

Kansas Water Committee Meets in White Cloud

(KTNC)-- A Kansas Water Office committee that's looking into the feasibility of building a system to pump excess water from the Missouri River water west, primarily to replace dwindling water in the High Plains Aquifer, met at the Iowa Tribe's Community Building in White Cloud Wednesday afternoon.

The committee looked at three aspects of the project – a legislative and legal review, water demand for irrigation and municipal purposes, and alternatives to the proposed system.

Water Office director Tracy Streeter says they're redesigning a 1982 Corps of Engineers study to reflect today's political, economic and environmental climate.

Plans call for building a 19,000-acre reservoir near White Cloud. Water would be pumped through a series of canals – mostly uphill – 380 miles to another reservoir.

Construction costs range as high as nearly \$70 billion for a pipeline system.

Much of the talk Wednesday focused on the proposal to build the reservoir near White Cloud. Many local residents were skeptical about that aspect of the project.

Iowa Tribal Chairman, and committee stakeholder, Tim Rhodd says the Tribe wants to ensure that Tribal Water Rights are preserved.

The process is in the preliminary stages. Streeter says they want to provide updated costs and information to policymakers who will make the final decision whether to proceed with the project. Whatever decision is made, construction is a long way off. Streeter says engineers estimate it will take at least 20 years to construct any aqueduct. The decision whether to go forward with construction will fall to a future Kansas legislature, and the federal government also might have a say in the process.

Some suggested Wednesday that western Kansas farmers should address their water shortage through conservation and growing more drought resistant crops. Committee members from western Kansas, though, said they already are doing those things.

Many Signals Communications