

USDA Rural Development and Rural Water District No. 1, Ellsworth County Enter Into Settlement Agreement

The board of directors of Rural Water District No. 1, Ellsworth County (also known as Post Rock) and the Board of Representatives of the Kansas Rural Water Finance Authority recently completed a cooperative agreement to facilitate a debt restructuring for the rural water district. The RWD serves nearly 1,500 patrons in eight counties in central Kansas and was financed by USDA Rural Development. The district has been in operation since the mid-1980s.

A mutually beneficial settlement agreement was reached between USDA Rural Development and Rural Water District No. 1's board of directors. The agreement places the rural water district and its customers on solid financial footing for the future and ensures

ongoing services to the customers of the District.

The settlement agreement restructures outstanding debt and also implements an enhanced governance of the District operations that ensures seamless transition and experienced management as the system plans for future improvements and repairs. A supervisory committee of three members of the Kansas Rural Water Finance Authority governing board and two representatives of the District's board is responsible to oversee operations and overall financial management of the District for a minimum of five years.

USDA Rural Development partnered with the board of directors of the water district and the Kansas Rural Water

Finance Authority to develop the settlement agreement to ensure local input and preserve the system for future generations. A loan was obtained by the District from First Kansas Bank in Ellsworth, Kansas.

The water source for the district is from Kanopolis Reservoir; water is treated by the District through its treatment facility located just south of the Kanopolis Reservoir dam. In addition to the rural customers, the District has contracts to provide wholesale water to the following entities: the cities of Brookville, Dorrance, Gorham, Luray, Paradise, Ellsworth and Waldo. The District also provides water to Saline RWD 7 and Osborne RWD No. 1 and White Energy at Russell.

The issue of our time

Turn off the political bickering and concentrate on one issue: water!

The perpetual argument over global warming has grown weary and has raised some ugly partisan hackles.

It's a debate with no end, some claiming it was dreamed up by liberal, tree-hugging, environmental extremists. Others say it's not a matter of if the Earth is truly warming, thereby draining its arctic waters, raising the worldwide sea level and creating vast numbers of tornadoes, earthquakes and floods. They say it's here already.

Setting that hot potato aside, there is an issue that faces Kansans in equal measure, and it holds the potential of worldwide consequences.

Water.

It's a two-syllable word with robust power.

Gov. Sam Browning sees it as a crisis-in-the-making, and he is right. He has beefed up the Kansas Water Authority and pushed for legislative funds to keep it on the front burner.

At risk are rivers such as the Neosho which gets its water from the John Redmond Reservoir near Burlington. The lake, barely 50 years old, is 40 percent sedimented, meaning it cannot impound sufficient water to provide adequate downstream flow to places like Burlington, Iola, Chanute, Parsons, Oswego and Chetopa. It needs millions of dollars in dredging work, which will cost more than many highways originally cost when constructed.

Optional water resources for local communities also has become high priorities, even in such town as Caney which currently is waiting to get a hook-up to a neighboring Chautauqua County rural water district.

Fact is: just name a town in Kansas and its leaders are worth with the Kansas Water Authority to seek better options of received and keeping water.

At the height of natural resources in Kansas is the wellknown Ogallala Aquifer which is the lifeblood of western and central Kansas. From the underground river flows water that supplies communities, rural water districts and crop irrigation. Without such irrigation, western Kansas could turn back to semi-arid ground, drying up wheat and corn production, and adversely impacting livestock production in that region.

The aquifer yields 30 percent of the nation's irrigated groundwater.

Kansas alone pumps more than 1.3 trillion gallons annually from the aquifer, more than enough to fill Grad Lake in nearby northeast Oklahoma ten times.

Brownback's forward thinking is applaudable, because so far, water has not become the partisan football that we have witness with the global warming issue.

Kansas State University is seeking unparalleled funding to study the Kansas water challenge and help implement workable rules that will make the aquifer last longer.

All we must do is look at the African continent to see how a lack of water has turn into political and cultural unrest – eventually resulting in civil war.

When water spigots run dry, entire community turn into wastelands.

Our debates need to stay intelligent, especially when it comes to water. It remains our most valuable resources, not only to Kansas, but through the world.

– from *Montgomery County Chronicle*