

Potential Op-Ed

As lifelong residents of Western Kansas, we understand how important agriculture is to our economy and our way of life. And how important water is to the sustained agricultural productivity we have experienced. Our region would look much different than it does today without having been blessed with the Ogallala Aquifer. We only need to look to some areas of Eastern Colorado to see what our area could look like without the aquifer.

Recently, the Kansas Geological Survey released information from well measurements they do each January. It's not unexpected, but the water levels dropped in 2021 anywhere from a few inches to several feet. The fact that water levels dropping isn't unexpected is the real underlying problem. Anyone who pays attention in our area knows we are using the groundwater faster than mother nature is putting it back. What happens when we get to the end, or what we are going to do about it before then is the real question.

This past two years, we've had the opportunity to serve on the House Water Committee. The committee has members from all over the state and has talked about a variety of water issues. We are happy that leadership created this committee and put us on it. Water issues should be a priority but haven't gotten enough attention at the state level for far too long.

You may have seen news articles about the committees work and some of the bills being debated. Some would have created substantial change in how water is handled in Kansas. While those bills did not move forward, the issues that drove the policy proposals to be put forward remain. We expect that there will be more discussion later this year and in future legislative sessions about what we collectively should do.

We have long been proponents of local control, and still are. But local control also means local action. If we are going to maintain the economy and quality of life we have enjoyed in Western Kansas, we need to make sure we have water. That means we need to be forward thinking and proactive in addressing groundwater level declines.

We would encourage each of you to act individually on your own property to conserve water. And maybe more importantly since this is a shared resource, become involved in the discussion about our water future. What do you think we should be doing and where do you think we should be going? If we don't address the issue ourselves now, mother nature may take away our ability to address the problem.

As always, please let any of us or your other local leaders know what you think.



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