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THE KANSAS WATER PLAN

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When we first started looking at developing a state water plan for Kansas, we thought it would be appropriate to assess past planning efforts so we could avoid repeating mistakes of our predecessors. We found the issue of water planning was nothing new—mankind has been involved in water planning for thousands of years.

One of the interesting water planning projects we discovered was a little known historical fact that may provide a foundation for future planning. It had to do with Moses. When Moses was leading the multitudes out of Egypt, he came to the banks of the Red Sea and, of course, they were blocked. Moses turned and saw a big cloud of dust off in the distance that was being raised by the pharaoh's army in hot pursuit. Moses called his three top advisors together and said, "It looks to me like we have two options here. One is to turn and fight; or, I'll get up on this rock, raise my staff and try to part these waters so we can escape across the floor of the sea." He turned to his first advisor who was his engineer and said, "What do you think?" His chief engineer replied, "Well, Moses, I don't know anything about military tactics. I can't advise you on our chances if we fight. I can tell you

this, from my calculations, if you succeed in parting these waters you'll raise the level of the sea several feet and you'll flood millions of acres." Moses said, "Thank you very much." He looked to his second advisor, his attorney, and he asked, "What do you think?" His attorney responded, "Moses, I'm like the engineer. I don't know anything about military tactics, but I can tell you this—if the engineer is right and we flood all that land, we are going to have lawsuits on our hands for years to come." Moses turned to his third advisor who was his public relations officer and said, "What do you think?" His public relations officer said, "Moses, I'm like the first two. I can't advise you about fighting. I can tell you this, if you succeed in parting those waters and we get out of this alive, I guarantee you three full pages in the Old Testament!"

Some things have not changed much since the time of Moses when it comes to dealing with water. There are still many people involved and major decisions are made for different kinds of reasons. We discovered that in 1917 the Kansas legislature passed a law that mandated the preparation of a state water plan and created the State Water Commission to prepare the plan. We have a very patient group of legislators in

Kansas. They waited ten years for the water plan to be prepared but it never came forward. They then passed a law in 1927 that abolished the State Water Commission and assigned the job to the State Board of Agriculture. Their patience was really tested as they waited from 1927 to 1947 for the water plan. No plan came forward. In 1955 the legislature passed yet another law and created an organization called the State Water Resources Board to prepare a state water plan. They waited from 1955 to 1978 and no water plan came forward. As a consequence, in 1978 the governor convened a group of people and asked them to sit down, talk about water issues and come up with a proposal for Kansas' water needs. These people were from a cross section of Kansas and included people from government and the private sector. The group met for 18 months and wrote a report called the *Governor's Task Force on Water*. Their basic proposal was, astonishingly, that Kansas needed a water plan.

The 1978 effort differed from the 1917, 1927, and 1955 efforts in that this group went the extra step and determined what the state water plan should be. They wanted a plan that dealt with policy issues including sections devoted to water management, water conservation, and water quality. Although fish and wildlife issues were left out initially, they were added subsequently. The group also believed the state water plan should include a section for each major river basin in the state. We still didn't have a water plan but for the first time in 80 years we finally had the framework for one.

It is important to keep in mind that the participants who wrote the report represented the first group to come to a consensus about what was needed. The movers and shakers in Kansas, those who were really interested in this issue and who knew it needed to be addressed, agreed up front on architecture of a plan. This was absolutely essential to Kansas' success in ultimately developing a water plan. Before we started writing, we had agreed on what the plan was going to look like.

In 1981 the legislature and the governor agreed to create yet another organization called the State Water Office and assigned it the responsibility of preparing the state water plan. Before initiating the planning process the Water Office reviewed the water plans of other states. Generally we found that most existing water plans were as big as the Chicago telephone book. They were out-of-date before they were finished and were sitting on a shelf. Those involved with developing the plans complained that nobody had paid any attention to their report and nothing was being done.

