



November 2018

To All Affected Parties:

Over the past few years, the issue of water usage in the Rattlesnake Creek Basin has been on the minds of farmers, business owners and community members. In 2016, the Division of Water Resources Chief Engineer found that junior water right holders in the Rattlesnake Creek Basin impaired the US Fish and Wildlife Service's right to surface water at three points of diversion in Quivira. Big Bend Groundwater Management District No. 5 (GMD5) has worked to bring stakeholders to the table and try to create plans to provide water to the refuge and maintain economic viability in the area. Water is the lifeblood of our farms and agriculture is the economic driver of the communities in which we live. Addressing the impairment claims made on behalf of Quivira National Wildlife Refuge in a legal and economically sound manner should be a priority for the membership of Kanza Cooperative Association and all residents in the counties of Pratt, Stafford, Kiowa, Pawnee, and Edwards.

In seeking to address the impairment, GMD5 initially proposed providing 1,500 AF of water through augmentation wells. This proposal based on modeling provided by Balleau Groundwater, Inc., showed that it would take 12 years with a reduction of 27,345 AF to see the appropriate net gain of 2.3 cfs at the Zenith Gage. Since the water tables are found to be stable for up to 250 years in the region, augmentation was the most logical and timely recommendation. The Chief Engineer rejected this plan with no suggested counter proposal. Since then, GMD5 proposed removal of irrigation system end guns and reductions of water usage in Zones A and D of around 14,000 AF, coupled with the augmentation. Each additional concession cuts into the economic stability of the region and will have lasting negative impacts on the livelihoods of GMD5 members, their families and the surrounding communities.

Through an analysis conducted by WaterPACK it is estimated that the economic impact of such a water use reduction within the sub-basin to be approximately \$8,413,860 in revenue losses annually. Kansas State University Agriculture Economics Department estimates that a dollar generated in a rural community will circulate the local economy 5-7 times, resulting in an even more devastating annual loss to the economy of at least \$42,000,000. In addition to the loss of revenue, land values will also fall. The same study estimated that the water reduction would amount to a fixed asset loss of \$88,320,000. Decreases in land values mean lower tax revenues for local taxing entities causing our schools, municipalities and healthcare system to suffer. It is not difficult to see that the economic ramifications of continued reductions in irrigation allotments and water restrictions will have far-reaching, permanent effects to all sectors of the economy throughout this region.

This is much more than an issue for the area's farmers. A harshly dictated, government-driven, and locally excluded resolution to this issue stands to have a significantly negative impact on the communities in Pratt, Stafford, Kiowa, Pawnee and Edwards counties. We urge residents to be informed and vocal on this issue because it affects us all.

Sincerely,

Kanza Cooperative Association Board of Directors