Kansas Public Water Systems Urged to Take Action to Alleviate the Impact of Severe Drought Conditions

In light of the fact that many parts of the state are experiencing a severe drought during the summer of 2012, the Kansas Rural Water Association recommends that all public water supplies take the following precautionary measures:

• Closely monitor daily pumping or production figures to ensure that more than normal quantities of water are not being produced. Obviously demand for water is at historic levels. Most systems will be producing more water this time of year compared to low demand periods. However by closely monitoring daily production figures water systems may be able to determine if what appears to be high demand may be a large water leak. It is also advisable to compare production/pumping records to water sold figures at least monthly to calculate your systems percent water loss. Again, if that figure is higher than normal, looking for water leaks is advisable.

• Measure both static and pumping water levels in all wells. A handout explaining how to measure such water levels can be found on the KRWA Web site under “downloads”. While this is a practice that should be followed on a monthly basis throughout the year, it becomes even more critical during drought conditions. If you have historical static water level readings, current static level figures should be compared to these to determine if water levels are dropping. Water pumped should also be examined to determine if air is present. Several factors could be causing air, including a drop in static water levels. Further investigation may be needed. If your system is experiencing such problems, the system should consider contacting its well driller, engineer or KRWA staff for assistance.

• Find and review your Emergency Operations Plan and/or Drought Contingency Plan to ensure it is up-to-date and allows your water system to legally take actions if needed to continuing providing water service. Many systems across the state have already implement the first stage of their plans, requiring voluntary water conservation measures. Again, if your system needs assistance with review of its plan, please feel free to contact KRWA at 785.336.3760.

• Finally, it is advisable to have a Boil Water Advisory handy in case your system loses water pressure for whatever reason. A Boil Water Advisory template can be found on the KRWA Web site under “downloads.” When water pressure is lost throughout the distribution system, it increases the likelihood of backsiphonage drawing contaminants into the system. Once an advisory is issued, continued bacteriological monitor throughout the system is needed. An advisory can usually be rescinded once pressure is restored, the system thoroughly flushed and additional bacteriological monitoring confirms water is safe to drink.