting and RAC messages can be found on the following pages. The full notes from each meeting can be found in Appendix A.

RAC Messages and Meeting Overviews

Cimarron:

- Biggest user groups need to be targeted when seeking input to help make the larger impact, and needs to be at a time of year that is accommodating to them.
- Consider the regional economic impacts and ramifications of reducing water use and/or converting solely to dryland.
- Regional local control that works to help conserve the resource.
- Increased resources, information, and education on water conservation.
- Increased available cost-share opportunities.
- Utilization of local information sharing network.
- Increased sharing of information on “non-traditional formatting” (ex. YouTube and social media).

Equus Walnut:

- Broad range of concern for water issues across the state.
- Education is needed.
- Move forward on the low hanging fruit.
- The need for conservation practices and the large impact of practices.

Great Bend Prairie:

- More education on different agencies roles and funding sources they provide.
- Need more input from general public and producers.
- Unpredictable on people’s viewpoints based on their region.

RAC Message –

- Clarify the intent of the goal as to what constitutes a “contaminant”. Each local source of water, surface, or ground water has its own unique naturally occurring chemistry. Should goal be modified to use the term “pollutants”, defined as containing elements foreign to the naturally occurring chemistry.
- Allow locally crafted remedies rather than broad administration to ensure maximum effectiveness of dollars and time invested at local level.

Kansas:

- In favor of statewide water education efforts.
- In favor of streamlining coordination of agency programs.
- In favor of regulatory actions when necessary & in coordination with voluntary approaches.
- In favor of nature-based solutions.
- In favor of ensuring sustainable infrastructure.

RAC Message - The Kansas RAC supports & applauds the Strategic Implementation Process for gaining tangible input and generating consensus regarding priorities for water management in Kansas. We encourage more outreach to the general public through social media and through leveraging municipalities, utilities, local governments, school districts and associations to publicize the next round of local consult meetings and virtual engagement and solicitation of input.

The Kansas RAC encourages the Kansas Water Authority to consider the following items as the Authority develops recommendations for the Governor and Legislature:

- Continued coordination of state-wide education regarding water issues in Kansas
- A streamlined approach to coordinate agency programs
- Consideration for the full spectrum of tools, including effective implementation of reasonable regulation
- Emphasis on nature-based solutions in pursuit of sustainable water infrastructure

Marais des Cygnes:

- Need to make data driven investments in water.
- Need to utilize best management practices such as streambank stabilization and buffers.
- Need to think about efforts to engage broad public support.

RAC Message -The Marais des Cygnes RAC acknowledges the importance of water issues statewide and encourages the KWA to continue utilizing the existing Marais des Cygnes RAC goals as guides for outlining our local priorities and concerns as we continue to work through the strategic implementation effort. The cost of doing nothing is greater than the investment needed to address water quality and water quantity.

In reviewing the initial consult meeting notes the MdC RAC is interested in assuring consideration for data driven investments, utilization of best management practices (i.e. streambank stabilization and buffers) and opportunities to leverage federal funds (by having a dedicated state conservation fund) as well as efforts to incorporate broad public support, are all included as the plan moves forward.

Missouri:

- In favor of a one-stop shop for water resources information & programs.
- In favor of a statewide water education efforts.
- In favor of solving sedimentation issues to address water quality in places outside of reservoirs.
- In favor of building & maintaining resilient water infrastructure.
- In favor of local, state & federal agencies & programs working together.
- In favor of a fair distribution of prioritization of water resource issues throughout the state.

RAC Message - The Missouri RAC appreciates the efforts of implementation in an investment in the Kansas Water Plan. The Missouri RAC agrees with the need for a 10-year funding strategy with state and legislative support for this strategy while leveraging regional investments in water resource protection and the Regional Advisory Goals and Action Plans that were previously developed.

We support the following priorities:

- Create a centralized resource to direct water stakeholders to appropriate local, state and federal resources and programs.
- Deliver a comprehensive water education and outreach program throughout the state.
- Water quality and sedimentation are directly linked. Therefore, implementation of sedimentation control projects should be prioritized for reservoirs and non-reservoir watersheds.
- Building and maintaining water-related infrastructure to improve resiliency for extreme events within the region, such as drought and flood.
- Leverage local, state and federal funding further to more effectively utilize program dollars.
- Consideration of high water priorities throughout all regions across the state.

Neosho:

- Improved water **infrastructure** is needed to help with water issues.
- There is value in **regionalization** for smaller communities and their water supplies.
- **Water reuse** has potential to free up water and can reinvigorate streams. It happens in the west & needs to be used more in eastern Kansas.
- Addressing **sedimentation in reservoirs** will continue to be of high importance as it is unlikely any new reservoirs will be built.
- **Water regulation** in western Kansas is ultimately what it will take to sufficiently accomplish water quantity security.

