

10/30/2003 Moran Supports Funding for Ogallala Aquifer Research

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Joins Kansas Geologist to Testify on Importance of Water Conservation Studies

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Congressman Jerry Moran today joined Dr. M. Lee Allison, the Kansas State Geologist and Director of the Kansas Geological Survey, to testify on the importance of providing research funding for the Ogallala Aquifer. In his testimony before the U.S. House Resources Subcommittee on Power and Water, Moran discussed the importance of comprehensive research on the entire aquifer to determine its depth and its future.

"Because our communities and American agriculture depend on the Ogallala Aquifer, we need to invest in its future," Moran said. "A coordinated research effort involving all eight states will be a useful first step in assessing the overall condition of the aquifer and ensuring its existence for future generations. The Ogallala is an essential component in ensuring that we have ample amounts of water in the future."

The Ogallala Aquifer provides 99 percent of the water supply for communities, businesses, homes and agriculture production in the high plains region of the U.S. This includes eight states - Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, Wyoming, Colorado, Oklahoma, New Mexico and Texas. The aquifer lies beneath 174,000 square miles of land, an area more than five times greater than the world's largest freshwater lake and over 150 percent larger than the surface area of all five Great Lakes combined.

The legislation discussed today is similar to legislation Moran introduced last year, which had widespread support. Moran was also successful in including conservation provisions for the Ogallala in the 2002 Farm Bill. However, no funding was set aside for multi-state research into the future of the aquifer. That is the focus of today's legislation.

Efforts have been undertaken by the State of Kansas to manage the Ogallala Aquifer, but a need remains to gather data about the aquifer to ensure its viability in the future. Since the aquifer crosses the borders of eight states, it is critical to have comprehensive, multi-state information to develop a full understanding of its overall condition.

In his testimony, Dr. Allison focused on the importance of funding research to learn how to extend the life of the aquifer.

"We in the states who are struggling to extend and preserve the life of the High Plains Aquifer know that ignorance is dangerous," Dr. Allison said in his testimony. "Good information is needed by farmers, bankers, cities and towns, businesses, water districts, and state legislators, among others, to make rational and realistic decisions about the future of the aquifer."

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