

Water District No. 1 of Johnson County

**To: Chairman Sloan
Members of the House Committee on Water & Environment**

**From: Darci Meese, Manager Legal/Government Relations
WaterOne (Water District No. 1 Johnson County)**

Date: January 30th, 2018

RE: Testimony in Opposition to House Bill 2513

On behalf of WaterOne, I want to thank the Committee for keeping the discussion of water funding in play. We would also like to express our gratitude for the \$1.2 Million allocation from the 2017 Legislature.

WaterOne remains firm in its position that no new fees should be imposed upon users until the State begins to transfer the funds mandated by statute--\$2 Million from EDIF (K.S.A. 79-4804) and \$6 Million from the State General Fund (K.S.A. 82a-953a). These transfers have not occurred since 2008, which means the State is approximately \$80 Million behind in its funding obligations. Stakeholders should not be expected to increase their fees until the State makes good on its obligation.

WaterOne continues to support the recommendation of the Blue Ribbon Task Force to dedicate 1/10th of a cent of the existing sales tax to the Water Plan Fund. At the Governor's Water Conference, we heard about the success other States have had using this approach and the model exists in our neighboring State. The Missouri Parks, Soils and Water Sales Tax was created through a constitutional amendment and earmarked specifically for the state park system and efforts to stop soil erosion and improve water quality. The tax was first approved by voters in 1984 and has since been reapproved by voters four times in 1988, 1996, 2006 and 2016. At least two-thirds of voters approved the tax the last four times it has been up for renewal. In addition, revenues from the Parks, Soils and Water Sales Tax allowed Missouri to have the highest reduction in its rate of soil erosion when compared to other states with more than 10 million acres of cultivated cropland. Attached you will find a handout with additional information about the Program.

It is understood that the State of Kansas is facing economic challenges. This is in part because addressing those challenges has been pushed to another day until now a crisis exists. When it comes to water resources, we should not wait for a crisis to act. There is nothing more vital to the success of the State of Kansas than an ample and quality water supply for its citizens.

We would urge this Committee to continue the conversation regarding the Blue Ribbon Task Force recommendation. There may be creative solutions such as phasing in small increments of the sales tax carve off or setting the effective date in the future. An interim source of funding would be to restore the \$6 million General Fund Transfer and the \$2 million EDIF transfer.

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CONSERVING SOIL AND WATER FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

The Parks, Soils and Water Sales Tax

The Soil and Water Conservation Program works to conserve Missouri's soil and water for future generations. The program includes several voluntary programs that provide agricultural landowners with incentives for using soil and water conservation practices.

About the Parks, Soils and Water Sales Tax

• The Parks, Soils and Water Sales Tax is a statewide one-tenth-of-one percent sales tax that provides funding for Missouri state parks and historic sites and soil and water conservation efforts. The tax is divided equally between the two efforts.

• The Parks, Soils and Water Sales Tax was first approved by voters in 1984, and has since been reappraised by voters three times. In 1988, 1996 and 2006, the tax was renewed by more than two-thirds majority of Missouri voters.



- The Soil and Water Conservation Program is funded by the Parks, Soils and Water Sales Tax.
- The portion of the Parks, Soils and Water Sales Tax that supports soil and water conservation averages about \$7 a year per Missourian.
- The Parks, Soils and Water Sales Tax is placed on the ballot every 10 years to reaffirm the voter's support of the park system and soil and water conservation efforts. The Parks, Soils and Water Sales Tax is set to expire if not renewed by voters in 2016.

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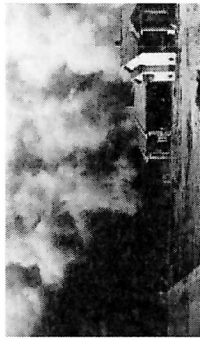
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BEFORE THE PARKS, SOILS AND WATER SALES TAX



- In the 1930s, Americans realized how devastating soil erosion could be as the Dust Bowl swept across the nation, relocating an estimated 300 million

tons of soil. Missouri had the highest rate of erosion in the nation, which led to the creation of the Missouri Soil and Water Conservation Districts in 1943.

- In 1982, Missouri was losing soil at a rate of 10.8 tons per acre each year on cultivated cropland.

SOIL EROSION IN MISSOURI

- Due to the efforts of the Missouri Soil and Water Conservation Program, Missouri has saved more than 177 million tons of soil over the past 30 years.
- Of Missouri's 44.6 million acres of land, 14.8 million are considered cropland. With almost half of Missouri's cropland soil classified as highly erodible, controlling and minimizing erosion is a significant challenge for Missouri's farmers.
- Erosion can cause problems by washing away the productive topsoil, which adversely affects local and national food supplies and economies.
- Soil erosion caused by stormwater runoff carries fertilizers away from the fields and into the waterways. The soil entering the waterway can cause water quality problems that continue far downstream.
- Eroded soil settling along the shores and beds of streams, lakes and rivers can lead to the destruction of valuable aquatic habitat such as fish spawning areas.
- Soil and contaminated water entering drinking water supply systems each year can increase water treatment costs, which raises utility bills for Missouri households.
- Revenues from the Parks, Soils and Water Sales Tax have resulted in Missouri having the greatest soil erosion reduction rate of any other state with more than 10 million acres of cultivated cropland.

HOW WE HELP

- The Department of Natural Resources has provided over \$660 million to Missouri agricultural landowners to implement more than 220,000 conservation practices using revenues from the Parks, Soils and Water Sales Tax.
- **Grants to Districts:** Each of the 114 soil and water conservation districts in Missouri receive district grants. These grants are used by local district boards to fund technical assistance for landowners and provide information and educational programs.
- **Cost-Share Program:** This program shares the cost of implementing conservation practices between the state and landowners. It provides partial reimbursement of the cost for the installation of soil and water conservation practices that prevent or control excessive erosion and improve water quality. These practices include buffers, grazing systems, cover crops and sediment basins.
- **Research and Monitoring:** The program provides funding for research and water quality monitoring. These efforts identify new methods for soil and water conservation practices that produce the best results for preventing erosion and protecting water quality.

PUBLIC INPUT



- The Soil and Water Districts Commission holds meetings, usually six times a year, that are open to the public. The commission develops statewide policies in accordance with their Soil and Water District's input and helps local landowners with their soil and water conservation efforts.

- County Soil and Water District Boards usually hold monthly meetings that are open to the public.

