

Area Legislator Voices Concerns About Water Transfer Plan

(KNZA)--An area Kansas legislator says he has concerns about the feasibility of a plan to transfer surplus Missouri River water to western Kansas, where the underground aquifer is being rapidly depleted.

Senator Dennis Pyle, of rural Hiawatha, discuss the proposal at a Legislative Coffee and Issues Meeting held Saturday in Hiawatha sponsored by the Brown County Farm Bureau Association.

A \$300,000 study being funded by the Kansas Water Office and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will update one completed in 1982 that proposed building a 360-mile aqueduct from near White Cloud in northeast Kansas to a location near Utica in Western Kansas. The cost at that time was pegged at \$3.6 billion to build the system, which would include pumping stations and collection reservoirs. As much as 4 million acre-feet of water could be diverted.

Pyle, a member of the Senate Natural Resources Committee, said he discussed his concerns about the plan with Kansas Water Office Director Tracy Streeter and Kansas Secretary of Agriculture Jackie McClaskey. He says he suggested the state first look at the stream flows in the spring during heavy rain and runoff coming out of Tuttle Creek, Milford and Melvern Reservoirs. Pyle says he believes it would be more feasible to look at capturing those waters.

If the proposed 360-mile canal is built, Pyle questions just how much water would actually reach western Kansas.

Pyle says western Kansas is taking steps to alleviate some of the use on the Ogallala Aquifer, but there are other things they are probably going to have to do. He said some farmers may have to give up raising corn and go to sorghum or cotton.

Many Signals Communications