Red Hills:

- Water issues have been ongoing for a long time, and everyone must come together to provide solutions.
- Small communities are particularly vulnerable and in need of assistance to get grants and funding for water solutions.
- Education is critical.

Smoky Hill-Saline:

- Education is essential for change
- Need a more efficient and streamline process for cost share resources and programs.
- Utilize local communities and programs to educate
- Collaboration across the state and focus on the “big picture” not just personal region.

Solomon-Republican:

- In favor of enhancing communication techniques by utilizing all available resources.
- In favor of a statewide education effort that is based off of a marketing campaign.
- In favor of regionalization of water utilities.
- In favor of braiding local, state and federal funding resources.
- In favor of statewide promotion of water conservation; including all sectors.
- In favor of funding “shovel ready’ projects – acting now.

RAC Message - The Solomon-Republican RAC would like to express the following priorities to the Kansas Water Authority and the Strategic Implementation team:

1. Improve communication through utilizing the resources available from the local entities (newspapers, utilities, municipalities, conservation districts, etc.)
 - a. Communicating with and educating local groups on priority water issues
 - b. Communicating clearly and positively with all stakeholders to improve trust
 - c. Develop a marketing campaign based off of the feedback provided by local stakeholders
2. Leverage opportunities to partner with other groups –
 - a. Financially: taking advantage of using multiple program funding sources
 - b. Operationally: regional utility use opportunities
3. All sectors of water users need to participate in water conservation efforts
4. Act now
 - a. Increase funding for shovel-ready water infrastructure projects
 - b. Implement water conservation measures in cities/towns

Upper Arkansas:

- Broader perspective is needed to better educate all groups and regions on the issue.
- Inaction of regional organizations to help address issues of decline.
- Need for all regional stakeholders to be involved in decision making.
- Need for transparency to public on all processes that will impact them.
- Maintain local economy.
- Conservation-minded stewardship for the High Plains Aquifer.

RAC Message - The Upper Arkansas Regional Advisory Committee (RAC) would like to thank the Kansas Water Authority (KWA) and Implementation Team for their work in the Strategic Planning Process and seeking input from the RACs and other stakeholders. The RAC would like to pass on the following comments for consideration by the KWA and Implementation Team:

- Upper Arkansas RAC Priority Goal “Establish a diversified, usable water supply by 2030, to motivate a vibrant growing economy with conservation-minded stewardship focused on increasing the life of the aquifer, reestablishing streamflow in the Arkansas River, and accelerating recharge; benefiting: economic prosperity, wildlife, habitat, recreation, and all water users while protecting property rights and providing safe drinking water.”
- State water laws that are out of date and need to be revitalized to what the current conditions are. Water laws need to be tailored to help conserve and promote economic benefit.
- Lack of connection between innovation and preservation. Need to find a way to balance both.
- Ways to capture large rain events in the region so that it can be absorbed and to make us not just a “pass through state”
- Honor and protect private property rights
- Be completely transparent with the process and having more public input meetings and engaging the citizens/stakeholders more
- Appreciation for starting the process and encourage you continue your work
- GMD3 board members solely get to do decide the water use for the region and the high priority areas, this needs to also involve all stakeholders

Upper Republican:

- The need for more action and less talking about the same thing over and over.
- Keep land values strong with longevity to allow producers to stay in production longer and achieve stability.
- Re-evaluate past incentive programs to ensure you are getting "the biggest bang for your buck".
- Achieving stability everywhere.
- Encouraging regional decision makers and organizations to have the resolve to stand up to those that fight back against actions that help achieve stabilization.

Upper Smoky Hill:

- Keeping things simple. Put the numbers out that need to be cut to get to stability.
- “Just get it done”.
- Increased funding and research towards technologies and practices that will make an impact.
- Local control.
- Lack of accountability.
- Transparency and consistency.
- Maintaining local economies.

Verdigris:

- Education is critical for communities and decision makers at the state level to allocate the funding needed to address water issues.
- We need to place much higher importance on resiliency in water supply rather than efficiency. Resiliency is needed at the local and regional level.
- Timescale is a very important factor in these conversations. A lot of time water issues are generational and non-linear which makes long-term solutions complex and difficult to tackle.

Appendix A

Strategic Planning Input Notes by RAC

Cimarron:

For those that attended a local consult meeting, what stood out to you? Did anything surprise you?

- The number of people in attendance.
- The number of comments from people from different areas of the state that were very aware of what is going on in other regions as well as their own.
- The “Investments Areas” decision needed to have been earlier on the agenda or allowed more time to go over.

What advice or suggestions does your RAC (as one voice) have for the implementation team going forward?

