

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Governor, Stakeholders Discuss Future of Ogallala Aquifer

COLBY – More than 400 Kansans from across the state joined Governor Sam Brownback in Colby, Kan., today for a discussion on the future of the Ogallala Aquifer. The purpose of the Governor's Economic Summit on the Future of the Ogallala Aquifer was to seek input from stakeholders on the individual's role and how the state can support local stakeholders in reaching their goals.

"It is important that any solutions have the direction and support of the people interacting with this resource everyday," Gov. Brownback told summit attendees. "I'm here to hear from you. Let's engage in these important discussions in the great spirit of Dwight Eisenhower. "

The Ogallala Aquifer is the main source of water for all uses in the Western third of the state. Counties located above the Ogallala Aquifer account for roughly 2/3 of the state's agricultural economic value.

"This discussion about the Ogallala Aquifer is key to the economic future of our state," Gov. Brownback said. "Without Ogallala water, agriculture and all of its related businesses could not be sustained, manufacturing could not continue, recreational opportunities would diminish and the towns in the area would cease to exist."

"Managing the Ogallala Aquifer in a way that both benefits agriculture today and sustains the valuable water resource for future generations is crucial to the success of the state," Kansas Secretary of Agriculture Dale Rodman said.

At the Summit, the Governor led a roundtable discussion where he listened and discussed with the attendees incentives aimed at conserving and extending the life of the aquifer while also enhancing the Western Kansas economy. The panel included Brownie Wilson, Kansas Geological Survey; Dr. Bill Golden, Kansas State University; Dr. Joseph Aistrup, Kansas State University; Kansas Ag Bankers represented by Matt Lee; Kansas Agribusiness Retailers Assoc. & Co-op Council represented by Stan Stark; Kansas Dairy Association and Kansas Livestock Association represented by Ted Boersma; Kansas Farm Bureau represented by Steve Baccus; League of Kansas Municipalities represented by Carolyn Armstrong, Colby City Manager and Carl Brewer, League of

Kansas Municipalities President; Western Kansas Rural Economic Development Alliance represented by Neal Gillespie and Western Manufacturer's represented by Andy Davis.

Following the roundtable, the stakeholders broke into small group input sessions to provide their ideas about the Ogallala.

"We are interested in hearing ideas about incentives for conservation that can be provided and disincentives that can be removed," Gov. Brownback said.

One issue discussed at the Summit was the "use it or lose it" concept in Kansas water law as a possible disincentive for conservation. All information and opinions presented at the Summit were recorded and will be incorporated in future discussions leading to long-term solutions for the Ogallala Aquifer.

"We're really pleased with the input we received today," said Kansas Water Office Executive Director Tracy Streeter. "I'd encourage Ogallala stakeholders to stay engaged and continue to provide their ideas and feedback as we continue the dialogue through the Kansas water planning process."

If you have input or ideas about the Ogallala Aquifer you would like to share, contact Chelsea Good with the Kansas Department of Agriculture at 785-296-2653 or chelsea.good@kda.ks.gov or Katie Ingels at the Kansas Water Office at 785-296-3185 or katie.ingels@kwo.ks.gov.

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