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**Testimony on Water Vision Update to
2015 Special Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources
By Susan Metzger, Assistant Secretary
Kansas Department of Agriculture
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Chairman Schwartz, my name is Susan Metzger and I serve as an Assistant Secretary for the Kansas Department of Agriculture. I appreciate the opportunity to appear today before the Agriculture and Natural Resources Interim Committee to provide an update on the Vision for the Future of Water Supply in Kansas (the Vision).

The Vision called for the development of regional water supply goals by local leadership teams. In August, the Kansas Water Authority approved the goals recommended for the state's fourteen water planning regions. With this recent incorporation of goals, the Vision document is now complete.

In November 2014, Governor Brownback challenged his Administration and the citizens of Kansas to be actively implementing at least 75 percent of the more than 100 Phase I Action Items contained within the Vision by November 2015. As of the date of this interim hearing, one month prior to the 2015 Governor's Water Conference, we are nearing that goal with 70 percent of those action items are under implementation. We are confident we will reach the 75 percent target by the Governor's Water Conference.

Two immediate action items were identified in the Vision, including the creation of the Governor's Water Resources Subcabinet and the establishment of a Blue-Ribbon Task Force to address financing water related activities. The Water Resources Subcabinet includes the executive leadership of the Kansas Department of Agriculture, Kansas Water Office, Kansas Department of Health and Environment, and Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism. The Subcabinet held its first meeting on May 6 and have met monthly since to improve coordination on water related issues. Members of the Subcabinet also traveled jointly to Washington, D.C. in July to meet with Kansas' congressional delegation and leadership from the federal water agencies. Members of the Blue Ribbon Task Force have been identified, and a meeting of the Task Force will be scheduled within the next two months.

Several Phase I Action Items were implemented as policy changes during the 2015 Legislative Session. These policy changes include allowing for the rollover of unused allocations in Multi-Year Flex Accounts for program re-enrollees, giving due consideration for past conservation in programs, allowing augmentation as a means to address impairment in the Rattlesnake Creek Basin, and development of Water Conservation Areas (WCAs).

WCAs are a simple, streamlined and flexible tool allowing any water right owner or group of owners the opportunity to develop a management plan to reduce withdrawals in an effort to extend the usable life of the Ogallala-High Plains aquifer. Since the legislation was signed into law in April, focus has been education and outreach through television, radio, print media, online and one-on-one landowner meetings. Serious interest in the tool has been expressed by water right owners in Groundwater Management Districts (GMDs) #1, #3, and #4. We continue working with these interested water right owners on their WCA management plans with the goal of implementing the first WCA before the end of 2015.

In addition to legislative changes, the Kansas Department of Agriculture is seeking additional stakeholder input on four proposed changes to rules and regulations identified as Phase I Action Items. These include limiting the movement of a point of diversion in areas of significant decline, civil penalties for exceeding authorized quantity of water and for failure to submit water use reports, and clarifying the Department's authority to seal flowmeters.

Implementation of the strategies and action items identified in the Vision remains a high priority for the Department, our sister agencies and our partners. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this update. At the appropriate time I will be available for questions.