- Irrigators are one of the biggest users, followed by livestock producer. Those two groups were severely underrepresented at the local consult meeting in comparison to the number of those that attended.
- Is input being obtained by all users?
- The meetings need to target the individuals/industries that use the most water to help make a larger impact.
- What are the economic ramifications of reducing water use? Studies need to be done, if there haven't been any already, to look into what the economic impacts will be of reducing water use. Those results need be shared with the public.
- Regional water management entities need to look at what other regions are doing to conserve the resource, and consider what other approaches need to been taken in order to address the decline issues that we have.
- Increase resources available to help producers obtain technologies to help use less water.
- Information and technologies that have been studied and implemented for water conservation often never reach the larger population of individuals. Only those that attend field days and conferences seem to know what is new and available. That information is not always being shared with others that could benefit from it.

What do you see as the best ways to get the word out in your communities so we can make sure everyone who wants to participate in September local consult is aware of those meetings?

- Broadcast on KFRM.
- Do a virtual breakout session at the next round of meetings.
- Social media blasts
- Local news releases
- Conservation Districts

- Local USDA offices
- “Zoom breakout session”
- YouTube

Do you have any examples of where you think programs could be merged to be more “stackable”?

- The average person is aware that we have a problem but not to the degree that those of us in this room are aware.
- The issue is important to those that it directly affects, and those that it doesn’t affect yet only are aware of the minimal.
- Work with research groups to obtain data/information needed.
- Programs that take land out of production are harder sells a lot of the time because people want to produce on the land they own/work - it’s their nature. Getting paid to do nothing generally goes against their human nature.
- Farm equipment that sits idle and is not used will go bad. Thus, taking land out of production or acres out of irrigation will cause the expensive equipment used to lose value and deteriorate.
- Programs like playa lakes restoration are beneficial for helping with recharge.
- Playa Lakes Restoration and CRP are stackable.

Equus Walnut:

For those that attended a local consult meeting, what stood out to you? Did anything surprise you?

- What stood out was having two breakout groups in one room disrupted conversation between the two groups.
- There was a balanced approach to overall issues; people were concerned for a broad range of issues, not just in their area.
- Breakout groups varied on people that changed their overall mind on the red ticket.
- People in the breakout groups had a lot of knowledge on water issues in their area, both local and agency people.
- Education is essential.

What advice or suggestions does your RAC (as one voice) have for the implementation team going forward?

- Now is the time to act! Move forward on low hanging fruit, don't wait until the issues are too big.
- Need to have a balanced approach for tackling issues: reservoir, aquifer, and water quality.
- Need to focus on the projects that can benefit multiple projects. Tackle the water issues that will have positive benefit on the other water related issues.
- Conservation activities will have collaborative efforts for other issues. When doing conservation practices, there are multiple benefits from several conservation practices. An example of a conservation practice that can have multiple benefits is creating a cultural change to plant and utilize more native species, especially in urban settings.

What do you see as the best ways to get the word out in your communities so we can make sure everyone who wants to participate in September local consult is aware of those meetings?

- Personal invitation to groups participating in/associated with.
- WRAPs email list
 - Utilize other agency email lists
- Social media accounts
 - Facebook, YouTube, etc.
- Target unified water districts
- Radio stations
 - K-State radio station
 - KWCH channel 12
- KLA and Farm Bureau newsletters

When discussing the most effective ways to save water, it's helpful to share how water is being used in the state. How do we balance informing Kansans about how water is being used without it feeling like we're singling out irrigation farms (or others who use large quantities of water)?

- Give metrics and show the economic impacts on the water usage.
- Show what the contribution and consumption is for users.

How would you prioritize where technical assistance would be most impactful? (Ex. for programs, technology, grants, etc).

- Small systems need technical assistance over the large systems.
- Technical assistance for Ag producers.
- There are issues with staffing, workload, and funding.

Do you think more people would have supported the Reservoir Investment Scenario if they knew that federal funds would be utilized too? Why or why not?

- Would have more support
 - There needs to be infrastructure upstream and ways to prevent the reservoirs from filling back up.

Great Bend Prairie:

For those that attended a local consult meeting, what stood out to you? Did anything surprise you?

- It was not unpredictable on people's viewpoints based on their region.
- There was a fair amount of people in a breakout group who didn't put their red ticket in because their minds weren't changed. Other breakout groups people put the red ticket in with their green ticket.

What advice or suggestions does your RAC (as one voice) have for the implementation team going forward?

- There needs to be more localized meetings and more opportunities for engagement besides the local consult meetings.
 - Great Bend Prairie RAC is very unique and should be highlighted and not grouped with other regions.
- There was not enough feedback and input from the general public or producers; most of the input at the meetings were from agency, research, or government.
- Would like more clarification on the investment scenarios during the local consult meetings.
- We need to improve how we explain the roles of different agencies in providing funding. A simpler approach is needed to make it easier to understand which agency offers what type of funding.
- The timing was not ideal for producers; September is busier for farmers than June.
- Have a webinar or another way for producers to engage with the consult meetings without being in attendance.
- The QR code that was provided for program resources does not provide additional background information.
- Making the process too complicated.
- There are already implementation processes in place. Should divide funding by the 3 categories and channel through KDHE, KDA, and the Conservation Districts. If additional practices are needed, they can be added.
- The wording of "no contaminants" does not define what "contaminants" are. There are natural occurring contaminants and removing them completely is unrealistic.
 - Confusing wording and clarification are needed with revision of goal.
 - Language can differ between surface/ground water and drinking water.
- Need to highlight all the good work that has been done and continues to be done.

