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TESTIMONY

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Senate Agricultural Committee

Consideration of SB272

Jan. 24, 8:30 a.m. RM 159S Statehouse

Chairman Taddiken and members of the Committee:

The City of Wichita is enthusiastically supportive of the efforts by Gov. Brownback and his administration to deal with the ever-changing demands for Kansas water supplies. Current drought conditions across the state are the concern of agricultural and municipal water users alike, and the Committee's timely consideration of this issue is essential.

To ensure that the end result provides the greatest benefit for the greatest number of Kansans, the City of Wichita also urges the Committee to consider some of the unique concerns regarding the Equus Beds aquifer storage and recovery (ASR) project, a primary water source for Wichita residents.

Those concerns include:

- The adequacy of the 1993 baseline for ASR water rights. Intense irrigation use during the drought period puts a heavy demand on the water reserve above the 1993 level. It is conceivable that the water pumped into the aquifer by the ASR project may not be available for municipal use, despite the fact that the costs have been nearly completely shouldered by Wichita water users. An alternative approach would be to give the ASR permits the senior right to all the water pumped into the aquifer.
- Enforcement of current and projected rules and regulations is essential to the integrity of the process. We realize that the Division of Water Resources is severely strained to keep up with the monitoring and enforcement process, especially given the torrent of drought permits issued this past year. We encourage the Governor and State Legislature to adequately staff the agency to meet this demand.
- Preservation of the Equus Bed water levels is essential to warding off the salt brine intrusion from the Burrton well field. Short-term overuse of the aquifer could have severe long term consequences if the quality of reservoir is compromised. Irrigators and municipal users alike have a tremendous stake in the sustainability of this important water source.

