Watershed education programs and stakeholder groups in the Neosho River Watershed of Kansas

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The current water planning process in the State of Kansas got it’s start in the early 1980’s as a result of a conflict over water transfers from the Kansas River Basin to the Arkansas River Basin. This resulted in the creation of the Kansas Water Office (technical and administrative services) and the Kansas Water Authority (statutory water user groups). The development of Basin Advisory Committees was the result of a legislative directive to involve stakeholders in the process. The state was divided into twelve basins, each with it’s own BAC. The clear need for local, on the ground activity to deal with non-point source issues led to the development of the Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy (WRAPS), which is a partnership between the KWO (water plan funds) and KDHE (EPA 319 funds) to support the development of local watershed stakeholder teams. These teams potentially sequence through four project stages: Development, Assessment, Planning and Implementation. In the Neosho Basin, there are currently 4 teams in various stages: Upper Cottonwood (Planning), Upper Neosho (Assessment), Lower Neosho (Development), Spring River (Development/Assessment).