What do you see as the best ways to get the word out in your communities so we can make sure everyone who wants to participate in September local consult is aware of those meetings?

- Make sure there is enough time and notice for producers.
 - YouTube videos that agency can share across their news networks.
- Allow another agency to share the YouTube videos.
- Radio stations
- KDA, conservation districts

When discussing the most effective ways to save water, it's helpful to share how water is being used in the state. How do we balance informing Kansans about how water is being used without it feeling like we're singling out irrigation farms (or others who use large quantities of water)?

- Discuss the agricultural economic impact.
- Link how the irrigation affects other communities, businesses, etc.
 - Highlight the benefits from irrigation.
- Be mindful of the language and tone towards irrigation.

How would you prioritize where technical assistance would be most needed? (Ex. for programs, technology, grants, etc).

- Strong education and outreach, and peer to peer networking emphasizing success and failures.
- In-the-field and personal interaction.
- Accommodate for generational differences.
- There must be the “right” people providing the technical services.
- Utilize incentives.

Do you think more people would have supported the Reservoir Investment Scenario if they knew that federal funds would be utilized too? Why or why not?

- Programs being developed need to leverage federal funding, not just reservoir projects.

Kansas:

- There was not a lot of general public in attendance, so there was not a lot of open conversation due to fears for speaking on behalf of each one's business/representation (the other hats worn by each individual).
- Late August would be better for round 2.
- Thought the numbers were a success.
- The activities were very well run and it was an effective technique, that would not be easily replicated online. To get the general public to participate, it can't be during the workday or where you have to pay for parking. It must be in the evening after work hours.
- Might try an online survey, but will probably get mostly the feedback of "Just make it work".
- There is a general distrust from the public anyway, but the area of aquifer seemed skewed and political. It right away created a feeling of an already-decided solution.
- The education piece is huge, but would definitely allow for getting a sense of just what the public knows.
- The large concept, over-simplification ticket options were tough to actually believe, envision, and respond to.
- Need to figure out how to get the public buy-in.
- Education through the school systems could be a way to reach the general public (send a one-page summary with an online survey link).
- The truly disengaged won't be involved this fall. Could we make a 2-minute YouTube that leads to a 3-minute survey (like KDOT's Zoom local consult statewide to finish their series of meetings). Make it an actual Zoom production.
- Should send out a "We missed you at local consult, but now here is a link to provide your thoughts."
- In order to get more general public to attend, send advertising through the municipalities, conservation districts, KSRE, and other local town social and news media.
- Utilities can help spread awareness through their social media – as many of the public pays more attention to what comes from their cities on social media. This is why having a short video is important to telling the summary of what we are requesting/doing.
- Don't think we fully realize how much the feds (USDA) are involved in our issues. For example, crop insurance makes it possible for crops to be grown on soils that weren't/aren't suitable for crops.
- Disappointed that the suggestions for nature-based and ecology-minded solutions didn't make it to the summary.

Marais des Cygnes:

For those that attended a local consult meeting, what stood out to you? Did anything surprise you?

- Overall, they were well-done meetings. Burns and McDonnell did a good job with participation. Nothing in particular was surprising.
- They were well-managed meetings.
- A common theme was nature-based solutions and not wanting to subsidize expensive solutions.
- There was a lot of networking after the meetings concluded; people wanting to learn more and make connections.

What advice or suggestions does your RAC (as one voice) have for the implementation team going forward?

- While the attendance was surprisingly high, this is still a very small fraction of the Kansas population. This group also represents a lot of the voices already engaged with water issues, and there are a lot of people not being represented in these meetings such as a lot of producers.
- Moving water is a big waste. We should not build where there is not water.
- Sedimentation is a high priority issue – need more data to see the results of conservation efforts such as upland BMPs. We need more money for data collection overall to see how effective our conservation efforts are. We can then use this data to show decision makers that these efforts work and advocate for more funding.
- Need to focus on BMPs such as streambank stabilization and filter strips.
- Need to support dedicated conservation funds. The state of Kansas is missing out on federal matching dollars because we don't have a pot of money to use. We need to act now to plan for these long-term investments with major benefits.

Missouri:

The Missouri RAC appreciates the efforts of implementation in an investment in the Kansas Water Plan. The Missouri RAC agrees with the need for a 10-year funding strategy with state and legislative support for this strategy while leveraging regional investments in water resource protection and the Regional Advisory Goals and Action Plans that were previously developed.

