

Water level shows dramatic drop

WICHITA (AP) — Well-water levels throughout drought-plagued western Kansas dropped at twice normal rate in the last year, with parts of the dwindling Ogallala Aquifer falling as much as 12 feet, according to tests conducted by the Kansas Geological Survey.

In a typical year, well-water levels drop from a few inches in parts of the northwest to a few feet in west-central Kansas. In the southwest part of the state, water levels typically drop three to five feet, and occasionally six feet, in normal years.

The drawdown varied throughout the region, but generally it was double those numbers, said Rick Miller, chief of the survey's exploration services.

Southwest Kansas — among the area hardest hit by drought — saw water levels in the aquifer fall 12 feet or more, Miller said.

"Water levels are dropping faster in the southwest, but they have the greatest amount of saturated thickness (of the aquifer) in general," Miller said. "They have more water to work with."

The Ogallala stretches from northern Texas to South Dakota and

County offers to pay for sorting

TRASH, from Page 1

coming in for less than 3,000 tons," Tiede said. "I don't see it happening."

"We are all Sherman County residents," said John Garcia, "and we need to find a way to keep this in the county, and the best solution to the sorting problem is to put it in the hands of the county."

"The city doesn't want to keep this no matter what," he said. "We can't speak for them, but think it is not good to take the money out of the state. The residents are a the mercy of the city and county."

Rasure thanked the audience members for their comments. "This is a people issue and affects all of us."

"No matter what we decide somebody is going to be unhappy," Commissioner Chuck Thomas said.

Rasure said he felt the county taking over the collection system would work and that the county could make it efficient, but he then suggested a counter proposal.

Based on the question from Hurd at the public forum, Rasure said the county would employ the people to separate the trash, and absorb the cost.

As part of that he proposed that the city consider establishing a collection point where citizens could bring small items like toasters and small pieces of wood to get them out of the regular dumpsters.

He also proposed that the city implement a special construction and demolition fee to be part of the building permit process. The fee would cover the cost of a special dumpster for handling the debris from the building project, and if the person handled this material without using the special dumpster the fee could be refunded.

"That is all on the city side," Tiede said. "It would be a help to us. I think we can hire another sorter as long as the trash remains reasonably clean as it is now."

"I'm all new to this," Thomas said, "but I think that is a good alternative."

"I believe the main problem is that the collection system is not compatible with what has to be sorted under the small arid landfill regulations," Way said.

Kevin suggested the county develop a formal letter to the city laying out the details of the county proposal.

The main features of the proposal Rasure listed

- That the city keep the collection system as it is now.
- The county would hire and pay for the extra sorting help at the transfer station.
- The city would help keep the small construction and demolition materials out of the waste stream, and add a special construction dumpster fee to their building permit process.

These points are to be presented in a formal letter to the city commissioners who are expected to hear a proposal from U.S. Waste Industries of Colorado Springs at their meeting on Monday, Feb. 3.

"I want to compliment Daniels, Reid and Garcia for their help and their proposal," Rasure said. "I think it is a good proposal."

"With the state cuts we need to find ways to work together," he said. "Now it is everybody's issue."

is a major source of water on the High Plains. Rural irrigation in western Kansas has been drawing water from the aquifer faster than nature can replace it.

"If the recharge rate is a few inches a year, and you lose five to 10 feet a year, it is pretty basic math at that point," Miller said. "We burnt two years in one last year in


terms of water available."

Those counties showing the greatest amount of well-water drawdown were Haskell, Gray and Finney counties, Miller said.

Wayne Bossert, director of Groundwater District No. 4 in Colby, said the state is managing the depletion by stricter management of "high priority" areas of the aquifer where water is in shorter supply.

"It is not the first drought that has come along, and it won't be the last drought," Bossert said. "While it certainly focuses everyone's attention on things, it doesn't mean what is happening now is wrong or inadequate."


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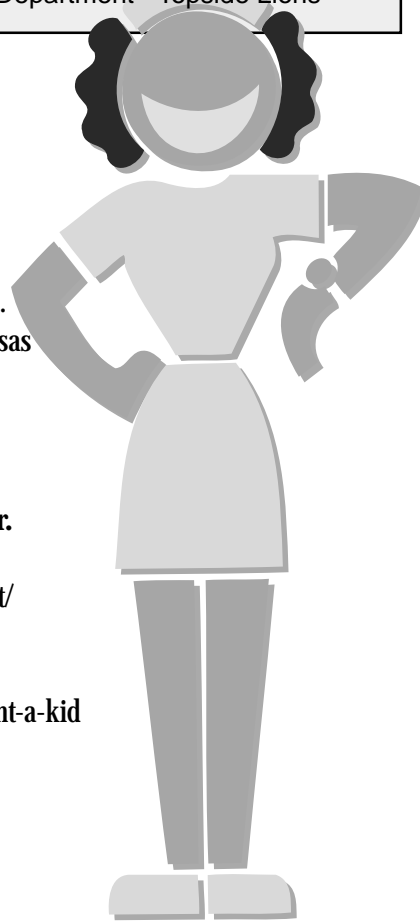
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