

# Governor Announces Appointments to the Kansas Water Authority

Despite disruptions to much of state government and Kansas legislative activities amid the COVID-19 pandemic, important appointments continue to be made in the world of Kansas water. During the past few months, the governor has announced four new appointments to the Kansas Water Authority. Among the responsibilities defined in Kansas Statute, the water authority advises the governor, the Legislature and the director of the Kansas Water Office on water policy issues, including the approval and revision of the Kansas Water Plan, federal contracts, administrative regulations and proposed water-related legislation. The KWA appointments are among nearly 50 other appointments the Governor has made to various state boards in recent months. “I am committed to keeping government working for all Kansans, and that includes continuing the essential appointments process,” Kelly said in an April 13, 2020, press release. “These appointments have been made with the same level of scrutiny and certainty as always, and I have no doubt these individuals will be great additions to their respective boards and help keep our state running as it should.”

The KWA is charged with providing leadership to ensure that water policies and programs address the needs of all Kansans. KWA is required to be made up of a diverse group of individuals in order to represent a variety of water interests. KWA is comprised of 24 members. Of these, 13 are appointed positions. The governor appoints 11 of those members, including the chair. One member is appointed by the President of the Senate, and one member is appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives. State

agency directors serve as ex-officio members. The Governor appoints members as follows:

- One shall be a representative of large municipal water users
- One shall be a representative of small municipal water users
- One shall be a board member of a western Kansas Groundwater Management District
- One shall be a board member of a central Kansas Groundwater Management District
- One shall be a member of the Kansas Association of Conservation Districts
- One shall be a representative of industrial water users
- One shall be a member of the state Association of Watershed Districts
- One shall have a demonstrated background and interest in water use, conservation and environmental issues
- Two shall be representatives of the general public

## Connie Owen

Constance (Connie) Crittenden Owen from Overland Park was appointed by Governor Kelly as Chair of the Kansas Water Authority last summer and confirmed by the Kansas Senate in January 2020. Connie is a licensed attorney and has practiced Kansas water law for more than 25 years. As an administrative hearing officer for the Kansas Department of Agriculture’s Division of Water Resources, since 2004, she presided over the initial hearings for the first two Local Enhanced Management Areas (LEMAs), as well as numerous hearings addressing abandonment of water rights, water law enforcement actions, applications for new water rights and change aspects of existing



rights. Prior to this role, Connie served as legal counsel for DWR, advising the Chief Engineer and staff on water law administration and enforcement and conducting all administrative and intrastate litigation before the Kansas District Courts and Kansas Appellate Courts. Connie previously served as a research attorney and motions attorney for the Kansas Court of Appeals and the late Kansas Supreme Court Justice Robert E. Davis. A lifelong Kansan, Connie earned her B.S. degree from Emporia State University, in 1981, and her law degree at the University of Kansas in 1988. “My experience as a licensed attorney practicing Kansas water law for more than 25 years has exposed me to real-life water issues that affect individuals and families, as well as businesses and municipalities,” said Owen in a KWO press release. “As Chair I welcome the opportunity to apply the knowledge and expertise of the board members, professionals in our state agencies and stakeholders throughout Kansas to protect our water resources for current and future generations.”



### Dr. Jean Steiner of Manhattan

Steiner is an adjunct professor at Kansas State University. Steiner received a Ph.D. from K-State in agronomy and agroclimatology, and a degree in geology from Cornell College. She is the former director of USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS) Grazinglands Research Lab in Oklahoma, former center director at USDA ARS in Georgia, former senior science coordinator in the Department of Animal and Rangeland Sciences at New Mexico State University, as well as a member of the American Society of Agronomy, Soil Sciences Society of America, Soil and Water Conservation Society and American Society for the Advancement of Science. “The water authority relies on members with a strong knowledge of water-related issues in Kansas,” Governor Kelly said. “Dr. Steiner’s career and significant scientific knowledge of agronomy, soil sciences and water conservation in Kansas as well as her experiences in other states make her an ideal appointee for the Kansas Water Authority.”

### Lynn Goossen of Colby

Goossen is the owner and operator of Goossen Farms Inc., where he oversees the production of a variety of irrigated and dryland crops. Goossen also served on the Kansas Grain Sorghum Commission, the Thomas County Farm Bureau Board of Directors and the State Resolutions Committee of the State of Kansas Farm Bureau.

Prior KWA appointments made last year by Governor Kelly include Jeremiah Hobbs of La Crosse, representing the State Association of Kansas Watersheds, Chris Ladwig from Derby and Spirit Aerosystems, representing the Kansas Chamber of Commerce and industrial water users, Sen. Carolyn McGinn from Sedgwick, representing Environment and Conservation, and David Stroberg from Hutchinson, representing Groundwater Management Districts No. 2 and No. 5.

### Allan Soetaert of Gardner

Soetaert is the manager of Rural Water District No. 7, in Johnson County. He has been a public servant for 32 years, involved with meeting the daily, and varied, demands of a public water supply system, as well as more regional water issues and public water supply systems and initiatives. These include serving on the Maris des Cygnes Regional Advisory Committee, chairing the 5-member Supervisory Committee that provided guidance and oversight to a rural water district in central Kansas on the verge of foreclosure by the federal government, and chairing the Hillsdale Area Water Cooperative. He also serves on the Board of Directors of the Kansas Rural Water Association. Allan has been assigned to the KWA public water supply committee.

### Allen Roth of Hays

Roth farms full-time near Hays and has a bachelor’s and master’s in computer science from Kansas State University. He has served 18 years on the Ellis County Conservation District Board of Supervisors, six years on the Kansas Association of Conservation Districts Board of Directors as well as the Smoky Hill – Saline Regional Advisory Committee since its inception, and on the Cottonwood Extension District Board of Directors.



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