We support the following priorities:

- Create a centralized resource to direct water stakeholders to appropriate local, state and federal resources and programs.
- Deliver a comprehensive water education and outreach program throughout the state.
- Water quality and sedimentation are directly linked. Therefore, implementation of sedimentation control projects should be prioritized for reservoirs and non-reservoir watersheds.
- Building and maintaining water-related infrastructure to improve resiliency for extreme events within the region, such as drought and flood.
- Leverage local, state and federal funding further to more effectively utilize program dollars.
- Consideration of high-water priorities throughout all regions across the state.

Neosho:

For those that attended a local consult meeting, what stood out to you?

- Struck by the lack of citizen presence for input. There were water professionals, yet did not really notice any citizens at the Salina local consult meeting. Hopefully there is a better chance in the September meeting to format and schedule the meetings that provides a better opportunity for citizen involvement. The lack of citizen involvement was a problem, yet it relates to and mirrors the diversity of problems in Kansas.
- The Chanute local consult meeting had citizens present who actually had concerns for the aquifer, but just a few of the general public were present. Even though the invitation was shared with members of the Water Assurance District (WAD), very few WAD members were there, which is an issue.
- Noticed a different tenor to the input in Salina compared to Chanute. Salina was more concerned with reservoirs.
- The Chanute region seemed more focused on local concerns, but were willing to look broadly and recognize it is a “we” problem. The second ticket had a lot of conversation in the relationship between the aquifer, water quality, and the streams.

Did anything surprise you?

- Surprised by everyone’s constant stating that there is such a huge economic impact to farmers when talking about the aquifer disappearing. Several years ago, the Neosho Basin held a drought games competition that helped participants to realize the impact of supply/demand. If the aquifer depletes, it doesn’t take the economics and farming all the way down to zero. It only forces the producers to farm in different ways/consider different crops, which needs to be done anyway. Because of lessons learned through the drought games, would like to see a drought-games workshop held in western Kansas.
- Was there any conversation with state’s investment in water reuse? Reuse is valuable in freeing up water and can reinvigorate streams. Water reuse happens in western Kansas, but not in the eastern portion. However, the “west” is moving “east” in regards to climate conditions. We are seeing more drought conditions in the east that used to be areas with precipitation abundance. Reuse could play a huge role in sustainability and economic growth for industry. What can we do to start getting industry to go down the path of reuse? We need to utilize the resources we have in the best way.
- Surprised by comments that were shared to have come out of the Chanute meeting. (Two didn’t hear the comments that were highlighted in the “official” takeaways in their rooms.) The rooms they were in recognized the issues of the Neosho, but also knew of issues in the west.

- The facilitators at the Chanute meeting in the breakout rooms seemed to pressure the group towards the issues in western Kansas, but the participants reminded the facilitators the Neosho is in need, also.

What do you see as the best ways to get the word out in your communities so we can make sure everyone who wants to participate in September local consult is aware of those meetings?

- Need to make sure it is shared with as many media and newsletters, public news radio stations and local TV stations as possible. KOAM, KSNF/KODE and other TV stations.
- The Public Information Office in Pittsburg can help get notices to the TV stations throughout the region.

General Conversation:

- Need to start looking at cross-border basins (nearby basins) more to help with water issues. For the Neosho, there won't be additional reservoirs added. However, that process should start with water sharing regionally from town to town.
- There is value in regionalization, and it would work best if the state would mandate regionalization as a way to help communities and their water supplies. Ex. Pittsburg could easily supply nearby communities with water.
- Regionalization, however, does not solve the issue of figuring out how to prolong/conserves water supply. The water is still going to be depleted if communities do not figure out how to conserve or if the state/communities do not figure out how to gain more storage or gain more resource.
- Need to look at keeping our resources within the basin as much as possible and figure out ways to reuse.
- The issues of the Ogallala are going to take state regulation to get anything sufficiently accomplished.
- Sedimentation of John Redmond is going to be important for to region. The dealing with sedimentation at John Redmond seems to hinge on how the project advances at Tuttle.

Red Hills:

For those that attended a local consult meeting, what stood out to you? Did anything surprise you?

- Local consult meetings went well, lots of voices and diversity of voices. Ticket activity made audience think.
- Meetings held during the day. People will make time to go during the day, professional interest is going to be more represented, may skew results. Young people and farmers aren't going to make it.
- Overall, well attended and well organized.
- RAC members discussed water quality in different parts of the region.
- RAC members discussed need for money for upgrading pipes and water treatment.
- RAC members discussed produced water pilot and water reuse from oil and gas industry in the region.
- Surprised by comment on disadvantage communities that don't typically qualify as disadvantaged communities – many small communities are just outside range.

What advice or suggestions does your RAC (as one voice) have for the implementation team going forward?

