AN ACT concerning water; relating to the water rights conservation program; amending K.S.A. 2010 Supp. 82a-718 and 82a-731 and repealing the existing sections.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Kansas:

New Section 1. (a) The chief engineer may administer a water rights conservation program. An eligible water right in good standing may be enrolled in the program, subject to the approval of the chief engineer.

(b) The enrollment period for the program shall not exceed 10 years. A water right enrolled in the program may be re-enrolled within two years of the expiration date of the previous enrollment period, subject to the approval of the chief engineer.

(c) Each application for enrollment in the program and each application for renewal of enrollment shall include a non-refundable fee not to exceed $300.

(d) All fees collected by the chief engineer pursuant to this section shall be remitted to the state treasurer as provided in K.S.A. 82a-731, and amendments thereto.

(e) The chief engineer shall adopt rules and regulations to effectuate and administer the provisions of this section.

Sec. 2. K.S.A. 2010 Supp. 82a-718 is hereby amended to read as follows: 82a-718. (a) All appropriations of water must be for some beneficial purpose. Every water right of every kind shall be deemed abandoned and shall terminate when without due and sufficient cause no lawful, beneficial use is henceforth made of water under such right for five successive years. Before any water right shall be declared abandoned and terminated the chief engineer shall conduct a hearing thereon. Notice shall be served on the user at least 30 days before the date of the hearing. The determination of the chief engineer pursuant to this section shall be subject to review in accordance with the provisions of K.S.A. 2010 Supp. 82a-1901, and amendments thereto.

The verified report of the chief engineer or such engineer's authorized representative shall be prima facie evidence of the abandonment and termination of any water right.

(b) When no lawful, beneficial use of water under a water right has
been reported for three successive years, the chief engineer shall notify the user, by certified mail, return receipt requested, that: (1) No lawful, beneficial use of the water has been reported for three successive years; (2) if no lawful, beneficial use is made of the water for five successive years, the right may be terminated; and (3) the right will not be terminated if the user shows that for one or more of the five consecutive years the beneficial use of the water was prevented or made unnecessary by circumstances that are due and sufficient cause for nonuse, which circumstances shall be included in the notice.

(c) The provisions of subsection (a) shall not apply to a water right that has not been declared abandoned and terminated before the effective date of this act if the five years of successive nonuse occurred exclusively and entirely before January 1, 1990. However, the provisions of subsection (a) shall apply if the period of five successive years of nonuse began before January 1, 1990, and continued after that date.

(d) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (a), an eligible water right enrolled in and continually in compliance with the water rights conservation program, pursuant to section 1, and amendments thereto, shall be deemed to have due and sufficient cause for nonuse and shall not be deemed abandoned.

(e) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (a), a groundwater right, which has as its local supply an aquifer area that has been closed to new appropriations by rule, regulation or order of the chief engineer and where means of diversion are available to put water to a beneficial use within a reasonable time, shall be deemed to have due and sufficient cause for nonuse and shall not be deemed abandoned.

Sec. 3. K.S.A. 2010 Supp. 82a-731 is hereby amended to read as follows: 82a-731. There is hereby created in the state treasury the water appropriation certification fund. The chief engineer of the division of water resources of the Kansas department of agriculture shall remit all moneys received under K.S.A. 82a-708a, 82a-708b and 82a-727, and amendments thereto, and section 1, and amendments thereto, to the state treasurer in accordance with the provisions of K.S.A. 75-4215, and amendments thereto. Upon receipt of each such remittance, the state treasurer shall deposit the entire amount in the state treasury to the credit of the water appropriation certification fund. All expenditures from the water appropriation certification fund shall be made in accordance with appropriation acts upon warrants of the director of accounts and reports issued pursuant to vouchers approved by the secretary of agriculture or by a person designated by the secretary.

Sec. 4. K.S.A. 2010 Supp. 82a-718 and 82a-731 are hereby repealed.

Sec. 5. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after its publication in the statute book.