

MINUTES – MAY 14, 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 May 14, 2026. The board members present were Tom Taylor, Kent Moore, Darrell Wood, Kerry Froetschner, Fred Grunder, Joe Schlessiger, Marlyn Spare, and Craig Zwick. Board member Gary Hornbaker was not present at the meeting. The District staffs present were Orrin Feril and Vanessa Marks (Zoom). The guests present were Stacy Barnes (Zoom), Jeff Lanterman (Zoom), and Michael (Zoom).

The May regular board meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Tom Taylor.

Craig Zwick moved, and Kent Moore seconded to approve the April minutes as presented. Motion carried 8-0.

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

A new agreement with the Kansas Department of Agriculture – Division of Conservation (KDA–DOC) for the Irrigation Technology Initiative was reviewed for consideration by the board. Under Agreement TSP-2026-10, State of Kansas Water Plan funds would be authorized for irrigation system evaluations. The agreement would be initiated on June 1, 2026, and would be set to expire on December 31, 2027. Following discussions regarding applicant eligibility, Marlyn Spare moved, and Kerry Froetschner seconded to allow two evaluations per entity per calendar year for the ITI program. Motion carried 8-0. Marlyn Spare moved, and Craig Zwick seconded to approve the TSP-2026-10 agreement with KDA–DOC. Motion carried 8-0.

A second agreement with KDA–DOC for the Irrigation Technology Initiative (CS-2026-05) would provide cost-shares for implementing technology improvements through December 31, 2027. Following a discussion regarding the cost-share rates currently being offered, Kent Moore moved, and Darrell Wood seconded to increase the cost-share rate for the ITI program to \$6000 per irrigation system. Motion carried 8-0. Craig Zwick moved, Joe Schlessiger seconded to approve the CS-2026-05 agreement with KDA–DOC. Motion carried 8-0.

The contingently accepted offer with Tom Hammond from the March board meeting was discussed further, specifically related to recent developments regarding the division of the existing water right file number 37758. Recent discussions with KDA–DWR regarding how the water right could be split have led to the proposed recreation permit being operated from a newly drilled water well. The proposed bid for this recreation well was presented to the board totaling \$23,387.34. The current proposal from Mr. Hammond is for the District to cover 75% of that cost. Following a thorough discussion, Kent Moore moved, and Darrell Wood seconded to authorize payment of up to 75% of the proposed bid not to exceed \$17,540.50. Motion carried 8-0.

Now that the final Watershed Plan-EIS is public, the District has a clearer perspective for the expenditures in FY2026 and FY2027. As a result, the FY2026 budget will need to be amended in preparation for a public hearing in July. Additionally, the proposed FY2027 budget will be ready for the July budget hearing. The board did not need to act as these proposed budgets would be published in area newspapers within the next few weeks.

The District has been working on the draft action plan document for the past several months. A version of the action plan document has been provided to the public in outreach meetings and on the District's website. The latest draft of the document was presented to the board for discussion and review. Each area of concern was discussed, primarily focusing on the draft actions that would be taken for each region to reasonably address the identified issues. Following thorough discussion, no action was taken by the board, and all were encouraged to continue their review of the document in preparation for the June board meeting.

Orrin Feril discussed staff activities for the past few weeks and upcoming months. The communication system for the weather stations has been overhauled recently to discontinue the use of the copper phone line system. John and Vanessa have conducted additional testing of the ultrasonic flowmeter on the test stand at Great Plains Meter in Aurora, NE. There are two parcels available for hunting lease. Next week, a group of law students from Washburn will be in the area to discuss Western water law at Quivira NWR. Orrin was invited to speak to the group along with Jeff Lanterman and Kate Brenner.

Jeff Lanterman, KDA-DWR, mentioned the Rattlesnake Creek working group will be meeting soon. The pilot augmentation project is moving forward as well and in coordination with USFWS, it will likely delay providing water until closer to the fall migration. Jeff discussed concerns with obligating funding for the pilot augmentation project and noted a master contract is being drafted with Kansas Water Users Association.

Vanessa Marks, CKWBA, noted 123 acre-feet of water is available for bid closing on May 15. Additionally, there are 115 acre-feet available until the end of the month with a \$200 reserve price. The CKWBA is getting pushback from KDA-DWR regarding the deposit of a set of water rights that have been actively participating in the CKWBA Deposit program for years past. The issue is centered on the accounting of water while the water rights were participating in the Deposit program. This has potential implications for current enrollees in CAMP.

The next District board meeting is tentatively set for June 25, 2026, at 7:00 p.m.

With no further items to discuss, the board adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Attest by:         *Maelyne Spore*         Dated:         6-25-26