- Need to have more members in attendance for specific recommendations to pass along to the KWA.
- Need to start thinking about “what ifs” for the future instead of just assuming the status quo.

What do you see as the best ways to get the word out in your communities so we can make sure everyone who wants to participate in September local consult is aware of those meetings?

- Local paper in Cunningham. Print information in local paper about water conservation, pollution, irrigation. Educational opportunity.

When discussing the most effective ways to save water, it's helpful to share how water is being used in the state. How do we balance informing Kansans about how water is being used without it feeling like we're singling out irrigation farms (or others who use large quantities of water)?

- It's been going on forever. “It's the farmers fault, it's the guy with a beautiful yard's fault.”
- It's an everyone problem.
- Promoting education.

How would you prioritize where technical assistance would be most impactful? (Ex. for programs, technology, grants, etc.).

- Grant writing to apply for grants for small towns.
- Education on the programs that are out there.
- Information even between families on different conservation techniques can be divisive, so no great answer on this.

General discussion

- Water prices really impact water use.
- Decoupling water base from water use - average bill went up \$9 a month.

Smoky Hill-Saline:

For those that attended a local consult meeting, what stood out to you? Did anything surprise you?

- Surprised water conservation was not as emphasized. Feels it should have been one for the primary topics.
- There were a mix of participants views on regulations. Some were very focused on their own mission instead of the “big picture”. This halted some the collaboration between different viewpoints.
- Education is crucial for all aspects of water related issues and is essential for change.
- Funding for research is needed.
- Large emphasis on lack of workforce for water resource.
- Need more efficient process for program applications.

What advice or suggestions does your RAC (as one voice) have for the implementation team going forward?

- Need to recognize past efforts and highlight the good work that has been done. It is important to see the improvements that have been made.
- Smaller groups for at the meetings to encourage more discussion. Also, the RAC would like to see other ways for people to provide input without group speaking.
- Some evening meetings to accommodate for people’s working hours. This can help reach more people and get their input.

What do you see as the best ways to get the word out in your communities so we can make sure everyone who wants to participate in September local consult is aware of those meetings?

- Spread word at a more local level, use other media resources.
- Also utilizing our Colleges and KS State Dept. of Education for our high school students to get the word out. The colleges also have great meeting locations for September.

What ideas or suggestions do you have for how to utilize producers in education efforts?

- Personal testimonials.
- Sharing via social media.
- Promoting networking for conservation.
- Radio and peer to peer talk.
- Online forum/message board.
- Utilizing KSRE offices/agents to promote and share the KWO/RAC meetings, etc.

Where would investments to provide more technical assistance be most impactful?

- The use of Incentives would be impactful to encourage more people to participate in programs, BMPs, etc.
- Conservation planning for all water use sectors or all resource concerns.
- Technical assistance for ordinances and smaller permits. Provide advice and a toolbox for people to access to complete ordinances and smaller permits themselves. Navigating these can be difficult without proper instructions.

Participants indicated that their views shifted some because they were made aware of new information during the local consult meetings. For those that attended, did you learn anything new? Or do you know what information might have been particularly persuasive to participants?

- Keeping the message very simple and focus on the “why”.

Comments from the Public

- Utilize municipalities to help spread information.
- Mix of participants views on regulations. Some were very focused on their own mission instead of the “big picture”.
- Halted the collaboration between different viewpoints.

Solomon Republican:

The Solomon-Republican RAC would like to express the following priorities to the Kansas Water Authority and the Strategic Implementation team:

1. Improve communication through utilizing the resources available from the local entities (newspapers, utilities, municipalities, conservation districts, etc.)
 - a. Communicating with and educating local groups on priority water issues
 - b. Communicating clearly and positively with all stakeholders to improve trust
 - c. Develop a marketing campaign based off of the feedback provided by local stakeholders
2. Leverage opportunities to partner with other groups –
 - a. Financially: taking advantage of using multiple program funding sources
 - b. Operationally: regional utility use opportunities
3. All sectors of water users need to participate in water conservation efforts
4. Act now
 - a. Increase funding for shovel-ready water infrastructure projects
 - b. Implement water conservation measures in cities/towns

Upper Arkansas:

For those that attended a local consult meeting, what stood out to you? Did anything surprise you?

- Surprised to learn of one individual's comments on their fears of how the dairies are negatively impacting the region and resources.
- Out of state landowners are often not as informed as those that live here on the state's water issues.
- There was a strong consensus on the need to for something to be done now.
- Surprised that the "east" is also worried about what is going on in the "west", as is the "west" is concerned with what is occurring in the "east".
- There has been a reduction in groundwater pumping in Southwest KS in the recent years, however that reduction has taken place because individuals aren't able to pump as much or the water isn't there to pump.
- Was anything mentioned about funding for domestic or stock private well drills due to the water levels dropping? Current programs that are available are very complex to complete.
- Didn't think that the facilitators had enough training.
- Disappointed that the RAC goals where summarized. Key points were left out that were in the goals.
- Needs to be a goal to improve resilience in the underrepresented communities in the region.
- "Conservation minded stewardship" was left out in regards to the High Plains Aquifer.
- Consider recreation aspect of water and the economic benefits it can have.
- RMA/Crop Insurance policies that require producers to waste water and continue to "maintain" crops in order to get the failed crop payout.
- Inaction of regional organizations that are in place to help address the issues of decline and continue to drag things out.