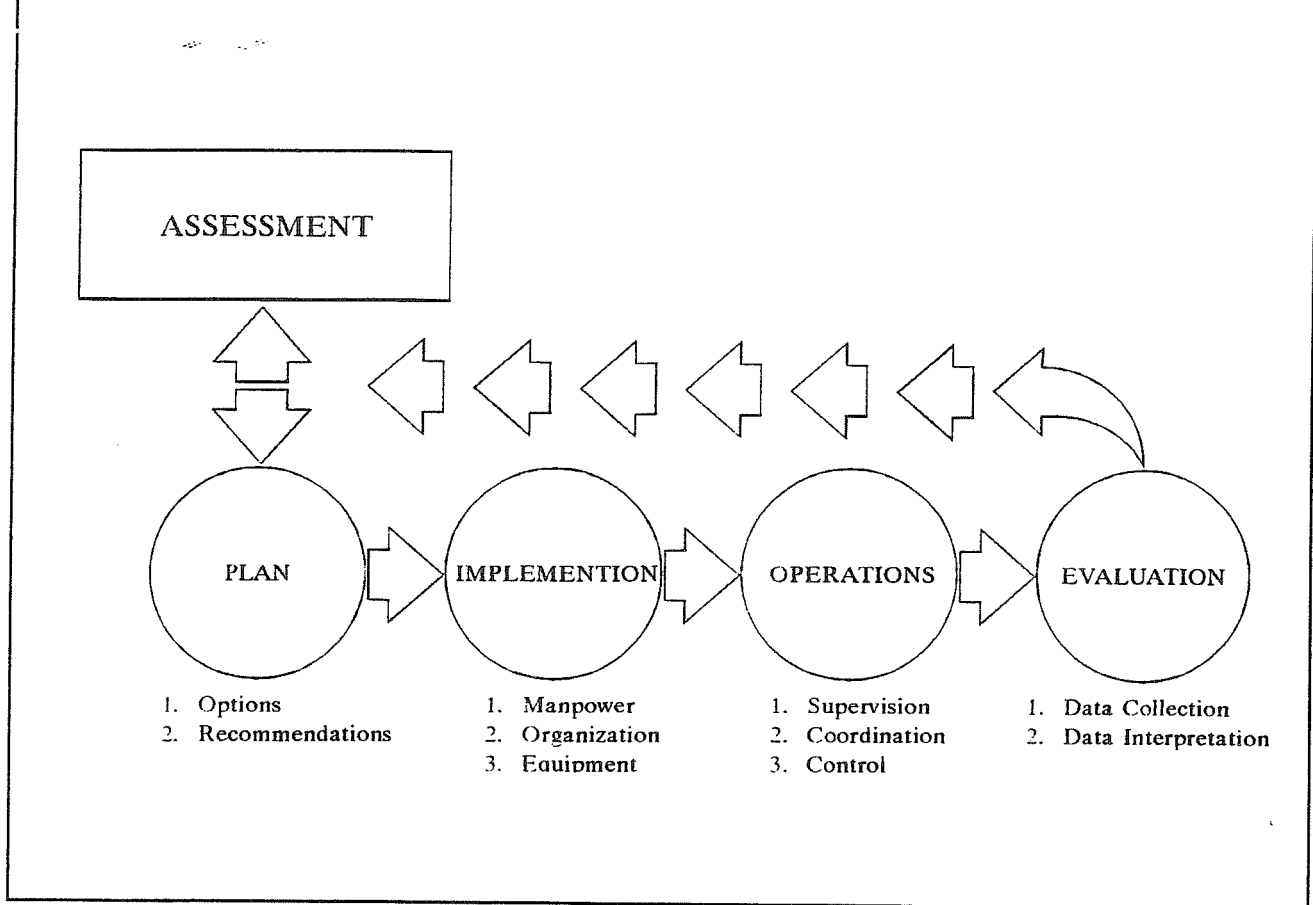
In Kansas, we decided that we wanted nothing to do with an exercise that required enormous energy, time and resources, only to have no one pay attention to it. Our diagnosis of the problems we saw in other states was straightforward and simple. The key weakness in state water planning around the country ten years ago was that water planning was out of context with the states' management processes, the processes through which the states made decisions.

