

August 11, 2020

WHC LEMA
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Testimony for the Initial Public Hearing, In Support of the Proposed Wichita County LEMA Plan (WHCL)

My name is Tammy Simons. My husband and I farm and ranch in northeastern Wichita County. I am one of the founding members of the first ever, county-wide Wichita County Water Conservation Area (WCWCA). I also serve as an elected school board member for USD #467 Leoti-Wichita County Schools.

The Chief Engineer's Findings listed in the Order establishing the WCWCA on March 7, 2017, provide the facts that the WHCL meets the first of the criteria established in K.S.A. 82a-1041(b). In addition, the WCWCA Executive Summary states:

"Our community, economy, and quality of life depend upon water. The Ogallala aquifer is our primary and most important water resource. Overall, 65% of the water stored in the Ogallala aquifer underlying Wichita County has been used. Irrigation accounts for 97% of the water withdrawn from the aquifer. Despite a diminishing number of wells and reduced pumping capacity, our aquifer continues to decline at a rate of about 7 inches per year."

Upon the failing of the GMD #1 district-wide vote for the previous LEMA plan in 2014, we took it upon ourselves to create a solution to our water issues where there was none. In fact, had the LEMA vote taken place only in this county, it would have passed with a 65% approval. The WCWCA has been extensively researched, locally developed, and subsequently proven itself successful as a voluntary effort to conserve water; however, we knew during the research stage that a voluntary effort will only get us so far.

Consider these facts from the WCWCA:

- The 7-yr average water use for this county (all uses) is 48,853 acre-feet (2012-2018), which is 9,567 acre-feet less than before the WCA began. It was averaging 58,420 acre-feet (2009-2015).
- Voluntary water savings are 2,648.11 acre-feet per year, which includes 19% of the average irrigated acres and 13% of active wells.
- Participants will save at least 18,536 acre-feet of water by 2023.
- That amount of water could support the households and operations of only the town of Leoti for 47 years (394 avg AF/yr).

In the interest of the common good, we need to save enough water to support the county's agriculture-based economy and our people's overall quality of life, keeping our schools and hospital and rural businesses open and thriving. The WCWCA is a start, but it is not enough. The WHCL will add the next desperately needed step of conservation to help us sustain the way of life we know and love, and want our kids and grandkids to be able to enjoy.

Last spring, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service recently awarded \$1.4 million to our local GRASP RCPP, which expands on previous success with an additional \$1.5 million in partner contributions. The WHCL is one of the strategies in the RCPP to help keep our community viable; other strategies include increasing enrollments in the WCWCA, playa wetland restoration, irrigation efficiencies, water right retirements, and conversion to dryland.

The boundaries established in the WHCL are reasonable as they encompass all the area that GMD #1 does and are similar those the WCWCA established and which the RCPP utilizes as well.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tammy Simons". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Tammy Simons
Wichita County WCA Participant and Founding Member