What advice or suggestions does your RAC (as one voice) have for the implementation team going forward?

- State water laws that are out of date and need to be revitalized to what the current conditions are. Water laws need to be tailored to help conserve and promote economic benefit.
- Lack of connection between innovation and preservation. Need to find a way to balance both.
- Ways to capture large rain events in the region so that it can be absorbed and not just a "pass through state".
- Honor and protect private property rights.

- Be completely transparent with the process. Have more public input meetings and engage citizens/stakeholders more.
- Appreciation for starting the process and encourage you continue your work.
- GMD3 board members solely get to decide the water use for the region and the high priority areas, this needs to also involve all stakeholders.
- Establish a diversified, usable water supply by 2030, to motivate a vibrant growing economy with conservation-minded stewardship focused on increasing the life of the aquifer, reestablishing streamflow in the Arkansas River, and accelerating recharge; benefiting: economic prosperity, wildlife, habitat, recreation, and all water users while protecting property rights and providing safe drinking water.

What do you see as the best ways to get the word out in your communities so we can make sure everyone who wants to participate in September local consult is aware of those meetings?

- Flyers with municipal water bills and municipal social medias.
- Spreading the word, word of mouth.
- Local Conservation Districts.
- Regional events.
- Funding for postage to have local entities share the flyers.
- Local papers.
- John Jenkinson, local ag reporter.

Do you have any examples of where you think programs could be merged to be more “stackable”?

- Most producers are generally aware of the declines and generally the public knows.
- Increasing the level of understanding of the issue.
- Communicating the connectivity between the farmer, conservation, tap water, and all water users.
- Increased school education events.
- Conservation incentives that have the fewest strings attached, offer flexibility and are adaptive.
- Kids that are being told to “turn the water off” - do they do it because they know there is a water decline issue or is because the water bill will be too high?
- Educating kids between 2nd and 6th grade on the issues and boosting outreach to those groups.
- Engaging with conservation districts.
- Working with regional schools.
- Helping to develop curriculum for schools for water education.
- Conservation stewardship programs in USDA are stackable.

- Find ways to stack state programs with federal ones.
- Encouraging federal agencies to better communicate among each other so that it gets to the county levels.
- Education with bankers and crop consultants in the region.
- There are not many incentives available or there are not any that are known.
- Mindset change from yield output to looking more at the overall input cost.
- Alternative crop varieties and soil moisture management.
- Other states are paying producers to not pump for a set number of days.

Upper Arkansas:

For those that attended a local consult meeting, what stood out to you? Did anything surprise you?

- Shocked at the number in attendance.
- Thought the meetings were good and the participation in the groups was good.
- A lot of new faces at each of the meetings.
- Broad/Diverse groups.

What advice or suggestions does your RAC (as one voice) have for the implementation team going forward?

- People are tired of this being talked about and nothing happening from it. They don't want to go to another meeting to hear the same information that has already been talked about over and over.
- This region and RAC are on track with the current work we are doing as it pertains to aquifer management and water quality.
- Keep land values strong with longevity to allow us to stay in production longer and achieve stability.

What do you see as the best ways to get the word out in your communities so we can make sure everyone who wants to participate in September local consult is aware of those meetings?

- Producers are resilient and they will figure out a way to make things work.
- GMD Board needs to have the resolve to stand up to those that fight back against them, taking the necessary actions to achieve stabilization.
- Incentives in the past have been utilized very quickly and often times you didn't get the best bang for your buck.
- Land values in Western KS are over inflated, the price of commodities is higher than it ever has been, everything cost more than ever. How does the average producer pay for it all?
- The reason irrigated ag was created was to support the livestock industry.
- What happens to the counties if the tax base from the irrigated ground goes down? Working towards longevity to sustain those wells, and that resource will help maintain the counties economies.
- Put a vote/survey to irrigators to see how much they would truly be willing to do and willing to cut.
- Education is a huge component to helping with the issue.
- Local solutions come from the local groups/control.
- The key isn't to just stabilize in certain areas but to stabilize everywhere.

- The 5-year management plans seem to be a success and allow for changes to be made gradually as needed.
- Believe the majority of producers are ready to get down to a stable number.
- What level are we engaging the bankers? They need to be in the conversation.
- Is the structure of the regional aquifer best managed by just one local entity?
- Does the structure of all GMD Boards need to be re-evaluated?