Table 1 depicts a fundamental management principle in which I strongly believe. It is a simple process that everyone of you in this room uses in some way or another if you run an organization, if you manage a ranch, if you operate a business. You develop a plan, the strategy to implement the plan, execute the plan and have a means to evaluate the plan. The plan is revised depending on the evaluation results and the whole process begins again. It is a fundamentally rational process.

If applied to state government, the process cycles on an annual basis, at least it does in Kansas and most other states. The governor usually prepares and proposes a budget yearly. That budget is eventually funded and then implemented. Each year the governor submits a proposal for a new budget, the legislature evaluates it, and the cycle repeats itself. We decided it was crucial for the water planning process to be integrated into the state's management system. We repeat the entire process each year in order to have a document that can be used by the governor in his budget and policy proposals to the legislature. Water issues surface yearly, and if you do not revise your plan to reflect current issues, no one is going to pay any attention to you after a couple of years. They will retreat to the same old ad hoc policy development process and the planners will be off the field and in the cheap seats.

The fundamental concept becomes a little more complicated in Kansas because we have eight water agencies. One state agency deals with water quality, another regulates oil and gas, another deals with watershed development, another regulates pesticide use, another administers water rights and another conducts water planning. In other words, there is not one but a whole set of agency management processes. We had to develop a planning process that integrated the planning of all state water agencies, so that the plan did not become the water plan of a single agency, but a plan representing the joint efforts of eight water agencies all speaking with a common voice. We knew that if the plan represented only one agency, we would go before

TABLE 1. Fundamental Management Principle



the legislature and seven other agencies would be there to shoot us down.

Every policy issue addressed in the planning process is discussed by a technical advisory committee comprised of individuals competent to deal with specific issues. We did not care whether they work for state, federal or local agencies, private organizations, or whether they are private citizens. We find the best eight or nine people and ask them to sit down at a table and noodle the issue. A staff member then prepares a background paper on the issue. Keep in mind that there are many groups meeting simultaneously.

After the background paper is prepared, it is taken to the state water authority which determines if the paper is complete enough for the purposes of drafting a subsection of the state water plan. With water authority approval, staff develops a draft subsection of the state water plan. It is then taken back to the water authority to determine if it is in good enough shape for public review. If so, it is taken to 12 public meetings

held throughout the state for public scrutiny. The results of those meetings are then used to redraft the subsection. The redrafted subsection goes back again to the state water authority. The water authority determines whether it has been sufficiently improved and whether or not it is responsive to the public input. If it is determined that it meets these requirements, two formal hearings are held, one at each end of the state. The results of those hearings are reviewed by the water authority again, and if the subsection is still alive, it is put in final form and adopted as a component of the water plan.

Every new issue in the water plan is subjected to the same process. At the end of a 12-month cycle, the updated plan is sent to the governor and the legislature.

Developing 12 basin plans follows the same process as the policy sections. Instead of ad hoc technical advisory committees, we have a permanent advisory committee comprised of 12 members from each basin.

After a basin plan is drafted it goes through the same laborious process of public meetings and public hearings as do policy issues.

Does it pay off? It has paid off for us because the majority of recommendations in the water plan get done because so many people have reached a consensus up front. The legislature is accustomed to having people come before committees and argue and fuss. The legislators are very happy to have people with divergent points of view come in and say, "We worked this out. We are all in agreement with the subsection of the water plan and we think it ought to be passed." It is a whole different approach to dealing with the legislature.

Now we get to the implementation phase and that means money. Much of what we want to do in the basin plans costs money. We designed a process for allocating funds called the Annual Implementation Plan. Every year in addition to the planning process, there is a separate process which includes developing a detailed budget for each of the state's 12 river basins. The budgets are subjected to the scrutiny of the basin advisory committees, which advise the water authority at two different stages during budget preparation. Ultimately a single budget for water issues in all 12 basins is finalized and submitted to the governor in time for the governor to prepare annual budget recommendations.

