

MINUTES – MARCH 12, 2026
BIG BEND GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT #5
MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The monthly board meeting of the Big Bend Groundwater Management District #5 was held at the District office in Stafford, Kansas on Thursday March 12, 2026. The board members present were Tom Taylor, Fred Grunder, Kent Moore, Darrell Wood, Kerry Froetschner, Gary Hornbaker, Marlyn Spare, and Craig Zwick. Board member Joe Schlessiger was not present at the meeting. The District staffs present were Orrin Feril and Vanessa Marks. The guests present were Jeff Crispin (Zoom), Jeff Lanterman, Tom Turner, David Wood, Cameron Conant (Zoom) and “Michael” (Zoom).

The March regular board meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by Tom Taylor.

A presentation by Tom Turner was added to the agenda as item 6a. A presentation by David Wood was added to the agenda as item 6b.

Craig Zwick moved, and Kerry Froetschner seconded to approve the February minutes as presented. Motion carried 8-0.

Kent Moore moved, and Darrell Wood seconded to approve the Annual meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried 8-0.

Orrin Feril provided the board and public with the March treasurer’s report and highlighted the unique items for further board review. Darrell Wood moved, and Craig Zwick seconded to accept the March treasurer’s report as presented. Motion carried 8-0.

The board conducted an election of officers for the upcoming year. Following a brief discussion regarding the current officers, Darrell Wood moved, and Kerry Froetschner seconded to maintain the current officers for the upcoming year. Motion carried 8-0. The District board officers are Tom Taylor as President, Fred Grunder as Vice-President, Marlyn Spare as Secretary, and Kent Moore as Treasurer.

Vanessa Marks, Notary Public, administered the affirmation as required by K.S.A. 54-106 to all present board members. All board members raised their right hand and affirmed the following statement:

“I do solemnly affirm that I will support the constitution of the United States and the constitution of the state of Kansas, and faithfully discharge the duties of the board of directors of the Big Bend Groundwater Management District Number Five. So, help me God.”

Tom Turner proposed a land trade to the board for consideration. His client owns SW 11-23S-12W in Stafford county. This quarter section includes a permanent conservation easement with Pheasants Forever for a 2-ac pond, Water Right File Number 37758 (195 AF) and CRP acres until 2035. Tom’s client has interest in obtaining SW 16-23S-11W including Water Right File Number 45846, SW 14-23-11W, and NW 08-23S-11W. The stipulations on the proposition is that Tom’s client would retain hunting rights for SW 11-23S-12W and 15 AF for recreational purposes. Several questions were asked regarding proximity to other projects and the Rattlesnake Creek channel.

Marlyn Spare made the following motion at 09:40 a.m.: “I move that the board go into executive session including Tom Turner and Orrin Feril for the preliminary discussion regarding acquisition of real property exception under KOMA to discuss the presentation from Tom Turner, and the open meeting will resume here in the meeting room at 10:10 a.m.” Kerry Froetschner seconded. Motion carried 8-0. The board came out of executive session at 10:10 a.m.

Marlyn Spare moved, and Kent Moore seconded to conditionally accept the proposal from Tom Turner’s client for the District to offer the parcels SW 16-23S-11W with Water Right File Number 45846, SW 14-23S-11W, and NW 08-23S-11W while retaining future water right & easement access options in order to obtain SW 11-23S-12W with Water Right File Number 37758 plus \$240,000. Tom’s client would retain duck hunting rights and the conservation easement with Pheasant’s Forever as well as 15 AF for recreational use on SW 11-23S-12W, subject to future purchase agreements and board resolution. Motion carried 7-0-1 with Gary Hornbaker abstaining.

David Wood, Kansas Water Users Association, presented a proposal to the District board. Currently, the District owns 876.5 acre-feet of water throughout the District. In July 2025, the District agreed to lease this water to the KDA–DWR at no cost for one calendar year for the purposed of groundwater conservation and management, prevention of economic decline and stabilization of agriculture in the region. In 2025, these water rights were not utilized for pilot augmentation. Consequently, the working group is requesting that the District lease the applicable water rights to KDA–DWR for the Pilot Augmentation 2.0 project for an additional calendar year with automatic renewal subject to future board discretion. Following a thorough discussion, Kent Moore moved, Fred Grunder seconded to authorize the lease of Water Right Nos. 16669-00, 28568-00, 35806-00, 35807-00, 36564-00 for one calendar year at no cost to the Kansas Department of Agriculture – Division of Water Resources with automatic renewal at the discretion of the District in the future for the purpose of groundwater conservation and management, prevention of economic decline, and stabilization of agriculture in the region. Motion carried 8-0. The KWUA also requested easement access to NW 08-23S-11W for test hole drilling and a potential production well for pilot augmentation 2.0. Kent Moore moved, Darrell Wood seconded to approve easement access to KWUA for NW 08-23S-11W to drill a test hole and potentially a production well for pilot augmentation or the purpose of groundwater conservation and management, prevention of economic decline, and stabilization of agriculture in the region. Motion carried 8-0.

Orrin Feril discussed staff activities for the past few weeks and upcoming months. The upcoming outreach meetings for the draft Action Plan have been scheduled for mid-April throughout the District. The flyer was provided to the board for their reference. Accordingly, to assist with data transparency, the District has rolled out an interactive map on the website for the public to have a better understanding of the boundaries of the areas of concern throughout the District. The board appreciation dinner was discussed and due to scheduling conflicts, the dinner will be scheduled in April. The Watershed Plan has completed the public review period. NRCS is currently drafting the Record of Decision which will then allow the District and associated consultants to begin the design/implementation phase of the project.

Jeff Lanterman, KDA–DWR, noted a few updates on the pilot augmentation project and answered questions regarding the WTAP water use criterion. Vanessa Marks, CKWBA, is currently working to review the water use reports submitted by participants in preparation of the annual report. Additionally, it is anticipated that there will be 5-6 water right deposits into the Association this calendar year.

The next District board meeting is tentatively set for April 9, 2026, at 7:00 p.m.

With no further items to discuss, the board adjourned at 1:15 a.m.

Attest by:  Dated: 4-9-26