



**K-STATE**  
Research and Extension

## Water Primer: Part 6

# Water Agencies in Kansas

Water is vital to all aspects of human life and activities such as direct consumption, livestock production, agriculture, industry, recreation, and waste disposal. Water is also essential to natural ecosystems and aquatic systems. One reflection of the many and varied uses of water is the many federal, state, and local governmental agencies that have water resource management responsibilities. The following agencies have continuous water responsibilities, but the list is not comprehensive.

### Federal Agencies

**Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)** ([www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov)) — The EPA's purpose is to protect human health and the environment by developing and enforcing regulations based on the laws passed by Congress. The EPA is divided into 12 offices or branches with 10 regional offices to address its many responsibilities. Kansas is in EPA Region 7. One branch of the EPA is the Office of Water (OW), which has responsibilities to ensure that drinking water is safe and to restore and maintain oceans and watershed aquatic ecosystems. The OW is further divided into several divisions, two of which are the Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water (OGWDW) and the Office of Wastewater Management (OWM).

The OGWDW provides administrative and technical support to federal, state, tribal, county, and local agencies, as well as the public, for issues pertaining to the protection of underground and surface water sources of drinking water and the biological, physical, and chemical quality of treated drinking water. Under the mandates of the Safe Drinking Water Act, the Source Water Protection/Wellhead Protection and Underground Injection Control Programs are concerned with the protection of sources of drinking water, and the Public Water System Supervision Program regulates the quality of treated drinking water.

The OWM has a range of programs that encourage the protection and restoration of watersheds, especially programs related to effective and responsible water use, treatment, disposal, and management. Programs also encourage protection and restoration of watersheds.

**Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)** ([www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov)) — The NRCS is part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and its mission is to provide national leadership for the conservation of soil, water, and related natural resources by providing technical assistance and cooperative conservation programs to landowners and land managers.

**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers** ([www.usace.army.mil](http://www.usace.army.mil)) — The Army Corps of Engineers provides public engineering services to strengthen national security, energize the economy, and reduce risks from disasters. The Corps is responsible for a variety of projects affecting water resources including disaster preparedness and response, flood protection, hydropower, navigable waters, recreation opportunities, regulatory oversight, and water supply.

**U.S. Bureau of Reclamation** ([www.usbr.gov](http://www.usbr.gov)) — The Bureau of Reclamation is part of the U.S. Department of Interior and is responsible for managing water resources in the western United States, including Kansas.



**U.S. Geological Survey (USGS)** ([www.usgs.gov](http://www.usgs.gov)) — The USGS conducts water-related research and water inventories. It provides information to help the public better understand the geology of Kansas, with special emphasis on natural resources of economic value, water quality and quantity, and geologic hazards.

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service** ([www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov)) — The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's mission is to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for future generations.

## State Agencies

**Kansas Water Office** ([kwo.ks.gov](http://kwo.ks.gov)) and **Kansas Water Authority** — The Water Office coordinates the Kansas water planning process in concert with the Kansas Water Authority. The Kansas Water Authority is responsible for advising the Governor, Legislature, and Director of the Kansas Water Office on policy issues and for approving the *Kansas Water Plan* and revisions, federal contracts, administrative regulations, and legislation proposed by the Kansas Water Office. The Water Authority submits an annual report to the Governor and Legislature containing recommendations for funding to implement the State Water Plan.

**Kansas Department of Agriculture, Division of Water Resources (DWR)** ([agriculture.ks.gov/divisions-programs/dwr](http://agriculture.ks.gov/divisions-programs/dwr)) — DWR administers 32 laws and the Kansas Water Appropriation Act, which governs how water is allocated and used; statutes regulating the construction of dams, levees, and other changes to streams; and the state's four interstate river compacts. It also coordinates authority for the national flood insurance program in Kansas.

**Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE)** ([www.kdheks.gov](http://www.kdheks.gov)) — KDHE has water quality administration responsibilities through the Division of Environment. The Division conducts regulatory programs involving public water supplies, industrial discharges, wastewater treatment systems, solid waste landfills, hazardous waste, air emissions, radioactive materials, asbestos removal, refined petroleum storage tanks, and other potential pollution sources that affect the environment. In addition, the Division administers programs to remediate contamination, reduce nonpoint pollution, and evaluate

environmental conditions across the state. The Bureau of Water is responsible for carrying out programs under the Federal Clean Water Act and the Safe Drinking Water Act. The Bureau of Environmental Field Services gathers and analyzes data to identify environmental conditions and trends for regulatory, technical, and pollution prevention purposes.