Several years ago the legislature created a special fund for implementing the annual state water plan recommendations. Thus, we do not submit a wish list to the legislature. We know exactly how much money we have each year for implementing the water plan, about \$16 million. We recommend to the governor and legislature the priority issues in each of the 12 basins. In the past five years, under two different governors, virtually no changes have been made in the proposed budgets and nearly every recommendation has been funded and is in the process of being implemented. It goes back to the issue of having a consensus up front.

Who are the strongest advocates for those budgets when they go before the legislature and the governor? Obviously, they are the leaders in the basin areas throughout the state because they feel they have been treated fairly and those budget proposals represent their priority needs. The representatives and senators from those parts of the state are told by their constituents that they played a part in the budget development, it represents their priority recommendations, and, yes, they think their representatives should approve it. As a consequence, we have been very successful in obtaining funds for implementation.

When we began our efforts, we had two major obstacles to get the state bureaucracy to switch its behavior and think and act in terms of natural boundaries. Each of the eight state agencies had a different set of administrative boundaries. No two were alike, one agency had four boundaries and another one had two. Thus we were dealing with 14 separate administrative boundaries that did not reflect the state's natural boundaries. In our plan, we had budgeted by basin, but we did not have an administrative mechanism in any one of the eight agencies to implement the budget.

A second problem was that historically, we had set up all our state activities along categorical lines so that one staff member deals with water wells, another with oil wells, another with disposal wells, somebody else in another agency deals with waste dumps, and so forth. Nobody has responsibility for the big picture. Each staff member is doing their own thing in their field. We are making a concerted effort to change that thinking so that a piece of geography is seen as a common responsibility for all agencies that deal with it. Agency staff must work together and start communicating with each other about implementing and managing their programs. To encourage better communication, we created basin coordinating teams for each basin. Teams meet and work regularly on developing basin budgets. We are not yet sure where we want to be in terms of comprehensive and efficient management of water on a geographic basis in Kansas, but we are beginning to break down the obstacles of categorical programs and illogical administrative boundaries.

Evaluation is a term that is used constantly in government. Usually this amounts to bean counting. For example, if you are planning to build four dams by year's end, you simply count the dams you have built, to determine whether you met your goal. That is not the kind of evaluation we are talking about with this process. We are developing data systems that help us evaluate what is happening in the state. We have invested much effort developing an information system that monitors water use in Kansas. Water reports are produced that focus on each county, right down to a township. We can monitor water use by every municipality and every rural water district. Comparisons can be made of one area to another with similar needs to determine whether the area is using its resources efficiently or not. Of course, we make that information public. The information has done a lot to encourage people to make changes in how they use water.

In terms of water quality, Kansas, like most states, has limited water quality information. As a consequence, we have urged and have been successful

in getting the U.S. Geological Survey to designate four-fifths of the land surface in the state of Kansas as part of the Survey's National Water Quality Assessment Program. This designation is going to produce enormously beneficial information on water quality over the long-term. The 20 percent of the land area not in that system will be monitored using the same methodology as the rest of the state, although the state will pay the full cost of that monitoring instead of sharing the cost with the USGS.

In summary, I have talked about having a vision and a consensus on water planning. It was very important to Kansas' success to have a vision and consensus up front. Secondly, when you talk about the planning process, you are not talking about the process of preparing the plan. You are talking about a management system that includes developing the plan, putting budget priorities in place, implementing proposals, and evaluating the long-term success of the program.

In Kansas, we had a commitment by Republicans and Democrats that this was going to be a bipartisan effort and for over 10 years the effort has been above partisan bickering in the legislative process. This project was undertaken under one governor and then was handed to another governor, and subsequently to another. It is now in the hands of a fourth governor and it never missed a beat because of the commitment at the executive and legislative levels. This has happened because the real power for the system comes from private citizens who tell the legislators that they like the process and the product.