Upper Smoky Hill:

For those that attended a local consult meeting, what stood out to you? Did anything surprise you?

- Good feedback at meetings and conversation.
- Local control aspect was strongly emphasized.
- Variety of representation from different industries/areas.

What advice or suggestions does your RAC (as one voice) have for the implementation team going forward?

- Stop using the word conservation and instead use “irrigation reduction”. Tell the producers what they need to cut back and they will work on it.
- Keep it simple and put the numbers out there that need to be cut, “keep it simple stupid”.
- A lot of time was spent getting nothing done. Now is the time to stop talking and to set a line of what would help make an impact. Let’s getting moving forward.
- “Just get it done”.
- Producers are frustrated with all the different technologies and such out there that only work for a little while, and they are tired of wasting money on the “the new thing”. Need to invest some time and funds in technology that will help make an impact.
- Need for technical and funding assistance to help get things done.
- Tech copies working with land grant universities, free of charge, to test their products.
- If the state would provide technical and financial assistance to producers, then the state would have a stake in the region and helping to address the issues.
- Issues with out of compliance meters in the state.
- Lack of accountability.
- Keeping the decisions local.
- Being transparent and consistent in information shared.

What do you see as the best ways to get the word out in your communities so we can make sure everyone who wants to participate in September local consult is aware of those meetings?

- Agree that it is everyone’s problem, however you have to look who the biggest users and one group’s actions can help address the issue.
- People need to understand that if producers do not have a market for the grain they produce, they are in trouble. If they lose the market, they would be doomed.
- If local economies are not sustained, the towns and other industries will die off.
- It has been proven that so much can be done with less.
- Transparency of information is key.

- Need to get past the “regional squabbles” and pettiness and work on the issue as “we” a state.
- A lot of “noise” lately about water. Cannot let the noise and negativity get in the way of the good work that is being done.
- Pushing the positive narratives and information.
- Key is giving a “number” for the producer and they will make the adjustments, and make it work. Demonstrate within region that we are making it work, that in itself will be impactful.
- Tools at the state level: flexibility.
- Some tools are already in place to help.

Verdigris:

For those that attended a local consult meeting, what stood out to you? Did anything surprise you?

- Diversity of people that came to the meeting was promising. Also, a diversity of interests and priorities from this group. Lots of people showed up for the region.
- Now is a critical time for funding in water within state government since the ball is rolling. Get message to legislators on the importance of water. Caney is poster child for need for water infrastructure in small communities. RACs need to educate their communities on water so they can communicate to the legislators their want/need for funding for water.
- The meeting was well thought out, structured, and facilitated. All of the information communicated was clear and concise.
- Resiliency is critical, this is different than efficiency. We need to look at resiliency at the local level, and *regional* level (i.e. multiple intakes for a community).
- There was a lack in discussion on timescale. Our world works in quarters or terms, but a lot of the issues and solutions discussed are generational. Also, the problems are non-linear.

What advice or suggestions does your RAC (as one voice) have for the implementation team going forward?

- Highlighting the underlined bullet points above specifically.

What do you see as the best ways to get the word out in your communities so we can make sure everyone who wants to participate in September local consult is aware of those meetings?

- Possibly texts?
- Getting input for this next round of local consult meetings is even more important now that the highlights have been identified to pass along to decision makers.
- More important is the message to get people to the meeting. People know about it from the media sources but how to get those people to the table. Telling a story? A feature that tells the story of Kansas water and let people know that this is their opportunity to be a part of this story.
 - KGGF AM out of Coffeyville for this region.
 - AM is listened to commonly all over the state by ag producers.
 - Conservation Districts can send via mail. Make sure to get information to CDs early to make these mailers.

Recognizing there is substantial need to help communities restore their water infrastructure, what suggestions do you have for how to prioritize which systems should receive funds?

- Small communities have the greatest need.
- Let professional staff at agencies make decisions on how to prioritize.
- Prioritize networks and regionally beneficial projects/systems for funding.
- Prioritize systems that can access and/or match federal funds. Ex. PWWSD 23 with federal money.

What do you think are the common characteristics of the programs or initiatives that people praised?

- Sometimes what works well is still a hard sell (i.e. cover crops). We need to actually concentrate on programs that are needed/important. Parameters for some projects are limiting with access to funds, i.e. farm ponds dredging v. new ponds.
- Word of mouth between producers is the most effective way to disperse information. Successful implementation of a practice and spreading the word from one person to the next is really effective.
- Programs need to demonstrate results and achieve intended goals.

What suggestions do you have for how to modernize research and extension? What other programs need to be modernized?

- Need to message and improve education to younger generation. High school and early college are the age gap we need target for the next generation. Need to think about their form of communication and information gathering and plug in there.
- NASA seems to have a lot of success with citizen science to gather data. Is this something that state programs can tap into, getting more data from engaged citizens?
- More information in one place – one stop shop for water information.