

On the water quantity side, EQIP can help producers develop a procedure and purchase new equipment to convert from irrigated to dryland farming. One technique that may be employed in the procedure is no-till cultivation. A number of areas in western Kansas have been identified where the reduction of water use from the Ogallala Aquifer will likely achieve benefits such as a stabilized water table. If the farmer finds the conversion to be successful, and is located within one of the specific target areas, it is possible that a State Conservation Commission program called the Water Transition Assistance Program (WTAP) could be applied. WTAP can purchase and permanently retire the formerly used irrigation water right. It should be noted that EQIP cannot be used for an irrigation-to-dryland project if the water right is already sold or abandoned. EQIP must come first. The Kansas Water Office published an excellent report on WTAP in October of last year. It can be found at: www.kwo.org/KWO%20HYDRORAM/Article_Oct2008_WTAP.pdf

While the stated goal of WTAP is to restore aquifers and improve streamflows, it is obvious that water systems

relying on these same water sources will indirectly reap the benefits of this program.

I don't know who said it first, but a wise man once said that most things in life worth having don't come easy. If you want to see your neighbors take advantage of this federal program, find out how you can help make it happen. Maybe you can hang some USDA posters where water bills are paid. Maybe your water system can host a meeting where an expert from the local NRCS office can explain how these programs can be utilized. Maybe you can give door prizes or even pay for part of a landowner's water quality improvement project. If it helps your water supply, won't you help?

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Kansas Capacity Development Achievement Awards go to 10 water systems

The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) will award ten public water supply systems with the second annual Capacity Development Achievement Awards. The award program is the first of its kind in the country, and is designed to encourage public water systems to go beyond mere compliance with the Safe Water Drinking Act (SWDA).

"This unique awards program serves as a positive means for encouraging systems to not just meet the standards, but to exceed them," stated John Mitchell, Director of the KDHE Division of Environment. "We're extremely pleased with the results that we're seeing from communities, and look forward to presenting many more of these awards in coming years."

The 2008 Capacity Development Achievement Awards were presented to the following recipients:

City of Assaria
City of Walton
City of Linn

City of Olpe
Harvey County RWD 1
City of Deerfield
Cowley County RWD 4
City of Fowler
City of Larned
City of Hutchinson

Up to five Capacity Development Awards per year are given for systems serving 500 residents or less. Up to five additional awards are given for systems serving populations of between 501 and 3,300 residents. No more than one award each is granted every year for systems serving between 3,301 and 10,000 people; and for 10,001 or more people. In addition, no more than one wholesale water district receives an award each year.

The awards are made possible using EPA funds that are allocated to states, and are just one of many activities that KDHE performs for the purpose of ensuring compliance with the SDWA. The majority of SDWA compliance

activities performed by KDHE include monitoring public water supplies for health and safety, administering low-interest loans to communities that enable them to upgrade and maintain their public water supply treatment systems and providing training and technical assistance to public water supply operators.

The federal SDWA was passed by Congress in 1974 and amended in 1996. The amendments required states to put strategies in place that help public water systems maintain technical, financial and managerial capacity. Originally, the SDWA focused primarily on treatment as the means of providing safe drinking water at the tap. The 1996 amendments greatly enhanced the existing law by recognizing source water protection, operator training, funding for water system improvements and public information as important activities for ensuring safe drinking water from source to tap.