

MINUTES  
2026 ANNUAL MEETING  
BIG BEND GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT #5  
*AND*  
CENTRAL KANSAS WATER BANK ASSOCIATION  
February 17, 2026 – Stafford County Annex – St John

The annual meetings for the Big Bend Groundwater Management District #5 (District) and the Central Kansas Water Bank Association (Association) were held February 17, 2026, at 7:00 p.m. at the Stafford County Annex in St John, Kansas.

Brandon Bortz called the Central Kansas Water Bank Association annual meeting to order. Tom Taylor called the Big Bend Groundwater Management District No. 5 annual meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. There were approximately 24 eligible voters and 9 visitors in attendance for the meeting with an additional 5 visitors attending via Zoom.

Orrin Feril presented the approved minutes from the 2025 annual meeting and welcomed all present in the meeting.

Kent Moore presented the financial report and proposed 2027 budget. The public present were encouraged to review these records in preparation for the July budget hearing to consider the budget for FY2027. The public was also provided notice of potential need for a revised FY2026 budget hearing due to project development within the calendar year requiring increased expenditures.

Marlyn Spare announced the District election of directors and presented candidates. Incumbent Joe Schlessiger was on the ballot for Barton County. Incumbent Darrell Wood was on the ballot for Edwards County. Kerry Froetschner was on the ballot for Pawnee County. Nominations were opened to the floor for all positions three times. Berry Bortz moved, and Jon McClure seconded that nominations cease, and a unanimous ballot be cast for the candidates to fill the open positions on the Big Bend GMD5 board. By show of hands, the motion carried unanimously.

Andrew Vosburgh announced the Central Kansas Water Bank Association election of directors and presented the candidates for the one open position representing the public. Tom Taylor was on the ballot representing Big Bend GMD5 for this position. Nominations were opened to the floor for the public position three times. Kent Moore moved, and Jon McClure seconded that nominations cease, and a unanimous ballot be cast for Tom Taylor to fill the open public position on the CKWBA board. By show of hands, the motion carried unanimously. Brandon Bortz and Vernon Hirt were on the ballot as incumbents for two additional positions on the CKWBA board. Nominations were opened to the floor for these two positions three times. Jon McClure moved, and Justin Vosburgh seconded that nominations cease, and a unanimous ballot be cast for the incumbent candidates to fill the two private positions on the CKWBA board. By show of hands, the motion carried unanimously.

Lane Letourneau, KDA–DWR, provided a summary of the 2025 activities for the agency including new hires at the Stafford field office and in Manhattan. Mr. Letourneau provided a briefing on the current water-related legislation this session and provided some updates on the WRIS mobile and the Hays/R9 Ranch case in the Kansas Supreme Court. Jeff Lanterman reported on activities in the Stafford field office including updates on the pilot augmentation project and completion of the digitization of all water right files in their office. Several questions from the public were addressed Mr. Letourneau and Mr. Lanterman.

Brownie Wilson, KGS, gave a presentation of the state cooperative water level program and associated changes to the state’s hydrology in 2025. KGS is also rolling out a water quality sampling and monitoring program. Details on this program were provided to those in attendance.

Vanessa Marks provided a thorough overview of the Association activities in 2025 including updates on the Compensated Allocation Management Program (CAMP). CAMP has been expanded to include the 50% response zone of the Rattlesnake Creek region and funding is available to fulfill contracts in 2026. Mrs. Marks also noted how the CKWBA is able to show real water conservation through the variety of programs they offer.

Orrin Feril provided a brief overview of the District activity for 2025. The District has been coordinating with state agencies and its consultants to properly identify areas of concern within the District and to make appropriate management decisions for each area. These areas were presented to the public as a part of the initial draft action plan in accordance with K.S.A. 82a-1044. All were encouraged to provide input in this process. Mr. Feril also provided the public with an update on the Rattlesnake Creek Watershed Plan project and addressed questions from the audience.

Orrin Feril thanked everyone in attendance for their attention to the activities and encouraged everyone to stay involved in the water conversation in Central Kansas Water Bank Association by providing feedback on the draft action plan and by getting their water wells sampled. With nothing further to discuss, the joint annual meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Attest by Marlon E. Spivey Date 3-12-26