



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Hays and Russell Receive Favorable Ruling in R9 Ranch Water Use

Today, the Cities of Hays and Russell received official ruling from the Chief District Judge of the Edwards County District Court denying Water PACK's Petition for Judicial Review of the State's order allowing the conversion of water irrigation rights of the R9 Ranch in Edwards County to municipal use. The District Judge's decision affirmed the Kansas Department of Agriculture's Chief Engineer's 2019 approval of the Cities' change applications.

The City of Hays purchased the approximately 7,000-acre R9 Ranch and its thirty water rights in southwestern Edwards County in 1995, and a year later Russell purchased an 18-percent interest in the property, with the intention of someday using the water as part of the Cities' water supply.

Both Hays and Russell are water conservation leaders in the State of Kansas, and both have voluntarily agreed to using the water resource sustainably. By converting the R9 to municipal use, it is anticipated that the aquifer will be benefitted by 225,000 acre-feet of water, when compared to normal farming practices. Currently, the property is being converted back to its natural state with native grasses and vegetation to restore habitat and will one day provide hunting and other recreational opportunities for all Kansans.

Mayor Ruder of Hays and Mayor Cross of Russell issued the following joint statement. "This is a great day for Hays, Russell, and the region. As a result of today's ruling, we are one step closer to realizing the vision that community leaders initiated nearly 30 years ago. Our regional economy, worth \$2.8 billion, is dependent on having access to a reliable water source, and the R9 Ranch will provide this vital resource for future generations to come."

Unless Water PACK appeals the Judge's ruling, the Cities will begin to navigate the State's Water Transfer Act, which is required if more than 2,000 acre-feet of water is moved more than 35 miles.

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