**Kansas Department of Agriculture, Division of Conservation (DOC)** ([agriculture.ks.gov/divisions-programs/division-of-conservation](http://agriculture.ks.gov/divisions-programs/division-of-conservation)) — The DOC administers programs to improve water quality, reduce soil erosion, conserve water, reduce flood potential, and provide local water supplies. The DOC has the responsibility to administer the Conservation Districts Law, the Watershed District Act, and other statutes authorizing various programs. The DOC works with the state's 105 local conservation districts, the 88 organized watershed districts, other special-purpose districts, and state and federal entities to administer conservation programs.

**Kansas Biological Survey (KBS)** ([kbs.ku.edu](http://kbs.ku.edu)) — KBS is a non-regulatory agency with a programming focus on environmental and biological research and natural history. The KBS is a research and service center of the University of Kansas (KU) and an agency of the State of Kansas.

**Kansas Corporation Commission (KCC)** ([www.kcc.state.ks.us](http://www.kcc.state.ks.us)) — The KCC has statutory responsibility for ensuring that natural gas, electricity, telephone, and transportation vendors provide safe, adequate, and reliable services at reasonable rates. The KCC also has the mandate of assuring that oil and gas producers protect correlative rights and environmental resources.

**Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT)** ([www.kdwpt.state.ks.us](http://www.kdwpt.state.ks.us)) — KDWPT's mission is to enhance, conserve, and promote the natural, historical, cultural, and wildlife resources of Kansas. This entails many programs, including documenting the range and distribution of stream species through a survey that uses stream population data to enhance management decisions and assess the overall conditions of Kansas streams. The KDWPT operates more than 40 fishing lakes in the state and offers a variety of programs to help private landowners improve fish and wildlife habitats on their property.

**Kansas Geological Survey (KGS)** ([www.kgs.ku.edu](http://www.kgs.ku.edu)) — The KGS conducts water-related research and water inventories. KGS also provides information to help the public better understand the geology of Kansas with special emphasis on natural resources of economic value, water quality and quantity, and geologic hazards.

**Kansas State University Research and Extension (KSRE)** ([www.ksre.ksu.edu](http://www.ksre.ksu.edu)) — Kansas State University Research and Extension is a partnership between Kansas State University and federal, state, and county governments, with offices in every county. KSRE's mission includes promoting a safe, sustainable, competitive food and fiber system and strong, healthy communities, families, and youth through integrated research, analysis, and education.

**Kansas Department of Commerce (KDOC)** ([www.kansascommerce.com](http://www.kansascommerce.com)) — The mission of KDOC is to foster economic development through the promotion of business, commerce, and industry as related to water resources.

## Local

**Groundwater Management Districts** — Groundwater Management Districts provide water-use administration, planning, and information. Five groundwater management districts were created in the 1970s in the western and central parts of the state. The primary use of ground water in these areas is irrigation, although several districts also face issues of municipal supply. The districts are governed by local boards and have been instrumental in providing information and identifying research and regulatory needs within their boundaries.

### Groundwater Management Districts in Kansas:

Western Kansas GMD #1	<a href="http://www.gmd1.org">www.gmd1.org</a>
Equus Beds GMD #2	<a href="http://www.gmd2.org">www.gmd2.org</a>
Southwest Kansas GMD #3	<a href="http://www.gmd3.org">www.gmd3.org</a>
Northwest Kansas GMD #4	<a href="http://www.gmd4.org">www.gmd4.org</a>
Big Bend GMD #5	<a href="http://www.gmd5.org">www.gmd5.org</a>

**Kansas Rural Water Association (KRWA)** ([www.krwa.net](http://www.krwa.net)) — The Kansas Rural Water Association provides education and technical assistance to small cities, rural water districts, and investor-owned utilities to enhance public health and sustain Kansas communities.

**County Soil and Water Conservation Districts** ([www.kacdnet.org/](http://www.kacdnet.org/)) — The Dust Bowl prompted the passage of the Conservation District Law by Kansas legislature in 1937, leading to the formation of conservation districts. A conservation district is the primary local unit of government responsible for the conservation of soil, water, and related natural resources within the county boundary. Conservation districts address a wide range of environmental concerns, including agricultural and urban erosion and sediment control, water quality, water quantity, range and pasture management, fish and wildlife habitat, and other natural resource management issues.

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