

In 1955, the Quivira National Wildlife Refuge was established when the Migratory Bird Commission authorized the purchase of the first parcels that now include 22,000 acres of wetlands and marshes in South Central Kansas. In 1957, the Refuge applied to the State of Kansas and was granted a senior water right in the Rattlesnake Creek basin. The Refuge is managed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service and is listed as one of 29 wetlands of international importance.

For millennia, the wetlands have been a needed stop for migratory birds and waterfowl along the central flyway. In addition to the wildlife, the high salinity of the marshes are populated by flora that is unique to this area.

Quivira National Wildlife Refuge sits atop the High Plains aquifer. As irrigation water use in the area has increased the water levels in Rattlesnake Creek began to decline and inflow to the wetlands began to be impaired. By 1980, the decreases in water levels were becoming enough of a problem that the US Fish and Wildlife began to be concerned and work was started to study the problem and to try and work out a solution that would be equitable to all involved.

By September of 2013, no resolution had been agreed upon and the USFWS filed a complaint with the Kansas Department of Agriculture for impairment of their senior water right. Work was renewed with local stakeholders including members of Groundwater Management District 5 to try to come to an equitable solution, but a plan for a Local Enhanced Management Area (LEMA) failed to be approved by the State.

In September of 2019, Kansas Chief Engineer, David Barfield, ruled that the senior water rights of the Refuge were being significantly impaired and that junior water right holders were to reduce the amount of water they were pumping in order to restore full allocation of the senior water right. This plan was to have taken effect January 1, 2020, but with congressional input that order has been placed on hold. The whole matter may well end up in the courts.

For your oral presentation, you must present your cases as stakeholders in this issue and present your best plan to resolve this issue. Some of the stakeholder roles you may take on are; Manager of the Quivira National Wildlife Refuge, a Farmer utilizing irrigation in the basin, Business owner in St. John's, Kansas, Member of the Audubon Society, Groundwater Management District board member, Kansas Secretary of the Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism, Superintendent of USD #350.

Below is a reference for a website that might help you begin your research.

<https://agriculture.ks.gov/divisions-programs/dwr/water-appropriation/impairment-complaints/quivira-national-wildlife-refuge>