



The Nature Conservancy  
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August 10, 2020

Karen A. Woodrich  
State Conservationist  
Natural Resources Conservation Service  
760 South Broadway Blvd.  
Salina, Kansas. 67401

Dear Ms. Woodrich:

I am writing in support of Big Bend Groundwater Management District No. 5's (District) pending request for USDA PL-566 Watershed Act assistance to prepare a watershed plan for the District's streamflow augmentation project for Rattlesnake Creek in Stafford County, Kansas. This project is a critical element of our ongoing partnership with the District to ensure the necessary water supply for the Quivira National Wildlife Refuge (Quivira).

Quivira's 7,000 acres of wetlands provide critical fish and wildlife habitat along the Central Flyway, including habitat for threatened and endangered species like the listed whooping crane (*Grus americana*), interior least tern (*Sternula antillarum*), and the state-listed western snowy plover (*Charadrius nivosus*). For over ten years, area stakeholders and partners, including The Nature Conservancy (TNC), have worked to develop conservation efforts and projects to balance agricultural water use and Quivira fish and wildlife management needs. TNC recognizes the need for this consensus augmentation project to complement conservation and water efficiency efforts. As you may know, Congress directed that USDA prioritize projects providing fish and wildlife benefits with this current PL-566 funding opportunity — a direction the District's project will help fulfill.

TNC supports the use of USDA conservation programs to resolve water resource concerns by helping farmers and rural communities address such concerns through cooperative approaches. Once fully implemented with USDA support, the proposed project will help ensure that Quivira continues to provide critical fish and wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities and tourism benefits in south-central Kansas.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "H. Mehl", written over a horizontal line.

Dr. Heidi Mehl  
Director of Water and Agriculture Programs  
The Nature Conservancy in Kansas