

NEWS RELEASE: Dec. 5, 2008

**Water law expert to speak with southwest Missouri lawmakers**

Southwest Missouri lawmakers will discuss the region's future water supply with Colorado Supreme Court Justice Gregory Hobbs Monday at a special luncheon sponsored by Greene County Commission and the Missouri State University Office of the Provost.

The luncheon is Monday, Dec. 8, 12-1:30 p.m., at MSU's Kentwood Hall, 700 E. St. Louis St., Springfield.

Justice Hobbs is considered an expert in water laws utilized in western states, having practiced water, environmental, land-use and transportation law for many years before becoming a justice in 1996. He is visiting Springfield to speak at MSU as part of the university's Public Affairs Convocation Series.

Groundwater supplies, upon which many Missouri municipalities depend, are a finite source of water. Though the region usually has abundant rainfall and surface water, groundwater aquifers replenish slowly. Groundwater usage now routinely exceeds the rate of recharge, making water shortages already experienced by other states a very real possibility in Missouri. Compounding this is the fact that southwest Missouri shares groundwater aquifers and surface water sources with Kansas and Oklahoma, which, due to their comparatively arid climate, are governed by strict western-style water laws not used in Missouri. Should Missouri communities begin drawing water from sources in these neighboring states, a complicated legal battle could ensue.

At Monday's luncheon, Justice Hobbs will speak with area lawmakers about western-style water laws as well as the role of state and local governments in addressing regional water issues.

"Justice Hobbs' experience adjudicating water rights issues in Colorado will be invaluable to elected officials from our region as we begin addressing what appear of be serious challenges in securing our future water supplies," said Dave Coonrod, Greene County Presiding Commissioner.

Monday's luncheon serves as a companion piece to Hobbs' presentation for the MSU Convocation Series, "Finding Sustainability at the Confluence of Culture and Water in the Western Americas," Monday, Dec. 8, 7:30 p.m., at the Plaster Student Union Theater on the MSU campus.

For more information about the MSU Convocation Series, call Dr. Alexander Wait, MSU Provost Fellow for Public Affairs, at (417) 836-5802.

For more information about the luncheon, call the Greene County Commission at (417) 868-4112 or Jenny Fillmer Edwards, Greene County Public Information Officer, at (417) 829-6019 or (417) 379-5713.

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